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*Dogs are God's Second-Greatest Gift to Mankind.*



# Stopping Dog Aggression

by

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*Whatever you believe to be God's Greatest Gift to Mankind —  
whether that be Jesus Christ, the Laws of Moses, or the Koran,  
or whether it be family, friends, or love —  
There is no doubt that God's Second-Greatest Gift is Dogs!*

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## INTRODUCTION

Most people find dogs -- most dogs, at any rate -- to be happy, lovable animals whose presence we enjoy. But there are those dogs who have an attitude of aggression that leaves us feeling uneasy in their presence. We're scared -- sometimes properly -- by aggressive-



appearing dogs. We may go so far as to cross the street to avoid a strange dog headed our way. We're likely to avoid them in public areas and warn our kids to stay away from them.

Aggressive behavior is not as related to specific breeds as many people think. It's not only the Dobermans and Pit Bulls that can be aggressive and can be a threat to others. Nonetheless, we have a tendency to warn our kids to be particularly cautious around some breeds; we may worry if a neighbor brings into their home one of those "dangerous" dogs.

Stressful as all this might be, it's even more worrisome when it's your dog that has the aggressive attitude. If you note an aggressive attitude in your dog, it's appropriate that you experience stress over this. Not only do you suffer stress from your dog's attitude, it could be financially costly to you if she injures someone.<sup>1</sup>

It's not always easy to know whether you should be worrying about your dog's behavior. Perhaps others see signs of aggressive behavior in your dog but you don't. Or maybe you've observed that

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this manual, I'll be referring to your dog as "she," which (a) eliminates the madness of constantly repeating "he/she" and "his/her" and "him/her." And "she" also honors and remembers my own Beloved Malina, who is currently waiting for me at the Rainbow Bridge.

when you take away her food or a favorite toy she becomes huffy -- does that qualify as aggressive behavior.

That's the underlying purpose of this manual -- learning how to recognize and deal with aggression in dogs. Here are the things we'll be looking at:

**Chapter 1 -- Introduction.** You're reading it now.

**Chapter 2 -- Why are dogs aggressive?** Here we'll consider why some dogs demonstrate higher levels of aggression than do others. Breed is not the issue, a fact that may be eye-opening to you. It is, in fact, much more about the dog's history and how she's been treated in the past.

**Chapter 3 -- Give Helen a test.** There are things you can do to determine where your dog fits on the aggression scale. These tests are easy to administer and may provide you with the knowledge you need to ensure you aren't encouraging problems in her behavior.

**Chapter 4 -- Types of aggression.** Not every dog's aggressive behavior is alike. In this chapter we'll be taking a look at the types of aggression. You may discover that from time to time your well-behaved dog displays one or another form of aggressive behavior that you hadn't previously recognized.

**Chapter 5 -- Bad dog risks.** An aggressive dog in your home can be dangerous to you, too. In addition to any physical threat, you can be financially ruined if your dog harms someone else. This chapter addresses the things you need to consider about this issue.

**Chapter 6 -- Remedies for aggression.** Even if yours is the meanest, most aggressive dog in the neighborhood, don't give up hope. You can correct her behavior and, to all practical purposes, scare her straight. We'll consider assorted remedies for dog aggression, and what to do if yours is one of the few that cannot be corrected.

## **WHY ARE DOGS AGGRESSIVE?**

The nature of dogs is that they each have some aggressive tendencies. Not all dogs display an overtly aggressive behavior, but there are some behaviors that are inherent in being a dog. Even those dogs who always appear happy and laid back; even those dogs who would apparently never hurt a fly. Somewhere within them are aggressive behaviors waiting for the exact trigger -- which may never come -- that will make them, at least temporarily, aggressive.

Some dogs, of course, have natures that are extremely aggressive; their general nature is one of aggression and this is where problems lie. And the purpose of this manual is to address that extreme aggression. But before we can begin resolving problems, it's necessary that we comprehend dog aggression, its nature, and its forms.

In chapter four we'll examine assorted types of dog aggression. Here, we'll take a look at the nature of a dog and how she becomes aggressive.

### ***Communication:***

If your dog doesn't have any other reliable way of communicating with you, she may become aggressive. Dogs endeavor to communicate with people and with other animals. Their observations lead them toward their choice of communication methods. If they cannot understand what you're trying to get across -- or if they don't like what you're communicating -- they may display some degree of aggression.

Some dogs are just naturally mean, because of their past experiences. But more typically aggression is a dog's means of communicating fear, anxiety, or a need to protect.

***Protection:***

It's no secret that dogs are distantly related to -- descendents of -- wolves. They have a strong need to protect themselves and their pack. After you have convinced your dog that she is part of your pack -- and make sure she understands that you, not she, is the leader -- she will strive to be sure you and the rest of the pack are safe and protected. This sometimes calls for an aggressive attitude on her part.

