



A special language exists between people and dogs. It's not the same language dogs use to communicate with dogs or the same language people use to talk with people. A well-educated dog understands this language if he has been taught by a patient, persistent, understanding person. Dogs are not born understanding human language or culture. We invite them into our homes and it is our responsibility to help them understand how to be content in our community.

A well-educated dog understands that people ...

- are enjoyable to be near.
- can provide food, shelter and comfort well beyond that which he could find on his own.
- have "strange" customs (like hugging and petting), but none of them are life-threatening.
- confine him (with a leash, or a fence, or a comfy crate) for his own safety -- not because we wish to harm him.

There are also words dogs can learn, like "sit," "down," "stay" and "come." Teaching a dog these words helps us ensure his or her safety and comfort. Luckily dogs are happy to perform behaviors we teach them as long as we are fair teachers. Dogs do sit, lie down, stay in place and run to people naturally, and we can help them learn to perform these acts when we ask -- so we can all get along. After all there are some doggie customs that are "strange" to people -- like jumping up on someone you just met, or licking plates in the dishwasher, or chasing small animals. Teaching a dog a few words can help in so many situations. Here are a few examples:

Teaching a dog:

Prevents:

- | | |
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| Sit | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• jumping up for greetings• knocking over the food bowl you are putting down• bruising your chin when you attach his leash. |
| Down | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• bumping into children when greeting• tripping you up when you're carrying groceries• pacing around in the back seat of your car |
| Stay | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• losing your dinner to the dog• stressing people who come to your door• wrapping the leash around the table at the outdoor café |
| Come | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frightening automobile drivers in the road• Chasing at all hours of the night• Encountering unsavory dogs during outings |

Using enjoyable training methods also ensures your canine companion will understand the requests of even the smallest human in your household who can utter a few words.

Give your dog a smart start. Begin training early.

RESOURCES:

You can call our **Behavior Helpline** ((804)- 643-SPCA) for advice or to arrange a private consult at the Richmond SPCA. You may also review and see upcoming classes at www.richmondspca.org/training.