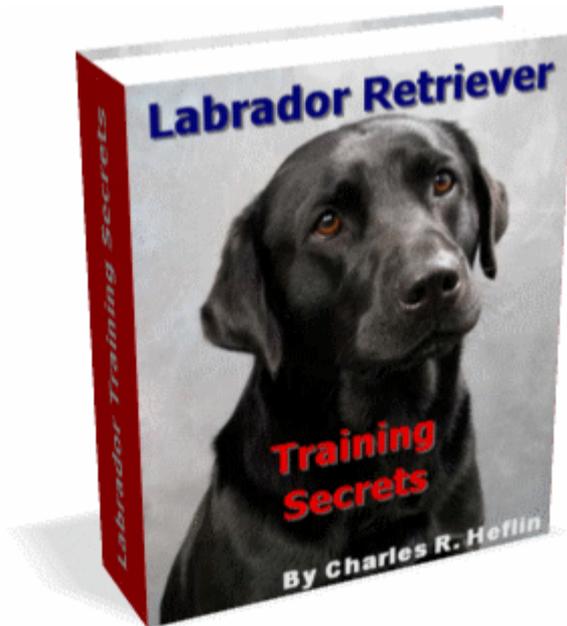


Labrador Retriever Training Secrets



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Foreword

History

You most probably think that a Labrador Retriever ought to be from Labrador, right? Well that is not so! Labs are believed to have originated from Newfoundland. Labrador is situated northwest of Newfoundland so the proximity of Labrador to Newfoundland might have something to do with the name!

The fishermen of Newfoundland extensively used this breed because the fishing boats could not come too close to the shore and this dog swam out into the icy cold water and dragged the nets full of fish back to the men on the shore.

So as fishermen used these dogs to retrieve their catch, they acquired the name “retriever.” That is why these dogs are strong swimmers. They are not too large to be accommodated on fishing boats either.

On shore, these dogs made excellent companions to hunters. They were used to retrieve prey that the English hunters brought down! These Englishmen inhabited the St. John’s area of Newfoundland. These hunters were responsible for bringing the dogs to England through the Poole Harbor of Dorset, which was the center of the fishing trade of Newfoundland.

These are some of the reasons that you might find the Labrador Retriever being also referred to by the following names too!

- 1 Black Water Dog
- 2 English Labrador
- 3 English Retriever
- 4 Labrador Dog

- 5 Lesser Labrador
- 6 Lesser Newfoundland Dog
- 7 Lesser St. John's Dog
- 8 Little Newfoundlander
- 9 Newfoundland Dog
- 10 Newfoundland Water Dog
- 11 Smaller Labrador
- 12 St. John's Dog
- 13 St. John's Labrador Dog

Appearance

The Labrador Retriever is a dog with a strong and medium build. It has an athletic well-muscled get up – with no excess fat. This get up enables it to function for long hours under tough conditions. Its stable temperament makes it an ideal family dog. Its mental characteristics and physical features make it a winner in the show rings too.

A distinguishing feature about the Lab is its tail. Best described as an “otter” tail, this tail is thick at the base and gradually tapers towards the tip. It is of medium length – no longer than the hock. It follows the top-line of the dog when at rest and in motion. It gives the Lab a beautiful flowing line that starts from the top of his head to the tip of his lovely tail.

Another distinguishing feature about the Lab is its beautiful coat. You can only gape in open-mouthed wonder at Mother Nature’s generosity in her creations. The Lab’s fur coat is so unique to the conditions that it originally lived in! The Lab is endowed with a short and dense water repellent coat. This gives a rather hard feel

to the hand. Beneath this is a soft weather resistant undercoat that gives the dog protection from water and cold conditions. The coat can be wavy down the back. Woolly, soft silky coats, or slick coats are just not true of this fine breed!

Traits

The nicest trait about Labrador Retrievers is that they are very people oriented. They love spending time with people whom they love. They would rather lick a person to death than hurt him.

They are good with children too. They have a stable temperament. Hence they do not get easily upset by strange noises or occurrences. They take things in stride.

And, being retrievers, they will happily fetch things for you. Consider that these retrievers require some action and exercise and these action-oriented dogs require good training in order to be good pets!