But perhaps your dog is aggressive toward you and your family, rather than protective. This can be frightening, as you may not comprehend why your dog would be aggressive toward you.

***Training:***

Dogs are trained -- encouragement is a form of training -- toward aggression in a couple of ways. There are dogs who have been deliberately trained toward aggression. Other dogs were not restrained from demonstrating an aggressive attitude. Either of these forms of training can create problems.

When a dog is specifically trained to be a watchdog -- or if she is of a breed with a natural inclination to be guarded -- you must be careful to ensure that her watchful tendencies don't become excessive.

On the other hand, some very young dogs demonstrate aggression, undeterred by their trainer or owner. The dog never receives the message that she must control her aggression, and problems begin to arise.

### *Other reasons:*

Sometimes a dog -- like some humans -- is just crotchety in nature. At times they may be moody or difficult, more likely to lash out at others. It's possible that there are underlying causes for this behavior -- a reason for them lashing out. We'll look at this issue later, but it's generally likely that these dogs were aggressive in puppyhood and were, in some fashion, encouraged. Having been encouraged to this behavior, it's a habit that's hard for the dog to break.

Keep on reading to discover how you can decide whether your dog presents a risk for aggressive behavior. You will be better informed once you know for sure whether his tendencies are toward docile behavior or (potentially frightening) aggression.

### GIVE HELEN A TEST

Perhaps you've just welcomed a new dog into your home -- a new puppy from a breeder, or an older dog from a pound or shelter. Either way, it'd be good to know whether Helen is aggressive or not. Alternatively, perhaps you've had your dog for a while and are unsure if she'd lash out if she had opportunity or reason.

It's possible that you didn't know that you can test your dog by challenging her patience. I'm not suggesting being deliberately mean or cruel to your dog; but by testing her you'll be able to see how she reacts in a range of situations.

Her reaction will help you determine if she's as harmless as you've assumed, or if you should be careful around her -- perhaps keeping her from interacting with other dogs and with people. Or, more likely, she'll be like most dogs, somewhere in the middle.

#### ***Basic tips:***

Always have a veterinarian check out your dog; don't assume that the advice given in this manual is equivalent to that of your dog's vet. There exists the possibility that your dog has become somewhat more aggressive due to a medical condition; or she might be hurting due to an injury and is lashing out in pain. Among the medical conditions that have resulted in dogs demonstrating aggression are diabetes, epilepsy, hypoglycemia, and thyroid problems.

If you've already observed some aggressive tendencies in your dog, exercise caution while conducting these "tests." Don't push on with testing her if she lashes out at you in a manner that seems dangerous. After all, if she lashes out then you've already got your answer about her level of aggressiveness, right?

If you come to the conclusion that your dog is so aggressive as to be a danger, you may need to undertake extreme measures to keep her

away from other dogs and other people. Recognize that you are liable -- both financially and morally -- if your dog hurts someone. Protect your family and others to whatever extent is necessary. Many dogs can be trained away from their aggressive tendencies; but some cannot and, in that case, you may have to give consideration to drastic measures. In Chapter 6 we'll discuss the various remedies available for treating aggressive behavior.

***Basic signs of aggression:***

Watch for these symptoms in your dog at any time. These are not the specific tests we'll soon discuss; they are things to watch for at all times:

- Growling at people, other pets, or noises.
- Snarling at anything.
- Curling her lips for any reason.
- Mounting people -- as if to exercise control over them.
- Lunging at you or at strangers.
- Snapping her teeth.
- Blocking your path or that of others.
- Aggressive barking, even when she's in protection mode.
- Biting -- which should never be overlooked. We'll cover this more in Chapter 5.

***Testing your dog:***

Let's start with some basic tests. Shelters frequently use these tests as a means of determining whether dogs are adoptable. And further, if they are adoptable, what kind of household would be most suitable to them.



The shelter might decide that one dog should only be placed in a home with children age 10 or older; or it might decide that another dog should not be placed in homes with any children, no matter what their age. The aggression tests are one of the primary means through which shelters make these decisions. Let's look at a few of the basic tests you can perform.

### ***Quick assessment:***

These little tests are often done in shelters because they're quick and easy to perform. The dog's reaction provides you with quite an insight into her level of aggression or her capacity for aggression.

- While your dog is eating, take away her food. Just reach down and take the bowl. If your dog is not aggressive at all, she'll just watch you take the food and, perhaps, give you a questioning look. If she's only slightly aggressive, you may hear her whine or moan. If she's seriously aggressive, she may growl, try to bite you, or move her body to keep you from taking her food. If she behaves aggressively, leave the food but make note of her behavior.
- Give your dog a toy -- plush or chewy in nature. Just as she's really beginning to enjoy playing with it, take it away from her. A non-aggressive dog will be annoyed, but not to the degree that she exhibits aggressive behavior.
- Pull the dog's tail and ears. You'll want to see, among other things, how well she'll do with kids-- since kids often pull tails and ears. But this test also looks for aggression in general. You may irk her, and that's acceptable. This test is a good way to see, in general, how aggressive she can be.

