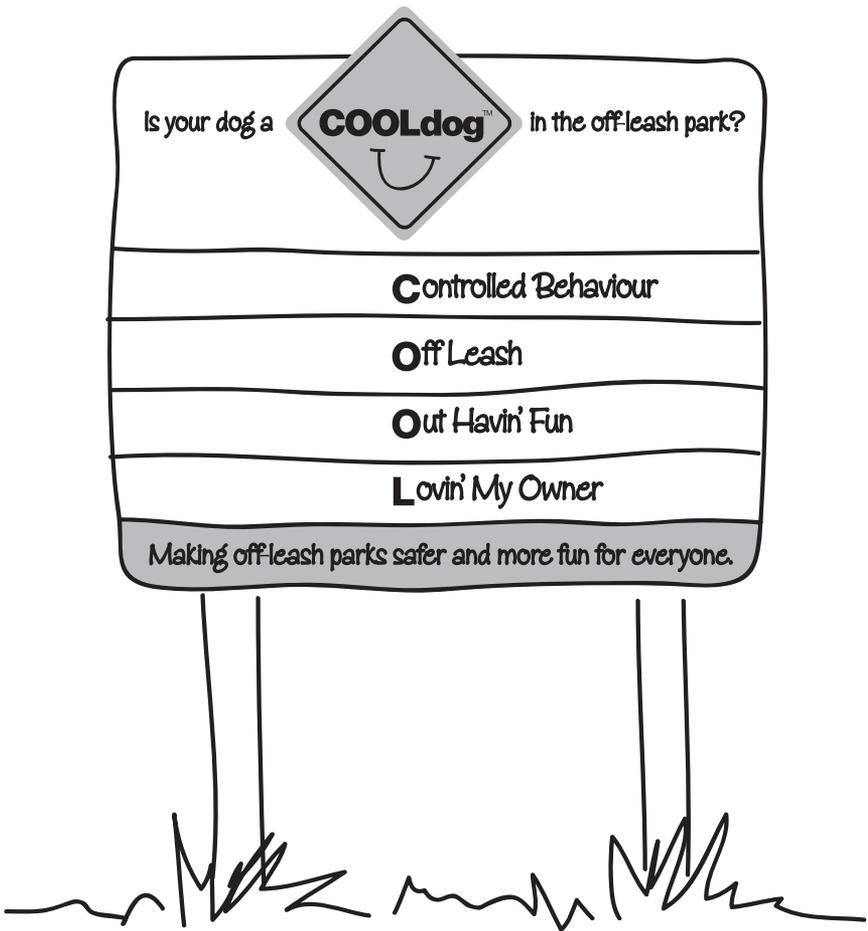


COOLdog™



A Guide to Safe
Off-Leash Fun

By Sherri Olsen



You're cool because you care about the well being of your dog and other dogs. **Your dog is cool** playing and having fun around other dogs and people.

Here's what you do to have a COOLdog...

1. Socialize your dog to be polite and friendly when meeting other dogs ON and OFF LEASH
2. Put on the COOLdog tag showing that your dog is cool and working on or accomplished the six COOLdog commands

Implement the rest of the COOLdog Method and you are on your way to fun, safe dog walking, on or off leash.

Disclaimer: I am not responsible for the health, safety and well-being of any dogs or dog owners and cannot be held accountable for anything that happens to anyone as a result of reading this book.

This book is intended for **dogs of any age**. Begin this program as soon as you bring your new puppy or new-to-you dog home. If you already have a dog at home, begin now. The COOLdog program is intended to provide training for your dog to be safely off leash. Please feel free to supplement my methods with any additional training methods you admire.

Note: For simplicity, instead of using the awkward he/she construction in reference to people and dogs, I have interchanged he and she randomly throughout the book.

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www.cooldog.ca

COOLdog™ testimonials

An important book. The concepts behind COOLdog are fundamental for any dog owner who wishes to create a safer, more enjoyable community for their dog to live in. Indeed we owe it to our dogs, ourselves, and to all the other dogs and their owners to get on board, spread the COOLdog word around, and become members of the growing COOLdog family.

