

APDT shares concerns regarding the use of dominance and “pack theory” as it relates to dogs. APDT adopts the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior’s Position Statement on the Use of Dominance Theory in Behavior Modification of Animals as the most current and accurate position on dominance theory. The AVSAB position statement may be accessed here: https://avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Dominance_Position_Statement_download-10-3-14.pdf

Dominance Theory Common Behavior Myths

Behavior Myth	Why Your Dog Really Does This	How to Change the Behavior
Your dog barks at you to tell you he’s in charge.	There are numerous underlying factors that can lead to excessive barking such as boredom, fear, and anxiety. Owners often inadvertently reinforce barking by giving the dog attention when they are barking, or yelling at the dog, which only strengthens the behavior over time.	Train the dog to bark and be quiet on cue. Proper daily exercise, interaction with a dog’s human family, and interactive toys such as Kongs® can decrease barking if the dog is barking out of boredom. For fearful and/or anxious dogs, determine what is causing the dog’s fears and work to desensitize him to them.
Your dog urinates in the house to show you that she owns the “territory” and not you.	Inconsistent housetraining techniques by the owner lead to dogs that are never 100% housetrained. Inappropriate elimination can often be due to an underlying medical condition such as a urinary infection. Unneutered dogs will mark territory more often than fixed dogs.	Go back to “Square one” with your dog and begin housetraining again. You must supervise your dog 100% and be able to take him out when he needs to go and reward him for doing so in order for him to clearly understand what is being asked of him. Take your dog to a veterinarian to determine if there is a physical cause for the behavior.
Your dog believes he is in control of the kitchen and is trying to eat before you.	Dogs are scavengers by nature and if food appears to be available, they will take the chance to “go for it!”	Teach your dog to stay out of the kitchen and not to jump on the counters or manage the environment using gates or barriers.

	<p>Dogs who are bored in the home may resort to counter surfing or digging in the trash to alleviate their boredom.</p> <p>Dogs jump up because they have been inadvertently reinforced to do so by inconsistent dog owners.</p> <p>Dogs jump up because they want to get closer to our faces to say hello.</p> <p>Dogs jump up because ... it's fun!</p>	<p>Give your dog interactive toys to play with, such as Kongs that you can stuff with food, so he can be steered toward appropriate outlets for his energy.</p> <p>Teach the dog to sit when visitors enter the house and reward for this behavior. Teach the dog that he only gets attention, treats, etc. when he has all four paws on the floor.</p> <p>Make sure everyone who interacts with your dog is on the same page about turning their back on the dog when he jumps up so the behavior is not reinforced in the future.</p>
<p>Dogs jump up on people to assert their height and rank over you.</p>	<p>If every time the dog gets to go on a walk, they pull you along without being taught any different, they reasonably understand that this is how walks are supposed to be! Getting to go on a walk is a fun-filled and exciting activity for a dog. They pull because they're enthusiastic and want to get out and enjoy the sights and smells of the outdoors.</p>	<p>Take the time to teach them what it is that you do want.</p> <p>Reinforce the dog heavily for staying next to you, and do not allow the dog to move forward if he is pulling. If your dog is too strong for you, use a management device such as a front clip harness, and use this <i>in conjunction with</i> teaching the dog not to pull.</p>
<p>Dogs pull on leash so they can get out in front of you and be in charge of you and the walk.</p>	<p>Just like with walking on leash, dogs get easily excited and don't know this is unacceptable behavior if you don't teach them otherwise. You only get pushed because you're in the way of whatever it is on the other side that the dog finds interesting and exciting.</p>	<p>Teach your dog a wait or stay cue and practice so they become used to the idea that you get to come and go first.</p> <p>Use baby-gates to block the dog from running through the house and use them to teach behavior such as wait, stay or sit at doorways.</p>
<p>Dogs push you out of the way and run through a doorway ahead of you to show you they're in charge.</p> <p>Dogs who think they are boss will ignore you when you call them because they know they don't have to obey.</p>	<p>Dogs who have not been properly reinforced for coming back to you when called will not understand what come means.</p>	<p>Teach your dog the come cue on-leash until your dog is coming every time when called.</p> <p>Reinforce the dog heavily when he does come – it should be 100% clear to him</p>

Dogs mount other dogs or people to show that they are dominant.

Dogs get on the furniture and/or beds to show that they rule the household.

Dogs become stimulated by their environment and can be easily distracted by other dogs or animals, people, children, grass, trees, cars, etc.

Mounting occurs for several reasons which include stress alleviation and play. When dogs play they will often take turns mounting each other for fun – the position is one of playfulness rather than an attempt to establish status.

Dogs get on furniture and/or beds for the same reasons that people do – because they're very comfortable.

that he did a great thing by coming to you. Never punish the dog if he doesn't come to you – this only teaches the dog that coming to you when he is called is not a "safe" thing to do.

If the dog is doing this to you, simply give the dog an incompatible behavior to do instead and reward them for doing so, such as sit, down, a trick, or anything else.

Teach your dog an "off" cue so they learn to get down off the furniture when you ask them to.

If you do not want your dog on the furniture at any time, manage the household so that the dog is not able to get up on the furniture. If they do, this reinforces that it's ok to sit on the furniture – you want to be able to block this from happening using baby gates, tethers, etc.

Provide the dog with a comfy dog bed or beds of his own and reinforce the dog for choosing to lay on them.

Finally, if you don't mind having your dog on the furniture but are afraid this means they're dominating you – relax! As long as you are setting the rules and guidelines in your house, it's ok for your dog to be on the furniture with you.