

The Seven Simple R's for Dog Behavioral Integration

R'S FOR A HAPPY HOME

By Dr. Peter Banfe

1. **Rules:** Dogs thrive on simple understandable social structure and articulated rules. Set up rules for the dog and enforce them. Set these with the family (not on the couch, no rough-housing inside, certain rooms off limit) and enforce them and your dog and you will have a happier dog and family. Example: Feeding at the table is improper. It will motivate salivation and begging. Certain dominance behaviors should be shunned.
2. **Repetition:** Repeat every day the behavioral rules a number of times. Dogs learn by repetition. A good time is before a meal, or during a walk. It is better to focus on one behavior (sitting) multiple times in a session than a number of behaviors once in a session.
3. **Reward:** Dogs are best rewarded not with human style affection (kisses and hugs), but with your time and company. It is a privilege to spend time with the Alpha. Of course, you can use food or toys, a praise. But reward must be connected to obedience. Give nothing for nothing.
4. **Routine:** Dogs feel more comfortable with routine. There is then less chance for error. Set times for eating. After the food has been out for 5 minutes, put it away. Walks every day, then quiet time in the house laying down. Walks should be structured learning time. They will learn well during this pleasurable time, and will be free to enjoy themselves within the bounds you set.
5. **Rigor:** Dogs will look for ways to move up the pack order if you let them. If you are ill or incapacitated you need to reset order as they will try to usurp authority. Be firm, rigorous, consistent. One clear correction is worth 1,000 ambiguous ones.
6. **Regularity:** Be consistent. When they do something wrong, consistently correct, the first time they fail. And consistently until they succeed. Use a consistent, unemotional reward/punishment approach. Don't lose your temper
7. **Respect:** Dogs should always show you respect. Many theorists now believe dogs see us not as pack members but as distinct. We need to make certain that they do not engage in disrespectful behaviors such as jumping up, excessive licking (which is dominance behavior), pulling on the lead, not coming when called, etc.