



Quick Fix Tools



A little Management goes a long way to problem-solving!

So the training's going fine. Almost every day, you spend up to three 15-20 minute-long sessions practicing the obedience exercises you learned in class. But meanwhile, your dog is still chewing on the couch, peeing on the carpet, or digging up the garden. What you need is some good doggy management!

Management is a way of structuring the dog's environment so that she always does the right thing and never makes a mistake. Management is NOT training. Through management, the dog is not *learning* what she should or should not do, but circumstances compel her to do the right thing anyway. In that way, it's often a lot simpler than training.

Most management tools are barriers of some sort that restrict your dog's movements or access to things. A leash is a management tool: it keeps your dog close to you, out of the street, away from the cats, and within the legal requirements. Fences, doors, exercise pens, kennels and baby gates are also common management tools. Maybe you're not taking advantage of them all enough.

Doors and gates

Most puppies and even many dogs can not take the responsibility to behave well when given the freedom of an entire house and garden. There are just too many possibilities to make an error over what to chew, where to pee, and what to play with. Until you are confident in your dog's training, restrict your dog to puppy-proofed areas of the house when no one is there to supervise (see [House-proofing Your Puppy](#) for more information). Close doors to keep your puppy out of rooms. In our house, the master bedroom was off-limits to dogs (per my husband's request). While my dog [Flipper](#) would not go (entirely) past the doorway when I'm watching (and praising him for staying out), I kept the door shut when I wasn't watching him. (We've since changed that rule and welcomed him in the bedroom, too!)

Use a baby gate if your doorway has no door. In our dog's youth, when we were busy cooking, we put the gate up to keep Flipper in the dining room, where he couldn't stand in front of the cabinets or stick his nose in the fridge. On the rare occasions when we were actually eating in the dining room, he's put on the other side of the gate so he can't learn any begging-at-the-table habits (and no one else learns any feeding-the-dog-at-the-table

habits!). Baby stores, pet stores, and many thrift stores sell baby gates.

I recently heard about a man whose dog had chewed up 20 pairs of shoes! Remember what Shirley Chong says: "Puppies were put on earth to teach humans to put their socks away". Even young children can learn a "put it away or lose it" rule for items left in the Puppy Zone. Put the shoes, toys, sweaters, blankies, etc. in the closet or bedroom and shut the door when you're not there to interrupt the puppy and direct her towards her proper chew toys.

Fences

A good fence will keep your dog in your yard, out of the street, out of the trashcans, and away from the neighborhood squirrels and cats. For climbers or jumpers, the fence should be 6-8 feet high. You can add a top "lip" piece that goes into the yard a foot or so, at a 45-90 degree angle, to keep the dog from going over the top if you have a climber.

A shorter wire or picket fence (available in gardening and home-supply stores) can keep a digger out of certain areas of the garden. (If you dog loves to dig, you should also provide a sandbox to dig in as a "legal" outlet for this hobby.)

If your yard is too big to fence in, or there are too many parts of the garden you don't want him digging in, consider installing a dog run or outdoor kennel. You can buy a steel-and-wire dog run pre-fabricated from many pet stores or home-supply stores.

A more solid fence of brick or stone or overlapping wood planks will reduce a dog's need to bark at the neighbors or passersby. You can also grow a hedge along the fence to make a great buffer zone, especially if there is another dog on the other side.

Leashes and collars

When you are outside of your safely-enclosed area, your dog should be on a leash. In many places, that is the law. Unless your dog is 110% reliable in obeying your commands, especially "come", the risk of your dog getting into trouble, getting lost, or getting injured (especially by cars) is too great. A leash can save your dog's life.

If your dog pulls on the leash, or drags you when he lunges after squirrels, cats or other dogs, you should of course train him to walk more politely. The "quick fix" management solution is a front-lead harness (such as a Premier [Easy Walk](#), SofTouch [SENSE-ible](#) and [SENSE-ation](#), and [Hightower Harness](#)), or a head halter (such as a Gentle Leader, Halti, or Softee - see the [Merchandise](#) page for a further description of a head halter). These devices work more quickly and more humanely than choke or pinch collars to control pulling and lunging.

Summary

Be pro-active about managing your dog's problems. If your dog attacks the vacuum cleaner, put her outside, in another room, or in her crate while you vacuum. Flipper likes to chase the water from the hose, so if we need to do some serious spraying we put him inside.

If there is some object your dog "misbehaves" with, make it inaccessible. Keep the remote control on the shelf. Put your wallet in a dresser drawer. Hang your purse in the closet or on a coat rack. Turn the easy chair against the wall, turn it over, or put a metal cookie sheet across the arms if you don't want your dog sitting in it. Close the curtains on the front window so your dog doesn't scratch the glass when she sees people going by. Buy a mailbox and place it in front of the slot so that your dog can't get the mail before you do. Put a doggy fence or exercise pen around the Christmas tree. Use a lick bottle if your dog splashes water from his bowl.

Don't forget how far *adequate exercise* will take you towards improving your dog's behavior. Adequate exercise for most young dogs (7 months to 4 years) is more than 20 minutes of full-speed running, daily! If your dog is getting less than that, some of that pent-up energy may find an outlet in "destructive" behaviors.