Dr. Martha Toy, Veterinarian

Something about your enormous love for your dog — really for all dogs — and your desire to take action on a huge problem that you had perceived has really touched my heart. The feeling I get about your book was similar to how I felt when I read “Marley and Me.” Or “Tuesdays with Morrie.” There is the story with all its facts, and then there is this love and relationship that fills in all the spaces between the words. That’s the magic of COOLdog. It’s a universal message of love and relationship inside a book about training dogs to be safe and have fun in off-leash parks. This book is something all dog lovers will enjoy, not just the off-leash-park dog owners.

Shirley Anderson

Last night we went for a walk and for eighty-five percent of the walk Barney walked nicely beside me without pulling on the leash. That, in and of itself, is quite amazing considering we have had only one lesson with you.

Two weeks later: I have further happy news. Barney and I have spent the last two weekends out at the cabin, and I have been able to allow him off leash for increasingly extended periods. He watches me a great deal, and if I take off in a particular direction, he tends to follow. If he happens to be a little too far away, I can call him excitedly once, and he comes a-running.

Kristine Robidoux

Apparently it's never too late to teach an old dog new tricks! After reading Sherri's book I decided to re-establish my leadership over my seven-year-old dog, Buddy. Using Sherri's training techniques, I discovered I was talking to my dog way too much. When I use the COOLdog commands he seems to better understand what I want him to do, and he is once again excited about doing it. Buddy is now paying more attention to me, both off-leash and at home. Thanks, Sherri!

Sue Deyell
Morning Show Co-Host
Classic Rock Q107

Sherri began socializing and training our puppy Norm when he was just eight weeks old. Since then, she has been a great source of advice and has helped us to stay consistent with Norm's training. His recall is excellent and he can now play freely and politely in off-leash parks. Today, at eight months, Norm is a very well-mannered dog and a delightful companion.

Jana and Floyd

I was delighted when Maddie became excited to learn and demonstrate her abilities when given the chance! She became quite lively and full of energy. Now I can take her safely to an off-leash park where she pays close attention to me and does not wander off.

Mona Keffer

I was amazed how in fifteen minutes our dog Luke learned not to pull on his leash. And Sherri didn't even talk to him, just used her umbilical technique and changing direction method.

Maggie and Don Branton

A comment from a new park friend, Marlene, who had no idea I was writing this book: *It's good to know what to do with other people's dogs in the off-leash park.*

Marlene

What is better than rescuing a puppy from Cuba? Your book helped me through the transition. He was able to accompany my older dog and me to the off-leash park, all without incident or personal stress. Thank-you for fast-forwarding my puppy's training!

Alice Wheaton, Author of bestseller
"Say NO to Me! The True Power of Upside-Training."
(Available in five languages!)

It took only three sessions with Sherri and Bear to see big changes in Cara's behaviour and leash walking. Sherri is able to quickly focus in on behaviours that need correction. She works well with our six-month-old puppy and she offers her advice in a rich and highly readable book. We have gotten our money's worth and so much more that we would highly recommend Sherri and Bear for all your training needs."

Barbara and Peter Barry

COOLdog™



A Guide to Off-leash Fun!
(without the stress...)



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COOLdog™ *acknowledgements*

For Bear

This book is based on my experience as a dog owner, as a professional dog walker and trained dog educator, and as a life coach.

So many people helped in making this book a reality. Thanks especially to Margo McKee from Indigo Ice for her creative genius; to Claire Poole from Clarify Communications; to Rod Chapman for his editing brilliance and patience with me; to Nancy Leberge for the COOLdog song;

to Paige Olsen, my great Mom, and to Karen Demoor for helping with dog video day, Claire Smith for the photos.

