

Paws Up for Pets

Professional dog trainers unleash some savvy advice

With the holidays behind us, the schooling really begins ... for you and your dog. The reality is whether you adopted a puppy or dog from a shelter, rescue group or reputable breeder, your four-legged roommate did not come with built-in manners.

I'm betting by now that the doggy honeymoon is over and you are feeling frustrated by your canine's actions. Maybe he chewed your favorite pair of shoes, shredded your sofa pillow into confetti or regards leash walking as opportunities to yank and marathon bark at other dogs.

From a newly adopted dog's perspective, he finds himself trying to adjust in a new home with new people and having to learn a new language — human. From your viewpoint, you fell for his cuteness, but were not prepared for his doggy ways.

Dog training challenges occur year-round, but it is fitting that after the rush of holiday pet adoptions, January is designated as National Train Your Dog Month by the Association of Professional Dog Trainers. And, to mark its 10th anniversary, I reached out to a couple of professional dog trainers in Palm Beach County who were happy to unleash some savvy doggy advice.

Lori Hill, founder of Pawsitive Dog Training (pawsitivedogtrainingfl.com) based in Delray Beach, is a certified professional dog trainer and American Kennel Club Canine Good Citizen evaluator who offers private in-home programs as well as group classes.

"I am comfortable treating a myriad of behavioral issues, such as separation anxiety, marking, nuisance barking and chewing/mouthing," she says.



Lori Hill, founder of Pawsitive Dog Training, seen here with her dog Louie, offers programs that range from teaching manners to making your pet a 'dream dog.' Photo provided

"Our dogs desire to please us. Just like with people, dogs can learn bad manners and habits if they don't have the correct guidance."

Dara Wittenberg is the founder of Rescue Me Dog Training (www.rescuemetraining.com), based in Delray Beach. She is a certified professional dog trainer and Animal Behavior College-certified dog trainer whose programs focus on problem-solving and offering various levels of training.

"The reason I got into dog training was to keep dogs out of shelters," says Wittenberg, who was honored as Behavior Team volunteer of the year in 2016 at the Peggy Adams Animal Rescue League in West Palm Beach. "I try to get people to understand life from a puppy's perspective. My role is to teach people how to communicate with their dogs and teach their dogs how to communicate with them."

Wittenberg is a major advocate for proper crate training for canines of all ages. "Crate training should

start as soon as possible and the use of the crate is about management and not about punishment," Wittenberg says. "Associate the crate with positive things. Feed your dog in his crate with the door open at first and his bowl in the back of the crate. When playing fetch, throw the toy in the open crate for your dog to go in to retrieve the toy and then treat them."



Wittenberg

If a dog is still learning not to greet guests by jumping up on them, Wittenberg says ushering the dog into his crate and giving him a treat like peanut butter or frozen beef broth in a Kong proves to be a win-win. The dog is occupied and regards his crate as a welcoming safe place and the guests don't have to dodge leaping paws on them.

Wittenberg says it is important to work closely with dog trainers and veterinarians to accurately identify the triggers behind an unwanted

Learn more

All dogs benefit by being properly socialized and well trained. The Association of Professional Dog Trainers sports more than 6,000 members who teach dog-friendly training techniques. You can check out articles, videos and other resources on its site at <https://apdt.com>.

canine behavior. And, pay attention to how you react to these actions.

"Some dogs go crazy when they see another dog on a leash and the owner may hold her breath, hold tight on the leash and the dog then looks at his owner and senses something terrible may happen," Wittenberg says. "Dogs are very sensitive. They pick up on our emotions. Instead, try to be calm, take a deep breath and do not wrap the leash tightly around your hand. If you are uptight, your dog will be uptight."

At Pawsitive Dog Training, Hill offers a tiered-teaching approach that begins with what she calls the Well-Mannered Dog Program and accelerates to what she calls the Dream Dog Program.

The well-mannered program's goal is to teach the person how to train the dog to master loose-leash walking and obey these vital commands: watch me, sit, come, stay, drop it. Behaviors, including peeing in the house, chewing/mouthing, jumping up on people and nuisance barking are also addressed.

Hill says loose-leash walking with your dog is critical for social time, enrichment and exercise. Her top cues are "watch me" (ensuring your dog

is focused on you and giving you eye contact); "sit" (the please and thank-you from your dog); "come" (having a good recall is absolutely critical and could save your dog's life if he gets loose); and "drop it" (getting dogs or puppies to release items in their mouths, especially dangerous items).

"I also value the 'wait' or 'stay' as a must-learn cue so your dog is trained to wait at the door, wait before crossing the road and before eating, as this teaches impulse control," Hill says.

Hill describes the Dream Dog Program graduate as the well-trained, well-mannered dog "who is a delight in all circumstances and obeys even around heavy distractions."

Canine graduates of this program have mastered 14 commands, eight behaviors and make good candidates for the AKC Canine Good Citizen and therapy dog status.

Hill's parting advice is to identify what motivates your dog to learn.

"Some dogs like treats, tennis balls or praise," she says. "And, your attitude is everything. Training should be a fun process for both you and your dog. Always focus on the training, and the last cue you give your puppy should be completed with success."

Arden Moore is an author, speaker and master certified pet first-aid instructor. She hosts a nationally syndicated radio show, Arden Moore's Four Legged Life ([www.fourleggedlife.com](http://www.fourleggedlife.com)), and the popular Oh



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