***Eating:***

If your dog is permitted to stand near or under the table while you eat, try this test. Drop a bit of food under the table where your dog can claim it for her own. Then reach down to retrieve the food. An aggressive dog will growl or lash out if you try to retrieve the food. A non-aggressive dog will meekly surrender what you're reclaiming as your own.

If you have more than one dog, can the dogs eat together? If they cannot, it's probably a sign that one of them has aggressive tendencies -- potential or actual efforts to steal the food of the other dog. This may be demonstrated in the form of threatening growls or attempts to take the food of the less-aggressive dog.

Often this aggression is exhibited when two dogs of the same gender eat together. If you have both male and female dogs that get along well with each other, consider feeding them together.

***Your role in the house:***

A key element to having a happy and satisfactory relationship with your dog is ensuring that she knows that you, not she, is the alpha dog in the relationship. You, the human, must always be in charge of all behavior; you, in dog-speak, are the Alpha Dog. Let there never be any compromise with your dog over this issue.

If these tests result in your dog demonstrating some level of aggression -- but she is otherwise non-aggressive -- then you may have an attitude problem that can easily be resolved. ***Once you have established yourself as the alpha dog***, she will know that disobedience and aggression are not an option available to her.

But if some of the following tests give rise to demonstrations of aggression, you should accept that you are dealing with an aggressive dog and with aggression issues that must be addressed swiftly.

Consider these scenarios:

- If your dog refuses to get down from the couch or other piece of furniture and you remove her, what does she do? Does she defer to you as "The Boss," or does she exhibit some degree of aggressive behavior?
- Does your (small) dog demonstrate an air of aggression, disobedience, or refusal when you call her from -- or remove her from -- being under the bed. If this becomes a struggle or if your dog demonstrates aggressive behavior, there's an issue of control -- ***your control as the alpha dog*** -- to be resolved.
- When you get too near to your sleeping dog, does she growl or show her teeth? Yes, this is yet another sign of aggression.

***Visitors:***

The manner in which your dog greets and deals with visitors to your home is extremely important in assessing her potential level of aggression -- her capacity for aggressive, detrimental behavior -- in the future.

It's especially important that you be informed of your dog's potential aggressive tendencies if you frequently have children in your house. Try to imagine how you'd feel -- or what liability you'd have -- if your dog were to harm a child visiting in your home.

Here are some observations you should make:

- How does your dog react when a new child -- one she hasn't yet met -- comes into your home? I'm sure you'd prefer that your dog not jump up on children to give them a big, happy lick; but that is still far to be preferred over actions that are more aggressive in nature. Beware of aggressive tendencies if your dog retreats under a piece of furniture and growls; or if

she circles the child or visitor while snarling or barking at them.

- What kind of reaction does your dog demonstrate when a new visitor seeks to pet her? Is she enthusiastic and graceful about the petting? Or is she unfriendly, given to snarling, growling, or retreating out of reach?
- When the stranger leaves the house, does your dog endeavor to chase them away? ***Aggressive dogs frequently chase away visitors in an effort to demonstrate that your house is actually their house!***

### ***In public:***

How your dog behaves in a public venue can be enlightening. Aggressive dogs in public become, in effect, a public nuisance. You may already have an idea of your dog's tendencies to aggression by how she behaves in public. Nonetheless, consider these clues:

- How does she behave if she's in the car when a stranger gets "too near." Barking is an acceptable means of communicating that the stranger is too close. But an inappropriately-aggressive dog may snarl, show her teeth, and exhibit a generally more threatening attitude than simple barking.
- What is your dog's behavior while she's in public on a leash? A non-aggressive dog might greet new people -- new friends in her own mind -- with a wagging tail and hopes of interacting with these people. A dog with aggressive tendencies, on the other hand, may lunge at people they don't know -- walkers, bikers, skateboarders, etc. If you have to constantly fight with and restrain your dog while she is on a leash, you should recognize that her aggression is an issue to be dealt with.

As you take into consideration all the tests discussed in this chapter, you'll have a feel -- or perhaps a definite knowledge -- for whether you need to deal with issues of aggressive behavior.

She may have only one type of aggressive behavior, or several. In the next chapters we discuss the differing types of aggression and your proper response to each of them.

***Get it all:***

I'm not much of a salesman, so I didn't try to inflict upon you some hyped-up, super-salesman, "gotta buy it today because the price goes up tomorrow" sales letter. I figured that the actual book itself -- as opposed to sales copy -- should convince you of its value. So . . .

If you've found the initial chapters of *Stopping Dog Aggression* worthwhile, you can buy the entire manual, download it immediately, and resume reading it within a couple minutes. You'll pay \$9.97 to PayPal and immediately be taken to the full manual. Once it's loaded in your browser, save it anywhere on your computer's hard drive and read it again and again, whenever you want.

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