



DOG TRAINING & OBEDIENCE

Kind, clear household boundaries your dog understands and your family can keep.

CPC Dog Training

DIGITAL SELF-HELP GUIDE



House Rules

Kind, clear household boundaries your dog understands and your family can keep.

CPC DOG TRAINING

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WELCOME

Before You Begin

Most household chaos with dogs isn't a training problem — it's a clarity problem. The counter-surfing, the door-dashing, the jumping on guests, the dog on the sofa only when Grandma visits: these usually come from rules that change depending on who's home, what mood everyone's in, and how tired you are. Your dog isn't defiant. They're doing what any reasonable creature does with inconsistent information — testing until they find what works today. This guide fixes that. You'll decide which rules genuinely matter to you, learn the two behaviors that solve most household problems, and get scripts for getting everyone in the house enforcing the same thing the same way. Nothing here requires harshness. Clear boundaries, kindly and consistently taught, are one of the kindest things you can give a dog — because a dog who knows the rules never has to guess, and a dog who never has to guess is a calm one.

— *The CPC Dog Training Team*

Getting the Most From This Book

This is a short book by design — but it isn't a race. The ideas here work best when you let them settle and put them into practice, one at a time. Here's how to get the most from the pages ahead.

1

Read actively.

Every chapter ends with a *Try This* exercise and a set of *Key Takeaways*. The reading plants the idea; the exercise is what makes it yours.

2

Start small.

You don't need to apply everything at once. Choose a single practice, let it become genuinely easy, and only then add another.

3

Keep what works.

Anxiety is personal. Some tools will click for you and others won't — keep the ones that help and quietly leave the rest.

4

Be kind to yourself.

Progress is never a straight line. A hard day isn't a failure or a reset to zero — it's simply part of the path.

Whenever you're ready, turn the page and let's begin.

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Why Boundaries Feel Unkind

Plenty of loving owners resist setting household rules because it feels mean — like they're being strict with an animal who just wants to be near them. It's worth taking that feeling seriously, and then looking at what actually happens in homes with and without clear rules.

Confusion is the real unkindness

Imagine a job where jumping on the desk earns applause on Monday and a telling-off on Tuesday, depending on your boss's mood. You'd be anxious constantly, testing the boundary just to find out where it is today. That's the daily experience of a dog in a house with inconsistent rules.

Clear rules remove that uncertainty. A dog who knows the sofa is never available doesn't spend the evening calculating. A dog who knows the sofa is always available doesn't either. It's the ambiguity — sometimes yes, sometimes no — that creates the stress and the testing.

***Your dog isn't testing your authority.
They're testing what the rule is today,
because yesterday it changed.***

Boundaries aren't punishment

Setting a rule doesn't mean enforcing it harshly. Throughout this book, every boundary is taught the same way: prevent the unwanted behavior from being rehearsed, teach a clear alternative that's genuinely rewarding, and be consistent. No shouting, no physical corrections, no dominance theatre.

A rule your dog understands and can succeed at is a rule that reduces conflict rather than creating it. Most of the tension people feel about boundaries comes from imagining they'd have to be enforced through confrontation — and they don't.

Fewer rules, better kept

You don't need many rules. Three or four, applied absolutely, will transform your home far more than fifteen applied loosely. Long lists of rules are impossible to enforce consistently, and inconsistent enforcement is what causes the problem in the first place.

So the work ahead is mostly subtraction. Decide what genuinely matters to you, let the rest go without guilt, and then be immovable on the few you kept.

Try This — Notice the Inconsistency

Before setting new rules, see honestly how variable the current ones are.

1. Pick one behavior that annoys you — jumping, counters, sofa, whatever.
2. For two days, note every time it happens and how each person responded.
3. Look at the variety of responses across people and moods.
4. That variety, not stubbornness, is what your dog has been working with.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Inconsistent rules create anxiety and constant testing — clarity is the kindness.
- Boundaries are taught with prevention and alternatives, never confrontation.
- Three rules kept absolutely beat fifteen kept loosely.

Choosing Your Rules

This chapter is a decision-making exercise rather than a training one. Getting it right saves enormous frustration later, because the most common cause of failure isn't bad technique — it's a household that never actually agreed on what the rules were.