Finally, here's a table with some quick solutions to many behavior problems that management can help with. Remember that management prevents the problem, but doesn't train the dog to act differently when the prevention measure isn't in place. Management buys you time to do the training!

Problem	Quick Management Solution	Comments
Dog pees or poops on carpet	Keep dog off the carpet, unless you know she is "empty" and safe	Use doors or gate to keep dog in an acceptable bathroom area, or use a crate to confine dog so that going to the bathroom is prohibited. Reward dog for "going" in the right place. See the Housebreaking Training Tip.
Dog chews on TV remote, wallets, shoes, socks, children's toys, the mail, or inappropriate loose objects	Put loose objects out of the dog's reach: on a high shelf, in a cabinet or closet, or in a room closed off by door or baby gate	Provide attractive, "legal" chew toys, and praise dog for chewing on them.

<p>Dog chews on carpets, baseboards, door frames, electric cords, furniture, or other inappropriate fixtures</p>	<p>Keep dog away from fixtures with doors, gates or fences. Spray objects with "Bitter Apple" or other chew deterrents.</p>	<p>Provide attractive, "legal" chew toys, and praise dog for chewing on them. Make sure that the dog has enough exercise and mental stimulation.</p>
<p>Dog barks at people passing by house when home alone</p>	<p>Prevent dog from detecting the people.</p>	<p>Shut the curtains, move the couch away from the window. Install a more solid fence or plant a hedge along it to reduce dog's view (or hearing) of the street. Keep the dog in crate for short absences from the home.</p>
<p>Dog jumps on people when they enter the door.</p>	<p>Put a leash on the dog, and stand on the middle so that the dog cannot jump up. Praise and treat the dog for not jumping (even if he has no choice!).</p>	<p>Train the dog to sit automatically at the door when greeting people. Give your guests dog treats to give the dog <i>only</i> when he is sitting.</p>
<p>Dog pulls on the leash</p>	<p>Use a front-lead harness (Easy Walk, SENSE-ible, SENSE-ation, or Hightower Harness) or head halter (Gentle Leader, Softee, Halti).</p>	<p>Train him to walk on a loose leash by rewarding any leash slack and refusing to continue the walk when he pulls.</p>
<p>Dog "attacks" the lawn mower, water hose, vacuum cleaner, or other appliance</p>	<p>Put dog in another part of the house before using the appliance.</p>	<p>Train dog to accept device by pairing low-intensity exposure to the appliance with treats when dog is calm. Slowly (over many sessions) increase the intensity of the exposure and rewarding the dog when he is calm again.</p>
<p>Dog digs up garden or lies in flower beds</p>	<p>Put a low but sturdy fence around landscaped areas.</p>	<p>If your dog loves to dig, provide a sandbox with occasional buried treats or toys. The sand will be cleaner than dirt, and the dog can be rewarded for satisfying his digging need where you</p>

Deus		direct. Make sure dog is cool enough (in summer) and warm enough (in winter), as digging can be a method of heat control.
Dog knocks over trashcans	Put trashcans where the dog can't get them (such as under the sink) or secure their lids so contents can't come out. Buy a trashcan with a snap-on lid, or hold lid down with bungee cords or clamps.	If your dog discovers he can open the cabinet doors, use baby-safe latches. Note that trash-dumping is a self-rewarding behavior every time they find a goodie in there!
Dog gets on furniture	Keep dog out of that room when alone. Turn chair against wall or upend it. Place a cookie sheet, box, or baby gate over chair or bed.	Consider putting a blanket or sheet over the furniture and allowing the dog to enjoy its comfort. The cover is easily removed and cleaned.
Dog runs into the street	Keep the dog on leash or within a well-fenced yard	This can save his life.
Dog chases neighborhood cats, squirrels, deer, etc.	Keep dog within well-fenced yard. Put a lip on the outside of the fence to keep neighbor's cats out.	Not much can be done about squirrels in your own yard, except keeping your dog inside!
Dog raids the cat's litter box to feast on kitty "treasures".	Put the litter box on a higher ledge, like a shelf or on top of the washing machine (though some cats won't use it if it "vibrates"). OR, put the litter box in a room that only the cat can get to, by tying a string from the door handle to the door post so that it only opens to cat width.	You can also get covered cat boxes and ones that have a sensor to automatically clean up after the cat has "visited".
Mulitple dogs in your house fight over mealtimes, doorways, etc.	Feed them in separate areas (within crates, or on tie-downs). Hold one dog back while letting other dog through the doorway.	Train each dog to "wait" at doorways, and release on their own name.

This article is copyrighted to Stacy Braslau-Schneck. Would you, your training company, or your club like to reprint this?

Please be sure to keep my name, business name, and the website URL with the article, and if possible, please send me a copy. See the [Contact](#) page for email and mailing address.

Links:

[5-Star Behavior Improvers](#)

Go on to the [Longer-term Training Tips](#)
Return to [Training Tips](#) main page.

[[Home](#)] [[Classes](#)] [[Training Tips](#)] [[Resources](#)] [[Events](#)]

Copyright 2002 Stacy's Wag'N' Train