

# Is My Dog Dominant?



## INFO

### No, he really isn't

He's just being a dog. He probably just needs some help with understanding what behaviour we humans prefer.

The notion of dogs wanting to dominate owners and rule the world came from a misunderstanding of wolf pack research that was then applied to pet dogs. Even if the old dominance principle *did* apply to wolves—and research says it doesn't, at least no more than parents are dominant over their children—pet dogs are no more wolves than we are chimpanzees.

### It's not helpful

The term dominance is a label, not a solution. Even worse, it sets us up as in conflict with our dog. If I believe my dog is dominant it follows that I should make him submit to me. This then results in an ongoing battle of wills that is unpleasant for everyone.

A more useful approach is to leave the labels out altogether and simply describe what your dog is doing, decide what you want him to do instead, and then make a plan to change his behaviour.

### It's a non-issue

What is important is the good relationship between you and your dog, and getting training results that allow you to live harmoniously together. Good training sets the human and the dog up to both get what they want so everyone is happy.

- Reward behaviours you like. That will make them happen more often.
- Ignore behaviours you don't like, or redirect your dog to something else if you can't ignore it.
- Teach your dog to "ask" for things he'd like by rewarding polite behaviours like a sit before opening doors, throwing a ball, taking the lead off in the park. This makes it highly likely that your dog will be polite at other times too to get what he wants rather than using pushy, obnoxious behaviour.

With this type of approach, everyone wins. You get a happy well-behaved dog and your dog gets to chase balls, go off lead, sniff other dogs, and eat treats, all of which are high on his list of priorities.

### Training Tip:

Actively watch your dog to capture those moments he is doing something you like—and reward him for it. We often don't really notice dogs doing good things like lying down quietly, chewing on his own toys, waiting at the door, but if we start taking notice, and actively rewarding our dogs for doing things we like they'd spend much more time doing "good things" and far less time "being naughty".



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