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Uppity Dogs vs. Balanced Dogs **Does your dog earn his privileges?**

What's an "uppity" dog? We consider dogs "uppity" when they have an attitude towards their owners that hinders obedience training, manners and a peaceful household. Owners of these dogs are frequently frustrated and believe their dogs are stubborn, won't listen and/or can't be trained.

What's a "balanced" dog? This describes most everyone's ideal companion. These dogs tend to have good household manners and they readily follow instructions. Owners understand the value in having their dogs earn privileges so they don't become uppity. These owners tend to be happier, overall, with their dogs.

Why earning privileges is important: We like to draw a parallel between dogs and grade school children. Some children are born with a high desire to please. They need a small amount of guidance and structure to follow household rules and do well in school. For a variety of complex reasons, they don't "push buttons" or misbehave just to get attention. They enjoy being "good." They can be given extra privileges and not take advantage of the situation. Some dogs are like this, and certain breeds of dogs tend to have more of these tendencies than others. It's easy to teach these dogs basic manners and obedience.

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On the other hand, you may know parents with a child who is naturally defiant, always challenging rules and authority. That child needs more guidance, very specific rules with meaningful rewards for cooperating and consequences for not doing as instructed. Parents of these children have to be on their toes, always anticipating ways in which their children might challenge them. Some dogs are like this, and certain breeds tend to have more of these qualities than others. Families who own dogs like this need to follow a stringent plan or their dogs may grow up to be problem canine citizens (as opposed to Good Canine Citizens).

We talk about privileges in our Puppy Manners and Beginning Home Obedience classes. Dogs who are taught to earn privileges around the house are more balanced, easier to train and live with. Uppity dogs, who are given whatever they want whenever they want it (such as treats, petting, getting on furniture, sleeping on the owner's bed, etc.) have a tendency to be more demanding and less obedient.



Is Your Dog Taking Advantage of You?

So far we've talked about uppity dogs vs. balanced dogs. Owners of uppity dogs are often frustrated by their dog's seemingly defiant behavior. These owners describe their dogs as stubborn and unwilling to learn. However, the problems often stem from dog-human relationships that are out of balance. Over time these very smart dogs have learned how to take advantage of their owners! They are master manipulators!

When you look at the photo, above, do you see two well-mannered little Terriers who have earned the privilege of joining their owner in bed? Or, do you see two manipulative little Terriers who growl and snap at their owner when their owner attempts to get in bed? How do you know if you're dog is taking advantage of you, and if he is, what do you do about it?

Uppity dogs may have been born with an "attitude" or their attitude may have been fueled by owners who weren't consistent when it came to household rules and manners.

Uppity dogs who are spoiled, and given lots of privileges without having to earn them, often become extremely difficult and pushy dogs. Some of them even show aggressive behavior toward members of their human family. These dogs believe they have the "right" to anything and everything they want. They believe they control the household and their environment. If they don't want something to happen, these dogs believe their desires are more important than their owners'. They have learned to out-stubborn their owners.

Regardless of how the uppity issues started, the solution begins with what's commonly referred to as the No Free Lunch Program (NFLP). NFLP is all about balance; the more privileges a dog is given, the more compliant he needs to become in order to earn those

privileges. The NFLP is typically harder on the owners than the dog; the dog typically welcomes the positive attention, consistency and structure.

Examples of privileges and ways to earn them include basic obedience commands and simple tricks. If your uppity dog wants a treat, a meal or his rump rubbed, have him sit first (but make sure you only say the command one time; otherwise you're nagging!). If your dog wants to lounge on the couch with you, make sure it's by invitation only, and only after an obedience command has been obeyed. If your uppity dog won't get off the couch quickly when asked, then he should lose that privilege.

Asking your dog to sit before opening the door to go outside will help him understand compliance and cooperation are the keys to getting what he wants. Having your uppity dog practice a brief down stay before he gets his dinner will help balance your relationship. The more uppity the dog, the more he'll benefit from the NFLP.

Shy and fearful dogs also benefit from the NFLP. It helps build their confidence; they can sit for a treat instead of worrying about the scary neighbor they encounter on a walk. It helps focus on the positive -- what they should do, as opposed to what they shouldn't do (bark, lunge, growl, etc.).

Uppity dogs who won't "allow" their owners to trim their nails will benefit from the NFLP. Uppity dogs who try to bite people who enter their owner's home will benefit from the NFLP. Uppity dogs who don't listen to their owners and appear to be stubborn during basic obedience training will benefit from the NFLP.

When balance is restored in the dog-owner relationship, more privileges can be granted. Instead of earning every single privilege, the balanced dog can earn multiple privileges by being a well-mannered companion who follows instructions and obeys occasional commands! Dogs are happy, owners are happy and that makes us happy!

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