I'd also like to thank Rudy Nieuwendyk, Anette Ceraficki, Yvonne Jeffery, Kevin Adams, Sarah Nielsen, Twila Johnson, Shelagh McCracken, Jill Anderson, Leigh-Ann Hughes, Cam McRae, Kathleen Wollenberg, Tania Corbett, Karen Louie, Helen Whyte, Bev Toovey, Elaine Lee, Pam Nease, Corinne Borbridge, Granger Cumberland, Vel Beaumont, Trina Hoffarth, Cheri Chase (Dyenasty Apparel), Samina Khandwala, Anna and Jordan Grose, Brigitte Lessard(Sportsbras.ca), Dr. Corrie Mattrie, Dr. Denise Petryk, Sid Andrews, Mona Keffer, Dave Reynolds, Joanne Hahn, Bill Bruce, Shirley Anderson, Andrea Lee, Jana Chrisp, Kristine Robidoux, Catherine Reid, Sue Deyell, Sandy Edwards, Hellen Carreras, Emma Poole, Alice Wheaton, Neil Mccullagh, Floyd Besserer, Susan Otterson, Carey Fraser and Dr. Martha Toy. Thank you all very much for listening and for supporting me during this two-year process. When everything was all jumbled inside, you were there for me. Priceless.

Also to all the great people and dogs I have met during my on- and off-leash encounters. It is amazing how dogs break through our self-imposed barriers and allow us to drop all pretenses so we can just be ourselves.

And of course to my park friends in my big backyard – thank you for your friendship. I am grateful to be a part of a neat community of great people and great dogs. We have shared many delightful moments with our canine friends.

new pup rascal



COOLdog™ introduction

Growing up, I lived on a farm in Alberta. What farm kid doesn't wish for a puppy? When I was eight years old we spent a day at the lake, and on the way home I saw a "Puppies for Sale" sign. I begged Mom to let me look. She hesitated, knowing Dad would put up a fuss because we already had a farm dog, but we risked it.

hey, I was young!

Rascal, a Black Lab/Dalmatian cross, was black with a white spotted chest and I adored him. He followed me everywhere on our farm – a girl and her dog doing chores, wandering happily through the pasture, daydreaming, watching the clouds in the sky. With my love for animals, I knew that I wanted a career

working with dogs. But I had a dilemma. As I saw it, I had three options. I could be a dog breeder, a veterinarian or a seeing-eye dog trainer. After giving the matter some thought, however, I decided I couldn't bring any more dogs into a world where too many were already unwanted and euthanized. I crossed breeder off my list. I didn't like the sight of blood, eliminating the veterinarian option, and the seeing-eye dog training school was in Ontario – too far from my home in Alberta and my mom.

My teacher hired me to take care of his animals while he was away. For \$3 a day I drove my motorbike through the fields to his house. There I fed and watered twenty dogs and ten cats along with chickens, geese and whatever other animals this kind-hearted man kept on his acreage. I loved the job. Most of the dogs were bigger than me – Saint Bernards, Shepherds, a Great Dane, Setters and an Old English Sheepdog. I would let them out of the shed, feed them, let them run around a bit and then put them all back in. I really don't know how I managed to get them all to behave. They were always happy to see me, and that made me feel good.

When the girls at school were reading Nancy Drew or romance novels, I was engrossed in all the dog stories I could find. I was also reading dog training manuals and talking to a professional about training pups to be seeing-eye dogs.

Old Yeller and *Where the Red Fern Grows* were my favorite movies.

I began saving money so I could meet the dogs and the movie stars. I started to write my own book about the adventures of a girl named Sam who lived in the mountains with her beloved dog.



(Too bad adolescence set in. Later I threw the unfinished project away.)

One day I noticed Rascal wasn't near. As my brother and I got on the snowmobile to look for him, I had a sick feeling inside. We looked everywhere. Finally I spotted the black form of my precious boy lying motionless on the train tracks where he loved chasing rabbits. I will never forget that day. My heart was broken. I abandoned my career aspiration of working with dogs and turned my attention to other things. My dilemma died along with my beloved pup. If only I had trained him to stay off the tracks. I am so sorry, Rascal. I failed you.

Life has a way of coming full circle. I was coaching a woman who wanted a career change. She decided to sell her dog-walking business. I introduced her to one of my friends who also wanted a career change. My friend bought the woman's business. As I helped my friend with her new business I remembered my career dilemma years before and my huge love for dogs.

We both took a dog educator training course, bringing all the dogs along. It was intense and eye-opening, both for the knowledge I gained about dogs and the knowledge about myself. It was fun adding dog coaching to my people-coaching career.

When I turned thirty-eight I looked at my life goal list. It said, "Get a puppy." I longed for another puppy like Rascal, and I had already checked off two other big items on my list – "Live near nature" and "Work from home." I had just bought a small dream home near a huge off-leash park (I call it my big backyard). If there ever was a time, it was now.

