



## Dominant and Aggressive Dogs

This is a 12 step protocol designed to help you gain more control over your dog. The ideas are adapted from “Dogs Behaving Badly” written by Dr. Nicholas Dodman. His basis idea is:



### **Step 1: Avoid Confrontation**

Simply put, do not do anything, or allow your dog to do anything that causes it to growl or become aggressive. If your dog growls and protects his dog treat, do not give him a treat. If he is possessive about stolen garbage, or tissue then put these items where he can not get them.



### **Step 2: Feeding**

Only you feed the dog and only you decide when to feed the dog. No more free choice feeding. Leave the food down for a certain amount of time then pick it up. Distract the dog, or wait until it leaves before picking up the food. **Most importantly** The dog must respond appropriately to a command given by you before he is fed. (i.e. the dog must sit on command) If the dog does not sit or obey the command do not give him the food. Do not give in to your dog if he does not eat for several days. This is a battle of wills that you must win. When he finally gives in, he is acknowledging that you are the boss over the food, not him.

### **Step 3: Petting**

The physical act of petting your pet, and the recognition that goes with it are very important to your dog. Petting is a powerful and meaningful reward for a dog. Always pet your dog by stroking his chest, chin or cheek. Petting the top of a dog’s head has resulted in many bites to owners because the dog perceives that as a threatening or aggressive act. Again the most important thing is **never let the dog tell you to pet it. You must make the rules.** Do not respond to your dog’s head butting or coaxing to be petted. Also, do not respond every time the dog wants petted. When you do decide to pet your dog **make your dog respond to a command first, then pet him but only for a brief time.** If he doesn’t sit then he doesn’t get petted. This is very hard for owners to do but is very very important.

### **Step 4: Praise**

Do not “over” praise. Too much praising causes the dog to not care. Also make the dog work for the praise by following a command or doing an appropriate action (such as walking calmly beside you or sitting or shaking on command). Make the praise warm and heartfelt. In other words: praise for good things but do not shower the dog with praise as it will become meaningless to the dog.

### Step 5: Toys



Toys are great, however **the dog must work to get the toy**. He must respond to your command to be allowed a toy. Put all toys in a box or drawer. Your dog must come to you if he wants a toy and respond to your command to get the toy. After he is done playing pick the toy up and put it away.

### Step 6: Games

Make sure that **YOU** initiate the game not your dog. If he wants to play and is pestering you to play ignore him. A short time later, when he has given up, you can start the game by picking up the ball or calling him to play. Also make sure he obeys **YOUR** rules. If he will not release the ball or mis-behaves, simply quit the game and walk away. Make sure that your games do not promote aggressiveness, in other words, no rough games.

### Step 7: Needs & Wants

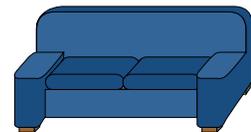
Demanding what they want and getting it, is a form of dominance that dogs use against us all the time. Dominant dogs thrive on this: they demand something and keep demanding until you consent. This feeds the dog's dominance. The answer to this is to **ignore the dog** and give them the cold shoulder. This is tough (we all want to pet our dogs, but with a dominant dog we must decide when to pet and when not to.) So be strong, again this is something you must win or your dog will gain confidence in his dominance.

### Step 8: Company

All dogs, even dominant ones, want to be close to their owners. Ration this closeness out as rewards for good behavior. Avoid having an aggressive or dominant dog sit in your lap or sleep in your bed. These are forms of companionship that should be banned.

### Step 9: High Places

NEVER allow a dominant dog on furniture or beds. And never get down on the floor with a dominant dog. Being at eye level with such a dog makes him feel more in charge. If you are afraid that removing a dog from a high place may initiate an aggressive act try one of these tricks:  
1. Put a long leash on the dog when in the house and if he gets on furniture pull him off. Tell him "no get off the couch", but praise him when he has all four feet on the ground.  
2. You can booby trap the furniture (A tin can filled with pennies attached to a string, or a water pistol).



### Step 10: Freedom

Again, do not let the dog out when he demands it of you, make him obey your command first. If he doesn't obey either do not let him out, or if that is not practical (i.e. he has to urinate or defecate) then tie him out or walk him on lead instead of letting him run loose.

### Step 11: Exercise

Plenty of exercise is good. A tired dog is less likely to be aggressive



### Step 12: Diet

Try a low protein diet, it might help.