



Animal Welfare League Qld's



FRIENDS 4 LIFE

NEW DOG OWNER TRAINING PROGRAM

THE DOOR DASHER AND GATE CRASHER

This information is intended as a general guide only

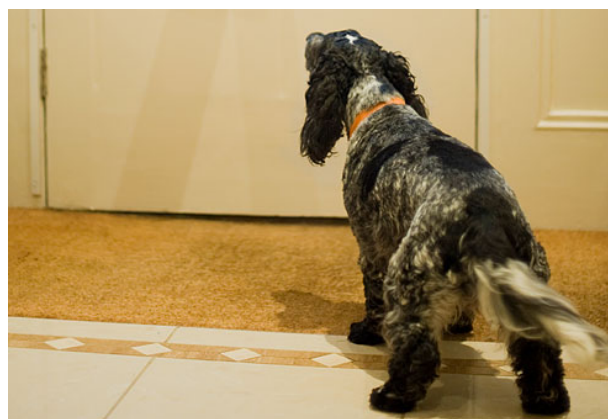
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Does your dog watch for the slightest opportunity to squeeze through the tiniest gap, rush out the door or gate and the ground running? It's time to start *Boundary Training* and get a little door control!

Teaching doorway manners

Why do dogs want to dash out the door?

The biggest reason is boredom and lack of exercise. His own house and yard are boring and his need for mental and physical stimulation is strong. He needs to stretch his legs and go investigating new smells. Take him for more walks, on your terms! Sometimes it's simply the challenge of beating the system. Implement a little leadership and work to earn.



It's Fun!

Bursting through with your people hot on your heels, taking them on a fabulous adventure, far and fast; dodging, dashing, being faster and more agile, outsmarting the hollering humans at every turn - It's worth chancing a scolding at the end!

He's so hard to catch!

Even when he's seen enough and is ready to come home, he still comes just close enough and then dashes off again. Why? Because he's learned that being caught is sure to be punished.

Getting grabbed and dragged and scolded is certainly something to be avoided for as long as possible

NEVER Punish the dog for coming when he's called!

The infraction happened when he rushed the door. Now that he is out and he's trusted you enough to allow you to take hold of his collar to take him back home, PRAISE HIM! If you punish him now, it's not only too late, but it will make catching him next time even more difficult.

Put on a happy face and say your mean things in a happy tone of voice, all the way home. You can't punish him for door dashing blocks away and many minutes after he crossed the threshold. Consequences are only effective within seconds of the infraction. The only association he will make is the behaviour he performed right before the punishment - allowing himself to be caught.

It's time for PRO-ACTIVE training!

Teach door manners. The following should become cues to your dog to **GET BACK**; **SIT** and **WAIT**:

- The sound of the doorbell
- Reaching for the door knob or gate latch
- Turning the knob
- The door or gate opening

Create a paired association and a strong chained behaviour sequence:

Spend plenty of time at each step until the dog is proficient at that level before moving on. Implement 100% management from here on out - there should be no chances to practice door dashing!

1. Teach "get back" - shuffle into the dog's space so he backs up a step, mark with a "yes" or "click" as the dog moves away, deliver reward by tossing **BEHIND** the dog - cue "sit" - mark and reward the sit - release (give permission to move).
2. Repeat. This time cue "get back" > shuffle til dog is the distance from the door you are aiming for > cue "sit" > mark the sit with a "yes" or "click" as his rear touches the floor > release "ok" and toss the reward **BEHIND*** the dog.

Jackpot if dog moves back before you shuffle or sits before you ask. The long term goal is for the dog to eventually "get back" and sit automatically as you approach the door, without being told. You may choose to provide a target to "go to your place" and sit on - like a bed or rug.

3. Add "wait" in varying lengths between the sit and the release.

**NOTE: Tossing the reward behind the dog strengthens the dogs desire to stay away from the door. The dog will gravitate to the point of food delivery. You might also use a ball or favourite toy.*



Pair the new behaviour with the door as the cue:

Approach door - "get back" - cue "sit" - mark and reward the sit - wait - release.

1. Approach door, touch knob - "get back" - cue "sit" - mark and reward the sit - wait - release.
2. Approach door, turn knob - "get back" - cue "sit" - mark and reward the sit - wait - release.
3. Approach door, open door a crack (be ready to slam it quick should dog start to bolt- put dog on long-line for insurance at this step) "get back" - toss reward behind dog if necessary at first - cue "sit" - mark and reward the sit - close door - wait - release.
4. Spend time at this level opening the door wider and wider until he can remain seated while you open it all the way.
5. Add a greeting "Hi! Nice to see you!" This is a difficult step - don't move ahead until you can greet imaginary guests with gusto without him breaking before you release him.
6. Next, touch the screen door latch, turning the screen door latch, as above until he will stay while you open the screen door. [Put your dog on a long line attached to something heavy during this stage. You can't take any chances of an accidental escape.]
7. Ring doorbell - "get back" - toss reward behind dog if necessary - cue "sit" - mark and reward the sit - close door - wait - release.
8. Increase length of "wait" following the sit. Reward intermittently for longer waits holding the sit position. Over time you want to teach the dog to be able to wait in the presence of distractions, until the dog can hold position when you take mail or pizza, or people enter, etc. This level will take a long time and lots and lots of practice. If you can't provide the practice opportunities, you can't expect this level of training finesse!
9. Add distractions and difficulty gradually. Start with well known family member standing on other side of screen door within view. Family member rings bell, you repeat "get back" sequence til fluent. Then add door opening, person coming in or delivering imaginary pizza.
10. Long term distractions: exciting friends, unknown visitors, pizza guy, mailman, UPS deliveries (remember that the rumble of the truck and big knock are also stressors and a huge leap in difficulty). You will need to train for doors held open wide enough for accepting big boxes, people who fling the door open before you are ready, etc.



Management / "life insurance" plans:

- Keep a leash by the door and attach it before you answer the door for safety's sake.
- Put a note on the door that says, "Do you know where the dog is?"
- For confirmed door dashers, leave a trailing long line on until you are certain that the dog's training is reliable.
- When guests are expected, tether the long line to something heavy so the dog runs out of line at the threshold.
- Keep the screen door locked so no one can open it from the outside before you know of the dog's whereabouts (this is especially important for the silent ones who lie in wait for the chance to bolt and for families with children).

Is your dog aggressive with guests?

If your dog is aggressive to guests, teach him to "go to your room" at the sound of the doorbell. Choose a room that is handy with a door that can be closed. Repeat the above pattern of training until the dog hears the doorbell and automatically runs to his room to await his reward. Toss the reward into the room and close the door. Now you can admit your guests or pay for that pizza without worry.