I almost chickened out, though. I don't know if it was the tremendous responsibility that I knew came with having a dog in the city, or if it was the "what if" game I played in my head.

“What if I get a big training job that requires travel?”

“What if I meet someone who doesn’t like dogs?”

“What if they take away dog access in my park?”

Unconsciously, I might have been afraid that my little heart couldn’t take another loss like the one I had suffered with Rascal. In my mind I kept reviewing old sayings about fear, about taking a leap into the unknown, about loving and risking.

“Feel the fear and do it anyway.”

“A life lived in fear is a life half-lived.”

“Better to love and lose than to never love at all.”

Finally I realized that I had to follow my heart. My own philosophy of life is this: *Be Courageous. Live Juicy. Amaze Yourself.* I took a deep breath and picked up the phone.

After Bear (my Labradoodle/Retriever cross) came into my life we began spending our days roaming through tall grass in the hills, swimming in the river and enjoying my huge off-leash park – a girl and her dog again, dreaming, playing, watching the clouds and loving each other full out. To love and be loved by a dog is to be blessed indeed.

But every time I took Bear to the park, I remembered Rascal. It’s always tough meeting strange dogs in a new park. Every time we met an unknown dog, nervousness set in. Dog language is difficult to understand and interpret – what *are* they communicating? I began to think there had to be a better way.

While Bear and I were learning the ropes in our off-leash park, I created that better system. That's what this book is about. The COOLdog tag and six commands at the heart of this system decrease uncertainty and provide unspoken communication between dog owners. The COOLdog Method lets you know that the dog you are meeting is trained, socialized and likely to be friendly. This creates more peace of mind for owners, more safety for dogs, and more fun for everyone.

This book provides basic training. It helps you take your dog from the safety of enclosed obedience training to the unpredictability of off-leash walking. The text shows you how to have A Guide to Off-Leash Fun! (without the stress...), and the how-to guide helps you manage uncomfortable park situations. Part training and part strategy, this book is all about ensuring maximum fun with your dog. Think of it as a mini-survival guide – read it to take the stress out of meeting other dogs in the park.

I've called the three main components of this book COOLdog Method, COOLdog Experience, and COOLdog and You.

COOLdog Method includes basic training for letting your dog go off leash, plus six essential commands – three for fun, and three for safety. This method provides more overall control in the park and more peace of mind for you, along with a decrease in conflict and increased safety for dogs. The COOLdog Method lets you easily create stress-free walks in any park.

Even better, when you train your dog in the COOLdog Method and identify him with a COOLdog tag, others know that your dog obeys the six commands and is well

socialized. COOLdog commands can minimize aggressive behaviour because either owner can say a command that both dogs know, increasing the likelihood of the trained response in both dogs. The COOLdog Method includes practical ideas to increase the fun factor and to solve uncomfortable situations in the park. It helps off-leash parks be safer and more fun for everyone.

My primary intention in writing this book is to help you train your dog for off-leash walking. Off-leash parks full of well-trained dogs are more enjoyable for everyone. The COOLdog Experience envisions a total transformation of the experience of meeting, walking and playing with dogs across North America.

COOLdog Experience invites you to become part of a culture where coolness creates community. Let us all work together so that we can continue to enjoy walking our dogs and having off-leash fun with them. Our canine friends will continue to have places in nature to play and run, and our parks will remain intact for everyone to enjoy without added restrictions (some cities are even now decreasing the number and size of off-leash parks, or restricting how many dogs you can walk at one time).

The last part of the book, COOLdog and You, focuses on dog owners. Written from the perspective of a life coach (my other career), it will help you get out of your own way and become an effective leader to your dog. COOLdog owners are cool. They train their dogs, take care of their parks and are just plain fun to be around.

Only when more dog owners adopt a consistent framework will we be able to avoid those unfortunate situations in which other people –who mean well – permit behaviour from your dog that you don't condone. COOLdog provides

a simple, effective method of training. The interactive communication techniques give dog owners peace of mind, and they give pups plenty of off-leash fun. When other owners, dog walkers and dog sitters adopt a COOLdog philosophy, your hard training work will be reinforced.