An untrained Lab can turn out to be unmanageable. This is partly due to his size and partly due to his unbridled enthusiasm! Lack of exercise can turn a Lab into a destructive creature. Destruction is a way for him to work out his excessive energy and utter boredom. Your Lab thrives on love and attention. So do not ignore him once he is in your care and possession. A Labrador is an intelligent animal and can be easily trained.

A well-trained pet

If you want a lovely Lab trotting majestically at your heels, it is very important for you to ensure that he is properly trained. So invest some time and energy in training this intelligent animal during the early stages of his life. Do this and you will reap the benefits multi-fold!

Chapter 1

Introduction

Know your Labrador Retriever

When you adopt a Labrador Retriever puppy you do not know what kind of a dog he will grow up to be. He could turn out to be just anything!

- 1 Energetic or placid.
- 2 Sweet tempered or just plain hard headed.
- 3 A good-natured goofy or just plain serious.
- 4 An outgoing “I love everybody” dog or a shy away introvert!

However, a conventional Labrador Retriever’s nature and attitude towards life is by and large like this.

- ✓ A cheerful, tail-wagging dog
- ✓ A dog that loves athletic activities and enjoys dynamic exercise.
- ✓ A dependable dog that has an even temper.
- ✓ A dog that can co-exist peacefully with other animals.
- ✓ A dog that is eager to please you!
- ✓ An easy to train dog.
- ✓ A large, bouncy dog with giant-sized enthusiasm towards life.

You must also be aware of some aspects about Labrador Retrievers that may not suit your lifestyle.

- ◇ This dog has vigorous exercise requirements.
- × It is a very high-energy dog with behavior that verges on exuberance.
- × They can be extremely boisterous if not given sufficient scope to work off their energy.
- × They can suffer from ‘separation anxiety’ if left alone for

too long. This can lead to destructive behavior and excessive barking.

- × They can exhibit "mouthiness", i.e., mouthing your hands or picking up and chewing objects.
- × This dog sheds quite a lot of hair.
- × Some Labs have quite a few health problems
- × Some Labs may be neurotic.

Major concerns regarding Labrador Retrievers

Besides the above factors, you must really pay attention to a few other major concerns regarding the adoption of a Lab.

1 Temperament

This breed was known for its dependable, sweet-natured temperament. But the breed paid its price for popularity! Irresponsible breeding by unscrupulous breeders led to the dilution of that lovely temperament. Today you come across numerous Labs that can be termed neurotic, hyperactive, dominant, or even aggressive.

2 Love of the great outdoors!

Labs are large dogs and must be provided enough opportunities to exercise those strong muscles. This is not possible if you are the indoor type. Your Lab simply must be taken out and allowed to run around and work off all his exuberance. Originally bred to retrieve game, this dog enjoys long runs. Hiking, biking, and swimming are also conducive to the Lab's temperament. Lack of physical exercise will turn the dog into a rather destructive and bored animal. This could prove to be quite detrimental to your house and yard too!

3 Liveliness

Oh yeah! These dogs are very lively! Especially until they reach about 3 years of age! They can jump and run and swamp you with their loving, though rather slobbering licks! This is all part and parcel of this lumbering, loving dog! But if you have very small children or elderly frail people at home, your Labs rather excessive liveliness may not go down too well with them. And you definitely do not want any accidents where your dog knocks people down or sends things flying.

4 Shedding

Getting rid of doggy hair can be quite cumbersome! Though not a very longhaired dog, this dog sheds quite a bit of hair. His hair can even come off on your hands as you pet him. You will even find it on your furnishings, carpets, and clothing.

5 Separation anxiety

These dogs simply love company and pine if left alone for too long! Do you know how they express their displeasure? They turn destructive! You might find your house in shambles by the time you return from your long outing. Outlets for their displeasure include excessive barking and chewing on your precious belongings. So if you work long hours and there is no one at home, then this dog is not for you.

6 Health Problems

Labs can encounter numerous health problems. Bone problems, rickety joints, eye problems, and heart problems are all possible with Labs.

How to Select a Labrador Retriever

1 Adopt an adult Labrador Retriever

The advantage of adopting an adult Lab is that you know the temperament of the dog. There will be no unpleasant surprises! You get what you see!

