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## Your Smart Dog The Secret to Speedy Training July 2007

It seems like everyone wants a shortcut to speed up training. **Like everything else worth working for, training has no real shortcuts. However, there is one overlooked tool that can help you teach your dog more quickly.** Once you learn about management, how easy it is to use, and how it speeds learning, you'll use it everyday.

### Management – What Is It?

Let's start with what management *isn't*. Management isn't training. Your dog won't learn how to *do* something as a result of your using management. **Management is used to help keep our dogs out of trouble.**

One of the laws of behavior states that any behavior that is reinforced (rewarded) is repeated. What this really means is that if a dog is able to get into the trash and get bones, he'll keep getting into the trash. Why wouldn't he – it works! The more this dog practices getting into the trash (and especially if getting in the trash sometimes yields goodies), the more he's going to try it.

And that's where management comes in.

To interrupt this behavior – and stop it from becoming a deeply engrained habit – we use management. What does this look like in real life? You move the trash into the pantry, move it under the sink, or you put a lid on the trash...anything to prevent the dog from sticking his head in and pulling out yummys.

Management is helpful because it keeps the dog out of trouble. **When the dog isn't in trouble, you'll have a chance to reward the good behavior.** For instance, if you put the trash in the pantry where your dog can't stick his head in, you'll be able to reward your dog for laying quietly in the kitchen, for chewing his Kong, or for some other desired behavior.

**Management helps  
keep our dogs out of  
trouble.**

Back to our law of behavior again – **the more a behavior is reinforced, the more that behavior will be repeated.** You're now reinforcing the dog for laying quietly, which means you'll get a lot more of that. The more good stuff you get, the less undesired stuff you'll get.

### Put It To Use

So what does management really look like in a real-life setting? **Here are some examples to help you decide how you can use management to speed up your dog's training.** Following each management suggestion are quick tips on how to *integrate management with training* which will really speed up the learning process for your dog.

### Jumping on Guests

Instead of letting your dog run and jump on visitors to say Hi, put his leash on before you



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open the door for your guests. Keep the leash short, your dog can't reach the guests to jump on them. He can then be asked to sit, and rewarded with calm attention from your visitors when he complies.

*Training Tip:* Teach your dog to sit to greet guests by having guests turn away from him every time he jumps (and giving him a lot of quiet attention when all four paws are on the ground)!

*Management and training are a powerful duo that supercharge your dog's learning.*

### **Housetraining**

If your dog isn't completely housetrained and is frequently peeing or pooping inside, use a crate to confine your dog when you can't keep an eye on him. If you don't like the idea of using the crate as a playpen, try this idea: keep him on a leash and connect it to your belt. He can't wander away while you're not looking and if he *does* have to go, you'll be right there to interrupt him and take him outdoors (where you'll praise him profusely for going in the right spot!).

*Training Tip:* Supervise your dog 100% of the time and take him out regularly (every hour or so) for potty breaks. Celebrate every time he goes to the bathroom outside!

### **Countersurfing (Stealing from the Counter)**

If a dog learns that yummy goodies are on the counter, and that if he tries hard enough he can sometimes get those goodies, why on earth would he stop trying?! If your dog has

successfully stolen something once or twice from the counter and been rewarded by a delicious treat, management is what you need, pronto! First, never ever leave anything good on the counter. Even if you push it way, way back. Second, if the dog is by himself in the kitchen, just assume he's trying to get things off the counter. So don't leave him unattended with access to the kitchen. Either gate the kitchen so he can't reach it, tether him to you (as described in the previous section), or crate him. Restricting his access to the kitchen guarantees that he can't get himself into trouble (and worse – he can't reward himself for the effort by eating Sunday night's dinner!)

*Training Tip:* Teach your dog "Leave It," which means don't approach, look at, or touch.

### **Mouthing**

Some dogs love to put their mouths on people when they are excited. My Labs do it when I get home after a long day. I don't mind this, but if you don't like it, give your dog something else that they *can* put in their mouth. You might want to put a basket of toys by the door so you can reach in as you're coming home and pop the toy in his mouth before he grabs your arm. It works just as well for your visitors, too –give your dog the toy as you're walking to the door to let your guests in.

*Training Tip:* Teach your dog how to inhibit the force of his mouthing – he'll be happy that you've explained how sensitive humans really are!

### **Stealing Shoes (or other inappropriate things)**

This one is so easy, you'll smack yourself on the head when you hear it. Keep your closet door shut! What – you don't keep your shoes in the closet? You take them off at the door when you



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come home? Well, start putting them up high, where your dog can't reach them! The more chances your dog gets to chew your shoes, the more he finds it enjoyable and the deeper that habit is engrained.

If your dog isn't after your shoes, but the remote instead, the same rules apply – put the forbidden object(s) well out of reach of your dog. If he can't get to it, he can't chew it!

*Training Tip:* Teach your dog to trade. He'll never run and hide when he has a goodie, he'll come show you his treasure and hope you'll ask him to give it up!

***Don't rely on management alone. Training is the long-term and reliable solution.***

### **Running Away**

If your dog isn't reliable off-leash and runs off if he sees something more interesting, don't let him off his leash or keep him enclosed in a fenced area. If you think leashing your dog cramps his style, how about buying a really long leash – say 20 to 50 feet – and letting him run around (safely) on that when you go out for your walks. Both you and the dog can be safe and happy. Fido gets to romp unencumbered (for the most part) and you can relax because you know he can't run off.

*Training Tip:* Take some really tasty tidbits on your walk and give one to your dog every time he comes back to you to check in. This teaches your dog that YOU are the best place to be!

### **What Else?**

There are just as many management options as there are training opportunities. **Don't rely on management alone – it does the trick for the moment, but management doesn't teach your dog** what he needs to know, it merely prevents him from engaging in an inappropriate behavior. Which is a good thing – the more he's able to practice a bad habit, the better he'll get at it.

Use management to get through the situation at the moment, but rely on training for the long-term fix. A certified positive-reinforcement trainer will be able to help you identify possible management situations to help you until you can train your dog. Let me know if I can help you find a certified positive-reinforcement trainer in your area!

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