This book stems from my wish for all dogs to be able to safely run free. When you commit to the COOLdog process, you will watch your dog thrive. Practice, patience and consistency are the keys to success.

As for you, congratulations! You are becoming a part of a neat group of people with well-behaved dogs. In the spirit of great big furry dog love, I invite you to join this group of like-minded individuals in a collaborative effort to make off-leash dog walking safe and enjoyable for everyone. Train your dog to be a COOLdog.

Sherri Olsen
July 2007
Calgary, Alberta

COOLdog™ definitions

COOLdog: a well-socialized, therefore likely to be friendly dog who knows the six COOLdog commands

COOLdog Experience: enjoying the collaborative effort in off-leash parks using a system of visual and verbal communication and guidelines designed to keep dogs safe and our walks hassle-free

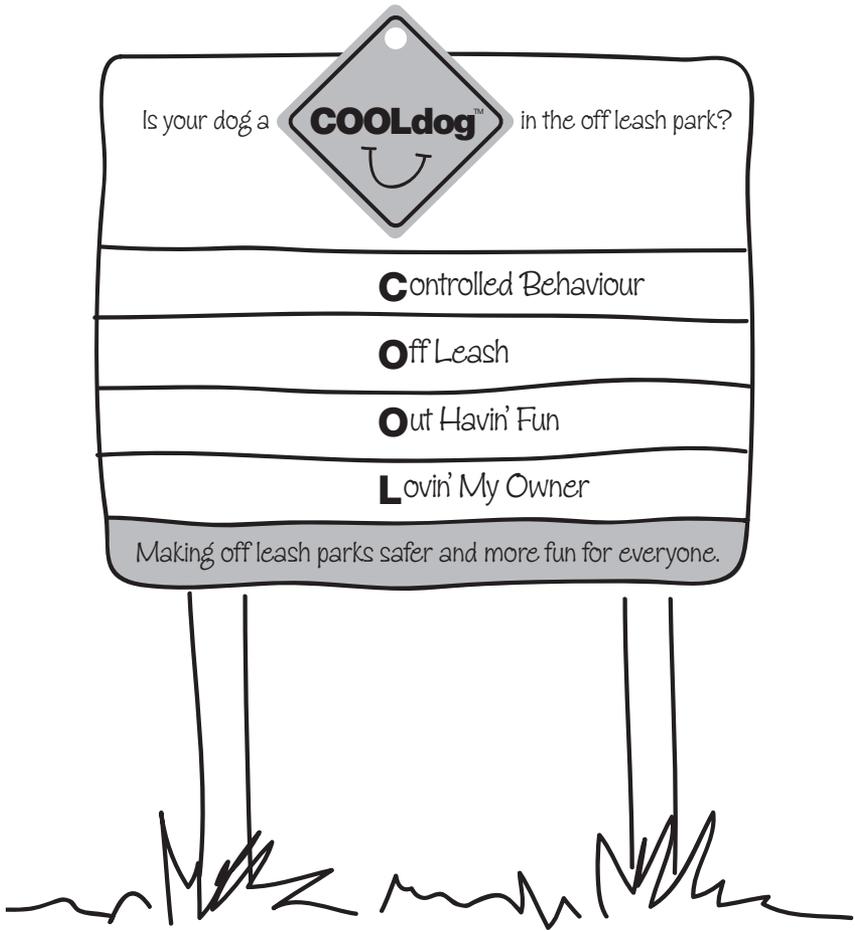
COOLdog Method: A training method for dogs of any age designed to promote A Guide to Off-Leash Fun! (without the stress...) using six basic commands

Safety Commands

Come
Leave it
Hold up

Fun Commands

Off
Drop it
Slow



The COOLdog Off-leash Method

You're cool because you care about the well being of your dog and other dogs when your dog is off leash.

Your dog is cool because he gets to have fun and he's cool around other dogs and people.

COOLdog™ vision

The COOLdog vision is ambitious and far-reaching. Imagine a culture in every off-leash park where all owners have taught their dogs the same six commands. These six key commands provide increased control over dog encounters and promote safe off-leash fun.