Decide what genuinely matters

Work through the usual list honestly: furniture, beds, kitchen while cooking, jumping on family, jumping on guests, begging at the table, going through doors first, mouthing during play. For each, ask what you actually want — not what you think a good owner should want.

There are no universally correct answers. Plenty of well-adjusted dogs sleep on beds. What matters is that you decide deliberately rather than drifting, because drifting is what produces the sometimes-yes-sometimes-no pattern.

A rule that isn't written down and agreed on isn't a rule. It's a preference your dog will keep testing.

Write them down and get agreement

Rules that live only in your head will be enforced only by you. Write your three or four on a piece of paper and put it on the fridge. It feels

excessive for about a day, then it becomes the thing that makes the whole system work.

Then have the actual conversation with everyone in the house, including children and regular visitors. The goal isn't for everyone to love every rule — it's for everyone to enforce the same thing. A partner who quietly lets the dog on the sofa isn't being kind; they're guaranteeing the dog keeps trying with everyone.

Make them binary

The most enforceable rules have no exceptions. 'Never on the sofa' is far easier for a dog than 'on the sofa when invited', which requires them to distinguish a subtle cue while excited. Start binary; you can add nuance much later if you want, once the default is solid.

Also be careful with rules that depend on your attention. 'No counter-surfing' only works if the counters are managed when you're not watching, or your dog will simply learn to do it when you leave the room — which is a harder problem than the original one.

Try This — Write the Fridge List

Twenty minutes now prevents months of mixed messages.

1. Go through the standard list and decide yes or no on each, honestly.
2. Choose the three or four that matter most and drop the rest.
3. Write them on paper in plain language and put them on the fridge.
4. Walk everyone in the household through the list and get explicit agreement.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Decide rules deliberately — there are no universally right answers.
- Write them down and get explicit household agreement, or only you will enforce them.
- Binary rules with no exceptions are dramatically easier for dogs to learn.

Teaching Place and Wait

Two behaviors do most of the heavy lifting in a calm household. 'Place' gives your dog somewhere to be when things are busy, and 'wait' gives you a pause button at doors, cars and food. Teach these well and half your problems dissolve without being addressed directly.

Building a solid place

Put a mat or bed somewhere your dog can still see the family — isolation makes place feel like punishment. Start by rewarding any interaction with the mat: a paw on it, then standing on it, then lying down, then staying for a few seconds. Build duration slowly, paying while they're still on it.

Once they'll settle for a minute, start adding light distractions: you standing up, walking to the door, picking up keys. Return and reward before they break. Place becomes genuinely useful when it holds during dinner, during visitors, and while you're cooking.

A dog with somewhere to be doesn't need to be told where not to be.

Building a reliable wait

Wait means pause until released, and it's easiest to teach at doors. Put your hand on the door handle. If your dog stays put, mark and reward. If they surge forward, simply take your hand off the handle and wait. Repeat until stillness is what makes the handle move.

Then progress: handle turns, door cracks open a centimetre, opens fully, and finally you step through. At any point your dog moves, the door closes calmly. No scolding required — the door itself provides all the feedback. Finish by releasing with a clear word like 'okay' so your dog knows waiting always ends.

Use them everywhere

These two behaviors cover an enormous amount of ground. Place handles visitors at the door, dinner time, deliveries, and general household chaos. Wait handles front doors, car doors, gates, stairs, and food bowls.

Practise them in short daily reps rather than only when you desperately need them. A wait that's only ever used in an emergency at an open front door isn't a trained behavior — it's a hope.

Try This — The Door Handle Game

Five minutes that turns your front door from a flashpoint into a non-event.

1. Stand at a closed door with your dog nearby and put a hand on the handle.
2. If your dog holds still, mark and reward. If they move forward, take your hand off and wait.
3. Progress in tiny steps: turn the handle, crack the door, open it wider.
4. Always finish by releasing with a clear word like 'okay'.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 'Place' gives your dog a default job during busy household moments.
- 'Wait' is taught by letting the door itself provide the feedback — no scolding needed.
- Practise both in short daily reps, not only in emergencies.

