
DOGGY DOOR MANNERS

When a guest knocks on your front door, how does your dog react? Does he bark and jump and claw at the door? Does he jump up on your guest when they enter your home? Is your dog simply out of control? Well, here's a tip we call "**Doggy Door Manners**" to help you get your dog under control when guests arrive.

To begin training your dog to have good door manners, start with nobody at your front door. We call this the "guest-less" door. Put a leash on your dog, letting him drag it around. Without warning your dog or taking him with you to the door, go to the front door and knock to simulate a guest knocking on your front door—you do the knocking. No matter how your dog reacts to the knocking, ask your dog to sit as you normally would if you were not at the front door. Do not open the door until your dog sits.

When your dog sits, open the door. If your dog breaks his seated position, immediately shut the door! If your dog breaks his sit as you reach for the doorknob, withdraw your hand from the doorknob and calmly tell him to sit. Then try it again: let some time pass, then go knock on the door, reach for the doorknob, and open the door. Repeat this sequence: let some time pass, knock on the door, ask your dog to "sit" or "sit—wait", then open the door.

Remember: the door does not open until your dog sits; the door does not STAY open unless your dog holds his sit.

If your dog breaks his sit, shutting the door immediately or not opening the door is the consequence. Conversely, opening the door is the reward.

Once you see your dog go through the whole sequence successfully, praise with a treat, but don't go banana's here. Stay warm and calm as you don't want your dog too excited at a door-greeting situation; you want calm.

For a dog that has a serious "door manners" problem, I start with the "guest-less" door and get to the point of mastering just that. Many people try to train their dog after the guest is already in the house. I believe it is easier to teach your dog what to do **BEFORE** you open the door. I call it putting on their "thinking cap" before you turn the doorknob—not after. This makes it so much easier for your dog to give you an obedient act before you open the door rather than opening the door, allowing him to sniff, allowing him to jump for joy or all over your guest. In the latter scenario, you end up trying not only to get your dog's attention, but also perform an obedient act.

If your dog does not know how to control himself before you open the door, odds are he will never master the "guest at an open door" scenario. Take baby steps here, one at a time, and start with the knock on the "guest-less" door.

We all know this scene too well. The doorbell rings. You open the door while holding your dog's collar. You invite your guest inside. You and your dog do the "wobble" dance as he just about contorts your elbow into a figure eight! This is really not the time to teach him what you expect from him—because you have *no control*.

Control the dog first—control the door second. When he masters what he must do, before the door opens, the rest gets easier. You need to remember that he needs the whole picture—not just what NOT to do, but give him the picture of what he needs to do so you can open the door.

Usually, once he masters the "guest-less" door, you'll have a calmer greeting when the door actually has a guest behind it.