A single word – COOLdog – communicates that message. COOLdog tags provide a visual cue for owners. The tag indicates that the wearer has been trained in the COOLdog Method and is therefore obedient, socialized and probably friendly. The tag also says that the owner of this dog has chosen to belong to a growing community of like-minded people.

Now imagine the COOLdog Experience spreading right across North America and beyond simply because it makes people feel good. You love your dog, and you like knowing you are doing the right thing for her as you walk in the off-leash park. It makes you happy watching dogs frolic freely and safely.

Imagine a network of COOLdog off-leash parks in every city – parks that have an increased fun factor, less conflict, reduced restrictions and no need for added bylaws.

Walking your dog with your friends in these parks is easy, because you are all using the same training commands and consistently respecting a common park etiquette. That is the COOLdog vision.



COOLdog™ method

The number of books with conflicting information regarding dogs and dog training methods is overwhelming. It is hard for new dog owners to know what is best.

There is no one right way to train your dog. Dogs have personalities, so training can not be a one-size-fits-all approach. Your role as leader is to choose a training method and style that works best for you and according to your dog's personality. Adjust as necessary. Listen to yourself. If what an expert says doesn't feel right, do some research and explore other options.

Dog training is an art and a science. It requires combining your instincts with proven methods while adjusting to what will work for your particular dog. There are many, many variables with dog training. I trust you will use wise judgment with a lot of heart as you work with your dog. Choose a training method that is best for both of you.

The COOLdog Method worked for Bear, and it has since worked well for many, many other dogs. Training your dog takes time and effort, but it is worth it when out in the park you can relax because your dog is so well-behaved. The up-front training time is minimal compared

to the enjoyment and peace of mind you will have for years to come. At times I was frustrated, yes. But I continued training Bear because I wanted to build a stable partnership, and to be a leader to my dog.

Expect the best from your dog. Dogs like to please, when they know how. Just like humans, dogs need and require love, structure and ground rules. Give them the opportunity to learn and you will be pleasantly surprised at the result.

Choose to see your dog as smart, as willing to learn the best way to interact with you and respond to you. Take the time to teach him, and let him make some mistakes. Sure, for your dog it means discipline and time outs. Establishing a code of conduct is part of being a responsible dog owner. It's all in how you do it.





Step one – The Foundation

Obedience is created by using positive and consistent methods and signals. This method utilizes a solid foundation of training principles:

Tips to communicate with your dog

Know your training style

Say commands only once

No treats

Use proper equipment

Establish leadership

Umbilical training

Correction techniques

Squaring off

Silence

Leash training

Socialization

Communicating with Dogs

If people are from Earth, dogs are from Jupiter. Earth people insist on using extensive verbal communication to Jupiter dogs, who wonder what the heck we are talking about.

All dog behaviour means something. Are you curious about what your dog is saying to you? Similarly, your behaviour means something to your dog. Your subtle movements, sounds and gestures directly affect your dog, who is undoubtedly attempting to derive meaning from your actions. This meaning is closely connected to what your dog is currently doing. Dogs live in the immediate.



Dogs watch us closely. They really are trying to figure out what we are trying to communicate, but we often make it hard for them. Body movement is canine communication. Dogs do their best to understand, but with our confusing and inconsistent verbal language and our haphazard body signals, we often do not make any sense to them. When that happens, they eventually tune us out.

Understanding dog behaviour is equally difficult for us. Adding humans to the equation makes it even more complex. Combine the different communication styles of dogs and humans with our different personalities, add some good old human baggage to the mix and sprinkle with nature/nurture variances, and you begin to realize how many variables there are to consider. To say it is confusing is an understatement.

Before we begin learning the COOLdog Method, let's start with some tips for communicating effectively with dogs.

- The less you talk to your dog, the better behaved she will be
- Dog language is body language, so be consistent and precise with your body and hand signals when giving commands
- Dogs read body language first; they only understand verbal commands after training using body language and hand signals
- When greeting other dogs, pay close attention to both the dog and the owner
- Research suggests that our natural inclination to approach and interact with dogs is actually opposite to what they prefer. For example, when you approach a dog directly and look him straight in the eye, you are communicating an assertive, authoritative manner. With dominant, status-seeking dogs, your behaviour will probably not deliver the results you want.
- Adopt an angled stance so you are not directly facing the dog, and notice what happens. Lower your head and eyes to avoid direct contact. Let the dog assess you first and approach on her own time. Experiment with this until you figure out what works best for your dog.



sometimes owners
give us clues about how
to interpret their
dog's behaviour

- As well, when you loom over a dog and pat her on the head, to her you are probably being threatening. Pats on the head and hugs are mostly annoying to dogs, who generally prefer chest and body rubs. They tolerate so much from us, don't they?