Doors, Counters and Couches

Now the specific problems. Each follows the same three-part pattern: manage the environment so the behavior can't be rehearsed, teach a clear alternative, and reward the alternative generously until it becomes the default.

Door-dashing

Door-dashing is the most dangerous household habit, so manage it properly while you train. Use a baby gate in the hallway, or clip a leash on before opening for deliveries. A dog who has escaped once and had a thrilling adventure has been powerfully rewarded for it.

Then train the wait from the previous chapter at that specific door, and add a 'place' cue for when the doorbell rings. The combination — physical management plus a trained alternative — is far more reliable than either alone.

You cannot out-train a sandwich left on the counter. Remove the jackpot, then teach the alternative.

Counter-surfing

Counter-surfing is maintained by an intermittent jackpot: most attempts find nothing, but occasionally there's a sandwich, and that's enough to

keep it going for years. The only reliable fix starts with removing the jackpot entirely — clear counters, push things back, and never leave food unattended during the training period.

Alongside that, make the floor rewarding. Randomly drop treats near your feet while you're cooking, so hanging around at ground level pays better than jumping up. And use 'place' during food prep, which gives your dog a specific job instead of an opportunity.

Furniture and jumping on people

For furniture, decide your binary rule and then be boring about it. If it's a no, block access when you're not there, and calmly guide your dog off every single time without drama. Give them a genuinely comfortable alternative right beside you — a good bed next to the sofa, not a thin mat in the corner.

For jumping on people, the currency is attention. Turn away and remove all attention the instant paws leave the floor, then reward warmly the moment four paws are down. The hard part is guests, so give them a script before they come in: 'Please ignore her completely until she's sitting, then make a big fuss.' Most people are happy to help when told exactly what to do.

Try This — Remove One Jackpot

Management gives you an immediate win while the training catches up.

1. Choose your worst household problem — counters, doors or furniture.
2. Make the reward physically unavailable: clear the surface, gate the hallway, block the sofa.
3. Set up the alternative in the same spot — a mat, a bed, a treat scatter zone.
4. Run it for a full week and note how much the behavior drops on its own.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Manage first so the problem behavior can't be rehearsed or jackpotted.
- Counter-surfing survives on intermittent food finds — clear the counters completely.
- Give guests an explicit script; most people help willingly when told exactly what to do.

Getting Everyone **Aligned**

This is the chapter people skip, and it's the one that decides whether any of this holds. A household where one person enforces and another quietly doesn't will produce a confused dog and a frustrated trainer — usually you.

Why one exception undoes the rule

If jumping is ignored by four people and rewarded by one, jumping continues — and gets more persistent, because intermittent reinforcement produces exactly that. Your dog isn't learning 'don't jump on people!'; they're learning 'keep trying, because sometimes it works brilliantly'.

This is why the softest person in the house often unintentionally creates the most persistent behavior. It's not about strictness or love; it's about the mathematics of unpredictable payoffs.

Your dog doesn't follow the household rule. They follow the most generous person in the household.

Make it easy to comply

Don't just ask people to enforce rules — make compliance the path of least resistance. Keep a treat jar by the front door so anyone can

reward a sit. Put the fridge list where it's unavoidable. Use a baby gate so the rule enforces itself when nobody's paying attention.

Also give people the exact words. 'Ignore her until she sits, then say hello' is actionable. 'Don't let her jump' is not — it leaves them improvising, and improvisation is what produces inconsistency.

Children and visitors

Children usually can't enforce rules reliably, and that's fine — don't ask them to. Instead, manage: use gates, supervise interactions, and give kids one simple, achievable job like tossing a treat when the dog sits. Never leave young children and dogs together unsupervised, regardless of how trustworthy the dog is.

For visitors, take thirty seconds at the door to explain what you need. Most people happily comply and rather like being included. The ones who insist on encouraging jumping because 'I don't mind' can be met with a leash and a place cue instead of an argument.

Try This — The Household Briefing

One short conversation is worth more than a month of solo effort.

