

## Pet Etiquette



We've all met them, the dog owners who don't seem to care about anyone's comfort but their and their dog's. They're the ones who let their dog leave a mess on the sidewalk or stand by while their pup barks at kids and bowls over old ladies. But even if you have higher standards for your dog than this, how can you be sure you're following all the rules of pet etiquette? After all, if you like to take your dog everywhere you go—on camping trips, road trips, rides in the RV, and trips into town—you already have a vested interest in having a dog that's welcome wherever it goes. Take a minute to brush up on your skills, and you'll be well versed in what is and isn't appropriate in the pet world.

**1. ☐☐ ☐ Pick up after your pet.** Be sure to take plastic bags with you every time you leave home with your pet. A handy trick is to tie the bag to the handle of your leash, so it's always there when you need it. The bag can be neatly inverted over your hand, which you can use like a mitt to pick up any poop, then turn the bag inside out, tie it shut, and it's ready to be tossed into the next garbage can you pass. If every dog owner took this one small step, more people would have good feelings about seeing dogs walking around in towns, cities, and public parks.

**2. ☐☐ ☐ Teach your dog to sit,** and always put them in a sit when you introduce someone new.

No one likes to be jumped on, even by a little dog. If your dog is sitting nicely, everyone will want to stop and say hello! If your dog is reluctant to sit when it's in an exciting situation, start by practicing in a more boring place (like at home) with a tasty treat as a reward. Slowly build up to places that are more and more crowded until your dog responds like a pro. When it comes to having a well-behaved dog, the ultimate responsibility lies with you. If you're willing to practice with your dog—and not give up until the dog does what you ask—your pup will become an exemplar of canine behavior.

**3. Socialize your dog.** When you walk out into the world with your dog, chances are good that you'll run into other dogs along your journey. Socializing your dog—introducing it to a wide variety of dogs of different temperaments—ensures that your pup will have the social skills to deal with any situation. The more your dog interacts with others of its own species, the better equipped it will be to handle these encounters. Off-leash dog parks are a great place to let dogs mingle and get to know each other.

**4. Never leave your dog in a parked car.** This is more a matter of safety than etiquette, but it's worth mentioning. In many cities, people can and will report these cases to the police—that's a sign of how dangerous it is for a dog to be shut in a car on a warm day. Even if the temperature isn't high, it's better to take your dog with you when you leave the car. But, you ask, how can I take my rowdy dog into a store? Read on!

**5. Teach your dog to heel.** In terms of dog etiquette, this is the kind of behavior that will earn you both a gold star. If you can teach your dog to heel, no matter how many distractions there are around, your dog will be welcome everywhere, even in bookstores, coffee shops, and other public places. It takes training, of course, to get a dog to heel consistently, but if you work on it every day, your dog can develop the skill. Just imagine the freedom this will give you. You'll be able to take your dog into any city, any office building, anyone's home, without worrying about its behavior. At this rate, you and your dog will never have to be apart, and that's the goal, right? After all, it's what your dog wants most in the entire world!