

YES! NO! MAYBE!

The Consistency Factor

By Dave Gustner

Any of the behaviors you may be experiencing with your puppy, such as digging, mouthing, chewing, jumping, object stealing, etc are completely normal things for a dog to do and are quite enjoyable – for the puppy, that is. Your pup will, therefore, continue to do these things until you teach him what the acceptable rules of behavior are. Perhaps the single most important rule for owners is to be consistent – a rule that may be a little more difficult to follow than it first appears. Keep in mind the following:

1. If certain behaviors are unacceptable, you must correct the puppy every time he engages in them. This, of course, means close supervision when you are with your puppy and preventing the behaviors (usually by using a crate) when you cannot be present or attend to him carefully. Always remember that if you give your pup the opportunity to misbehave in your absence, you are essentially telling him that such behaviors are acceptable.
2. Be careful of actively rewarding behaviors in one situation, and then punishing the pup for the same behavior in slightly different situations.
3. Be certain that all family members are fully aware of what the pup will and will not be allowed to do. If you are correcting the dog for jumping up on the furniture while, unknown to you, the children are encouraging him up on the couch, you are unlikely to see results.

Few things are more confusing, unfair, or stressful for a pup than inconsistency. Your puppy cannot learn acceptable behavior if a rule that applies one minute does not apply the next. Consistency, however, in rewarding good behaviors and correcting undesirable ones will greatly reduce the time your pup needs to learn the rules and will create a happier situation for you and your pup!