



Potter League

Enriching Lives

Reducing Problem Behaviors Through Management

It's often important to manage situations while you're working towards a final solution. In dog ownership, this means setting up your home and life in a way that prevents or discourages your dog from doing unwanted things.

Management does not teach your dog what not to do. It simply prevents or discourages your dog from doing unwanted behaviors. It's usually best to combine management with positive reinforcement (treat or toy reward-based) training. In some cases, simply managing the problem can be enough of a solution.

Examples of Management

You can use management to reduce or stop almost any unwanted behavior. Below is a chart of some common behavior problems and potential management solutions.

| Common Behavior Problem | Management Ideas |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Jumping onto counters | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Close the dog in his crate or a bedroom when you can't watch him• Place double-sided tape on the counters• Keep food and other goodies off the counters |
| Digging in the garden | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't leave the dog unattended outside• Place a fence around the garden• Lay chicken wire a few inches under the dirt |
| Chewing on non-chew toy items | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep tempting items out of reach of the dog or behind closed doors• Crate the dog when she's not supervised• Spray tempting items with a safe but bad-tasting product like Bitter Apple Spray |
| Pulling on a leash | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a no-pull harness or head halter |
| Jumping on household guests | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Place the dog in his crate when guests come over and don't let him out until he calms down• Introduce the dog to guests outside before bringing them inside. This is often less exciting and reduces jumping• Keep the dog on leash when guests arrive and then remove the leash once the dog has settled down |



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When You Need More Than Management

Again, remember that management is not training. Some owners don't mind using management to stop their dog from jumping onto counters. They don't need to implement training if that's the case.

Many owners would like their dog to walk nicely on leash though. In order to teach your dog how to walk nicely on leash, you must do more than purchase a no-pull harness. Implement positive reinforcement training techniques to help teach your dog that not pulling is the goal!

In the case of many more severe behavioral concerns (like aggression, phobias, fear, separation anxiety, and reactivity), a very good management plan is very important. Speak to a professional animal trainer for help creating this management plan. Remember that you must always expect your management plan to fail—so management is just a band-aid in this case. Use it to prevent further incidents while you work on a training plan to modify the unwanted behaviors.

Sometimes potential management plans are unrealistic. For example, a dog that's afraid of new people still needs to go to the veterinarian. It's simply unrealistic to never introduce the dog to another human again. That's why it's so important to pair management with good training.

Places to Get Help

It's helpful to get help creating a good management plan. In cases of true behavioral concerns, it's extremely important to get help. Check out these resources to get help with training, management and finding a trainer. They all have links to find a consultant near your ZIP code.

- ❖ American Society of Veterinary Behaviorists: avsab.org
- ❖ International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants: iaabc.org
- ❖ Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers: ccpdt.org
- ❖ Potter League for Animals Behavior Helpline: (401) 846 – 8276 ext. 119