



CHARACTERISTICS OF DOGS

When living with dogs it is important to set realistic expectations. Dogs are dogs and they are going to do dog things. Fortunately, dogs are intelligent and we can teach them some human-appropriate responses. Remember that dogs are always learning something. We need to ensure that they are learning what we want them to.

Knowing some general characteristics of dogs helps us understand them better:

- Dogs are amoral. They do not know right from wrong. They know safe and unsafe. For example, it is safe to get into the trash when people are absent but unsafe when they are present.
- Dogs are opportunistic and self centered. It is about what's in it for them.
- Dogs are social. This is why they make good companions.
- Dogs are constantly learning from their actions. Learned behaviours may be appropriate or inappropriate for human counterparts. Let's evaluate their behaviour from a learning perspective.
- Dogs explore the world with their mouths. They lack thumbs. Everything is a potential chew toy.

SUCCESSFUL CANINE PARENTING

To be a successful canine parent follow these simple rules:

- Understand a dog's perspective - be fair
 - o Remember dogs are amoral, opportunistic, self-centered, social, constantly learning and explore the world with their mouths. Dogs make the most of current opportunities. Their motto - Carpe diem.
- Be a good teacher
 - o Control what your dog learns. Guide him into making the right decisions. Set your dog up to succeed. Don't waste your time telling your dog what not to do. Instead, teach him the correct behaviour.
- Communicate clearly
 - o Your job is to communicate to your dog when he is performing a correct behaviour. Catch him doing appropriate behaviours and reward him for it. A frequent occurrence of positive reinforcement will help your dog learn quickly.
- Be consistent
 - o Inconsistency and unpredictability cause fear and anxiety leading to behavioural problems. Reprimanding jumping one day and rewarding it the next will confuse your dog. Set the rules of the household and make your interactions predictable and consistent.
- Be your dog's advocate
 - o Your dog cannot speak up for himself. Be aware of his body language and protect him from overwhelming situations. A well-meaning group of children running over and surrounding your puppy can be frightening. You need to be willing to intervene and prevent negative experiences.