1. Gather everyone who lives with the dog for five minutes.
2. Read the fridge list aloud and explain why consistency matters more than strictness.
3. For each rule, give the exact words and actions to use.
4. Put a treat jar by the door so rewarding the right behavior is effortless.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- One person's exception keeps the behavior alive through intermittent reinforcement.
- Make compliance easy: treat jars, gates, and a visible list.
- Manage rather than delegate with children, and brief visitors in thirty seconds.

Holding the Line **Calmly**

The last piece is what happens when your dog tests the rule — because they will, especially in the first fortnight. Handling that testing calmly and predictably is what converts a new rule into a settled fact of life.

Expect the burst

When a behavior that used to work stops working, dogs try harder before they give up. The jumping gets more insistent, the barking louder, the counter-checking more frequent. This is a normal, well-documented pattern and it typically peaks within a few days.

Knowing it's coming is what gets you through it. Owners who don't expect it conclude the method has failed at precisely the moment it's working — and giving in during the burst teaches your dog that persistence pays, which is far worse than never starting.

The rule becomes real the day your dog stops asking. Until then, be boring, be consistent, and wait.

Be boring, not angry

Your response to a broken rule should be as dull as possible: calmly guide your dog off the sofa, quietly close the door, turn away from the

jumping. No lectures, no raised voice, no eye contact. Drama is attention, and attention is a reward.

Then immediately give them a way to succeed — cue place, ask for a sit, reward four paws on the floor. Every correction should be followed within seconds by an opportunity to earn something. That's the rhythm that makes rules feel fair to a dog.

Keep it maintained

Once the household settles, rules tend to erode quietly — a bit of sofa on a cold evening, a bit of jumping when you're in a good mood. That's how you end up back where you started six months later. Re-read the fridge list occasionally and check whether reality still matches it.

And keep rewarding the good stuff long after the problem is solved. The dog who settles on their mat while you eat should still get noticed for it. Finally, if any household behavior involves growling, guarding or snapping — around food, furniture or people — stop and consult a certified behaviorist rather than working through it alone. Resource guarding in particular needs professional guidance, and getting help early is by far the best outcome for everyone.

Try This — Plan Your Calm Response

Decide in advance exactly what you'll do, so you're not improvising while irritated.

1. Pick your main rule and write the exact response to a breach in one sentence.
2. Make sure it contains no talking, no eye contact and no drama.
3. Write the follow-up: which behavior you'll cue and reward within five seconds.
4. Share both with the household so everyone responds identically.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Expect behavior to intensify for a few days before it fades — that's the burst, not failure.
- Respond boringly and always follow a correction with a chance to earn something.
- Re-check the rules periodically, and get professional help for growling or guarding.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Your Action Plan

Your household reset on one page. Do the deciding and the household briefing first — the training is the easy part.

- ☐ Log two days of one problem behavior and note how each person responded.
- ☐ Decide your three or four rules deliberately and drop the rest.
- ☐ Make each rule binary, with no exceptions to interpret.
- ☐ Write them on the fridge in plain language.
- ☐ Hold a five-minute household briefing with the exact words to use.
- ☐ Teach 'place' on a mat where your dog can still see the family.
- ☐ Teach 'wait' using the door-handle game, ending with a clear release.
- ☐ Remove the Jackson Clear counters, gate hallways, block furniture.
- ☐ Give guests a thirty-second script at the door.
- ☐ Teach a cue for by the door so anyone can reward good behavior.
- ☐ Teach a cue for the dog to go to the dog house when the door is closed.
- ☐ Teach a cue for the dog to go to the dog house when the door is open.
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FINAL WORDS

Where You Go From Here

A calm home isn't built on strictness — it's built on clarity. Once your dog genuinely knows what the rules are, and knows they don't change based on who's in the room, the constant negotiating stops, and everyone relaxes, including them. Start with the deciding and the conversation, because those cost nothing and change everything. Then manage the environment so the old habits can't keep paying, teach place and wait properly, and be pleasantly boring when your dog tests you. Give it two weeks of genuine consistency before you judge it. Most households are astonished by how much calmer things feel once the rules stop being a moving target — and your dog, freed from having to guess, will probably be the most relaxed member of the house.

Breathe. Begin. Return.

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