



Your Smart Dog

Help! My Dog Ate the Christmas Tree! How to Survive the Holidays with a Slightly Out-of-Control Dog

December 2005

Let's face it – the holidays are busy enough, forget trying to work in a little dog training amongst the shopping, the cleaning, the wrapping, the baking... It's not going to happen and attempting it will only result in frustration – for you and the dog! January is the month for resolutions – commit to working with your dog then, when you can devote time and attention to the task. For this month, let's just worry about keeping your dog out of trouble and you sane!

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These tips and tricks are designed to help you get through the hectic holiday months, just until you've got the time (and energy!) to train your dog. These are quick fixes, not permanent solutions, but they should help get you through the next few weeks and keep your stress level a little lower.

Exercise. Most of us don't look forward to a leisurely stroll around the block with our dogs in the middle of winter. Our dogs, however, are built for this type of weather and don't seem to be as bothered by it as we do. Their exercise needs don't diminish in the cold weather, so it's important that we allow them to "blow off

some steam." If they don't get the chance to do that, they'll direct that energy elsewhere – which usually means trouble! They'll grab a "forbidden" item and run through the house, begging you to chase them; they'll chew; they'll dig; they'll find all sorts of ways to burn their energy. A good, hard romp will tire them out and they'll be calmer and easier to live with. There are some [indoor exercise ideas](#) on the Smart Dog University website. Remember: a tired dog is a good dog!

Limited freedom. Many people pull out all the stops when they decorate for the holiday season. Things that aren't normally in your dog's reach suddenly are ... and look quite tempting to your dog. Not only is it annoying when your dog nibbles on the decorations, the tree, or the presents, but it could also be dangerous. Make sure you keep your dog – and your decorations – safe by using a baby gate to control your dog's access to those tempting decorations when you're not able to watch him.

Crating. Your dog may be fully housetrained and not have accidents in the house, but the crate is more than a housetraining tool. It's your dog's safe haven, a place where he can rest without being bothered. When you have a house full of guests, your dog might feel overwhelmed. Give him his own spot where he can get away from the action. The crate is a safe way to contain your dog if you can't watch him closely. If you're busy baking, wrapping, decorating (the list is endless!), stuff a Kong® full of peanut butter, plain non-fat yogurt, and/or biscuits, put your dog in the crate and



let him enjoy his goodie in the safety of his crate. He'll be happy, you know he's out of trouble, and you can get your work done without worry or interruption.

A tired dog is a good dog!

Leash and collar. If you've not trained your dog to sit politely for petting when guests come over, don't try to teach it now. But if you have guests coming over and don't know what to do with your dog in the meantime, try this: before your guests arrive, clip the leash to your dog's collar. Have some really tasty treats handy near the door. As the doorbell rings, take your dog – on leash – to the door with you. Offer him a treat as you open the door. Have your guest offer a treat as well. With all the goodies coming at your dog, he'll be too distracted to jump. (Note: the leash is on the dog for control only so he can't run around, dash out the door, etc. – don't jerk the leash to get your dog off the person. Instead, keep the leash short so the dog cannot jump to begin with.)

Out of sight, out of mind.

Dogs don't know presents from dog toys. Keep all items out of your dogs reach if you want to keep them safe. Your dog doesn't understand that the new leather shoes are a present, and not a chew-toy gift for him. Make it easy for him (and you!) and be sure to keep all goodies well out of reach of your dog.

Important Safety Notes: Chocolate and raisins are poisonous to your dogs. Be sure to keep all candy, fudge, cookies and other goodies out of your dog's reach. Check out the [ASPCA](http://www.aspcanet.org)'s pet safety webpage for more information.

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