



**WAG & TRAIN**.LLC  
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### **How to be a Calm and Confident Pack Leader**

No matter what breed of dog you have or what age, whether you rescued him or whether you've had him since he was a puppy, all dogs can benefit greatly from boundaries, leadership, and rules within their household or 'pack'. Lately, there has been a lot of emphasis on being dominant over your dog from a trainer on a nationwide TV show. I believe that is true to a certain extent, but it doesn't mean you have to be tough, rough, threatening, intimidating, or loud- or withhold the positives. Being a strong leader is more about your calm, confident, positive presence and the ability to be consistent and not give in to the 'look'. When your dog is being pushy or demanding, he is begging you to show him that you are the leader- and not give in to him when it is easier than being consistent (like when you are tired or too busy). Your dog will respect you more if you give him set limits and expectations that you will follow through with, and therefore he won't have to make up his own, which can lead to many behavior problems.

It's not that difficult to be a calm and confident leader, either. By doing just a few things with your dog, and increasing your 'dog language', you can set your dog up for success and help him be secure, happy, and confident himself. The following is a short list of some things I recommend to establish yourself as a calm and confident leader of the pack:

### **Pack Leader Rules: The Short List**

1. **Nothing is Free:** All dogs should earn EVERYTHING they want and receive. If they want dinner, treats, love, affection, a walk...anything at all, they must earn it. That means they have to 'focus', sit, down, rollover, - something to work for it. By working for all of their 'resources', you are teaching them that you are in control of them, which can decrease their insecurity within the pack. Be sure to use lots of praise when they follow through!
2. **No Furniture:** Dogs know that the pack leader always gets the best seat. So, for now, all the dogs have to be below the pack leader ~ figuratively and literally. And please don't allow them to sleep in bed with you. However, I believe it is okay for them to sleep on their own bed or in their own crate on the floor of your bedroom if you wish.
3. **No Free Feeding:** Dogs only need two to three meals a day (depending on age and health of course – please check with your veterinarian on feeding schedules). If you give them an unlimited supply of food that means that they decide when they eat. Take the food dish up after 20 minutes and put it back down at the next scheduled feeding time.
4. **No Rough Playing:** Please don't play constant tug of war or rough games (especially if your dog initiates it), because your dog may consider it a challenge (the pack leader doesn't challenge), and it can actually promote aggressive behavior. More appropriate games include fetch, hide and seek, 'find it', "find me", or the two-toy game. The two-toy game is played by throwing one toy, and then when the dog brings back the two and drops it, you throw the other toy.