HOTtip for a

COOLdog™



Learning the Ropes

Removing puppies from their mother and litter-mates prior to eight weeks is not cool. This causes behavioural problems later on. Puppies learn about pack rules, play behaviour and canine language from interacting with their litter-mates and their mother. This sets the foundation for future interaction with other dogs and their human companions. Because we live in an age of puppy mills and breeders who remove puppies too early from the litter, disadvantaged puppies are coming into our homes and dog parks. Without proper instruction and socialization, our puppies can become a menace to other dogs.

There are ways to avoid this. Only take puppies home after eight weeks of age. Make sure the breeder did not separate and crate pups for long periods of time. It's even better if the breeder raised the pups in the home. Ask questions.

Training Styles

Many variables influence the behaviour of your dog, and all of these variables mix together. The following list will give you an idea:

- When the pup left her mom (best at eight weeks, not sooner)
- How the pup was raised
- The dog's personality and temperament
- Your own personality and temperament
- Established behaviours of your new-to-you dog
- Your own history of learned behaviours, emotional wounds and other baggage
- Your philosophy and beliefs around dogs (how to raise them, train them and interact with them)
- Your goals for you and your dog

Along with the above variables, add to the mix your beliefs about dogs. Your beliefs may influence your dog's behaviour and relationship to you. Ask yourself if your beliefs might influence how you will train and interact with your dog. Think about how your beliefs might affect your training style. Which of the following beliefs do you hold?

- Dogs want to learn from you because they are intelligent
- Dogs don't think or feel
- You can't let your dog "get away with it"
- Dogs connect concepts and can see the point of behaving a certain way to get what they want (like a leash-free walk)
- You must use force to train your dog to do what you want – you must be dominant no matter what

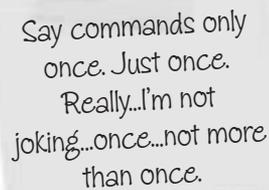
You will read how the COOLdog Method builds on the underlying premise that dogs want to learn, want to respect your leadership, and want to build a partnership with you. Your role is to teach them how. Choose now how you want to be with your dog, and in return your dog will respect you and behave accordingly.

Most people want a simple, black and white, ten-step program that doesn't take a lot of time and is intended to create a well-mannered, obedient dog. The COOLdog Method *is* black and white, and it is easy to follow. But like anything worthwhile in life, it takes a certain amount of time and effort up front to establish your leadership and train your dog.

Commands

In establishing leadership, the most important thing is to say commands only once. Let me say this again . Say it once.

When you repeat a command you compromise your leadership, and your dog will develop selective hearing, responding only when he is ready. Saying commands only once promotes listening and obedience. This is an important principle. It can be a hard habit for owners to break, but when you repeat commands your dog learns that if he does not respond immediately and ignores you, you'll just repeat yourself.



Say commands only once. Just once. Really...I'm not joking...once...not more than once.

Say the command and wait. Give your dog a chance to respond. If he doesn't, your next action will depend on

what the command was (if he broke from a *wait* command, for example, go get your dog and put him back).

Be consistent with commands. Be consistent with the tone of voice you use with each specific command. Do vary your tone so that one specific tone is associated with each command.

HOTtip for a

COOLdog™



Avoid Doing This

For me, learning this lesson required great mindfulness. Sometimes I slipped up and repeated a command just as Bear had begun to respond to the first command. Sometimes I made other mistakes.

Avoid doing this, for example. Bear was learning to ask to go potty outside. The good news is that he asked to go out. The bad news is that it was 3 am and he didn't come in right away. Even at that hour I was sharp enough to remember that I needed to go get my dog rather than to say the command again. However, out in the dark yard I triggered the motion sensor light and inadvertently mooned my neighbours. Oops – sure hope they were sleeping!