

## **The Secrets of Owning a Dog** **by Terry Powell**

The most obvious secret is that dogs never need to be trained to learn to "love" because it just comes so naturally to them; like breathing. Here are some other secrets of owning a dog.

1. Love them. Play with them. Love them some more, so they want to live ... with YOU! Your dog is the most powerful anti-depressant that will love you unconditionally.
2. Remember that your dog is your pet. Provide structure and routine through reward based training. Your pet will respect you even more for giving him/her rules and guidelines.
3. Never let your dog run free outdoors ... ANYWHERE outdoors. Open 'leash-free' dog parks are safer places for your dog to run, but they are subject to predator hawk attacks from above. Small dogs, young puppies, and injured dogs are food "prey" to large raptor birds.
4. Don't give your dog 'tiny tidbits' from the table:
  - (a.) it's only a teaspoon to you, but it's comparatively a cupful or more to a little dog,
  - (b.) human food is too high in fat, which can cause pancreatitis in dogs.
5. Always measure the food amount you give your pet; an overweight dog will lead a shorter, health impaired life.
6. Play with your dog. Not only will your dog do its best to try to entertain you, the interaction will make the bond between the two of you even stronger.
7. Never "trust" that the gate in your fenced in yard will always be shut. Delivery /Utility people may unintentionally leave your gate open.
8. If you walk your dog, always put the leash on the dog *before* you open the door to go out.
9. When putting on your pet's collar/ harness or leash, make sure there is nothing near you that these items can get caught on. If you are sitting in a

chair, make sure the leash cannot get caught in the arms rest or any type of wood trim.

10. Shut basement (and lock if possible) any doors leading to any stairway when playing with either dogs or kids.

11. Always hold your dog's leash securely while out walking. If you are in a vehicle, your dog needs to be secured with a seat belt harness, crate, or booster seat. Dogs have been known to jump out of car windows or jerk on their leash to chase a squirrel, cat, dog, or even a rolling ball.

12. Don't let your pet play with electrical wires, cords, outlets or appliances. Check to ensure electrical cords from wall sockets are anchored, especially if your dog is teething or is a chewer. Keep appliance electrical cords from dangling from counters, ironing boards or tables. Your dog may see a dangling cord as an invitation to play. Anchor electrical cords from wall sockets away from dog's access. Insert baby locks into unused plugs.

13. Pet safe antifreeze products do exist, and they typically contain propylene glycol, which is less toxic than ethylene glycol but they can still cause intoxication. Your dog will get sick when they lick any type of anti-freeze, and since anti-freeze is made with sugar or corn thickeners, your dog is going to be enticed to taste.

14. Never let dogs have access to your yarn, needlework or sewing supplies. Dogs can choke on yarn, pins or sewing needles. A dog can cut their tongue chewing on a pair of scissors.

15. Your dog needs a yearly vet check-up, and kept current on all immunizations. Your vet may recommend a checkup yearly for the first seven years, then a bi-yearly checkup as your dog ages.

16. Give your dog the prescribed flea and tick control meds and all other medications only as directed by your vet.

17. Never give your pet any human medications unless your vet prescribes the medication. There are some human medications that are toxic to dogs and cats. Human medications that may be prescribed by your vet for your dog may be toxic to your cat. Always check with your vet prior to giving a pet any kind of human medication!

18. Keep all medications out of your pet's reach. Medical containers and tubes may look like a toy and can cause harm if the medication is ingested.

19. Bring your pet indoors in cold weather, no matter their size.

20. If you live in an area where poisonous snakes, frogs, scorpions, or spiders are abundant, check with your local officials to see if they offer courses on training dogs to NOT attack snakes, or any poisonous local critters. Sign up and take the course WITH your dog.

21. Buy a dog coat for your dog to wear outdoor in the winter. Dogs feel the cold too.

22. Do not let your dog ride in the car with its head outside the window, as much as they love to feel the wind in their face. Dog's eyes cannot blink faster than the combined speed of a flying insect and your miles per hour.

23. Bathe your dog regularly. The breed of dog and your vet will help determine what how frequently you should bathe your dog. Baths will help keep your dog's skin clean and healthy.

24. Brush, comb or groom your dog regularly. Learn how to tell when his toenails need trimming, and how to trim them. Learn how to clean his ears, and contact your vet if your dogs ears smell or have any type of brown. Your vet or groomer can show you how to do regular nail and ear maintenance at home.

25. Every dog deserves and needs a place of their own where they know they can rest undisturbed. A nice dog bed and a quiet spot will do the trick.

26. When training a dog, remember he/she really wants to please you, so your praise for doing good is almost his/her favorite reward. A favorite reward is tiny bits of dog treats.

27. Purchase a metal tag for your dog's collar with his/her name and your phone number on the tag. If your pet is lost, he/she will understand a friend is someone who knows his/her name. Train your pet to let people read the collar tag. Get your pet micro-chipped, and keep the information up to date.

28. Teach your dog to "drop it" on your command. Most dogs will pick up anything that smells tasty outdoors, or indoors, too.

29. Don't let strangers touch or pick up your dog without your intervention. A startled dog may react with a defensive nip.

30. Teach your children that a pet is a living creature and not a toy.

### **Secrets of Owning Older dogs:**

31. When a dog ages, they become more sensitive to drafts, so make sure their favorite snooze place is warm and draft free. Be aware that as your dog ages, they will have a tendency to sleep more.

32. Senior dogs usually tire more easily and will want to take shorter and more frequent walks.

33. Older joints hurt when laying on a hard floor, so a dog bed or old stuffed pillow will feel wonderful to lay on. Check with your vet to see if your pet will benefit from the newer medications to ease any joint or arthritic conditions.

34. The stomachs and intestines of an older dog may be more sensitive to changes in new foods, so switch your pet's food gradually over a few days to a couple of weeks if you decide to switch to another brand of food.

35. Dogs who are allowed on "the couch" may need some assistance when they can no longer jump. You can buy a dog ramp or dog steps for easier access. Dogs that are impaired with vision loss will require special care and supervision, as they may unintentionally walk off the furniture and could possibly get hurt.

36. Always keep clean fresh water in your pet's water bowl. Old dogs are more susceptible to dehydration than a young dog. A dog that is dehydrated can experience serious health issues.

**37. Keep your dog at a healthy weight; cut back on portion sizes and size of treats until your pet is at a good weight for his/her frame. Your vet can provide information on your pet's ideal weight.**

**38. If the unthinkable happens and you lose your pet to an unforeseen accident, tell yourself it was not your fault even if you followed all the rules of good pet ownership, as sometimes things happen that are beyond your control.**

**39. Watch your pet for changes in weight, appetite and water intake. If you see any changes, take your dog to the veterinarian as these can be signs of a health problem.**

**40. When your dog is in pain, or has an illness that is not relieved with medications, talk to your vet about euthanasia. Euthanasia is the hardest decision you will make, yet the most loving gift you will ever give your dog. Your vet will help you decide when the time is right.**