Where do I get an adult Labrador Retriever?

The best place to look for an adult dog would be a Breed Rescue Organization. The dog could be there for any number of reasons. Death or illness of an owner could result in the dog landing in a Rescue Organization.

The lovely thing about Labs is that they are very people centric. So even an older dog will adapt easily to you. Dogs in rescue are normally well cared for. All they need is a loving new home. The national coordinator for the Labrador Rescue program is Luanne Lindsey of Texas. Her number is 512-259-3645. Fax is 512-259-5227.

2 But I want to adopt a puppy!

So you want a Labrador Retriever puppy. But how do you go about selecting an appropriate pup? Initially, make your basic decisions. Decide first whether you want a male or a female pup. Then decide on the color of the pup that you want. What sort of temperament should your ideal dog have?

Once you are clear about your requirements, contact your local kennel club to get a list of responsible breeders. Talk to each breeder to ensure that he meets your standards.

Responsible breeders will X-ray their stock for elbow and hip dysplasia. A good breeder will also show their dogs in field trials, hunts, or obedience competitions. Thus such dogs will be of good stock, clean, healthy, and properly housed.

You should feel comfortable with the breeder of your choice. You should be able to freely discuss with him any matter regarding the Lab such as their breeding programs, goals, or just any other general information.

After you have found a breeder of your choice, allow him to help you with the selection of a pup. A good breeder will have a pretty good idea about the kind of pup that will suit your requirement.

3 What is the difference between a Labrador and a Retriever?

None. The dog is known as a ‘Retriever’ as hunters used it to retrieve game on land as well as water. It is known as a ‘Labrador’ as it originally came from Newfoundland that is quite close to Labrador.

There are 6 types of Retrievers that are recognized by the American Kennel Club.

- 1 Labrador Retrievers
- 2 Chesapeake Bay Retrievers
- 3 Curly Coated Retrievers
- 4 Flat Coated Retrievers
- 5 Golden Retrievers
- 6 Irish Water Spaniels

4 Do Labrador Retrievers shed a lot of their coat?

Yes. It is rather surprising, isn't it, that such a shorthaired dog can shed so much! Well here is a surprise. These dogs actually have two coats. One is a soft undercoat and the other is a harder guard coat. These two coats help repel water when the dog swims. The outer coat keeps the dog warm.

Labs normally shed their coats twice a year. This process is called "Blowing." So at this time you will have a lot of hair on your hands! At other times of the year they shed moderate amounts of hair.

5 How much grooming do Labrador Retrievers require?

Not much but they do need to be brushed down once a week in order to keep them clean. You could get a 'slicker' type brush from any pet store for this purpose.

When you can hear your doggie's toenails clattering on the floor, it is time to clip the nails. So you should acquire some nail clippers to accomplish this job. Learn the right method of clipping from your vet.

You do not need to bathe your Lab very often. A bath is necessary only when your pet starts smelling rather bad! This is the time to shampoo him down well and proper. To get rid of dust and mud rinse him off with just plain water and wait until he is dry and brush out the dirt.

Too much shampooing washes out the natural oils from the dog's coat. And a proper oily coat is necessary to repel

water!

6 Are Labrador Retrievers good guard dogs?

If you want a dog to serve the purpose of a guard dog, then a Labrador Retriever is not the right choice. They are far too affectionate and people loving to make good guard dogs.

7 What sort of work are Labrador Retrievers good for?

Labs are, of course, excellent hunting companions as they were originally bred to retrieve game on both land and water. They make simply great pets, as they are so large hearted with oodles of affection.

Their affectionate nature qualifies them to become outstanding therapy dogs. They are such a source of comfort and solace to the lonely, elderly, and ailing! Their sharp sense of smell can be put to great use in sniffing out narcotics or bombs. Since they are easily trainable they make superb service dogs.

8 In what colors can Labrador Retrievers be found?

The usual colors that Labs are available in are black, chocolate, and yellow. Quite often yellow labs are referred to as Golden Labradors. Actually the color yellow ranges from nearly white to fox-red or gold. However, the Golden Retriever is quite different from the Labrador.

9 Do Labrador Retrievers like swimming?

They love to swim and take to water quite naturally. This again stems from the fact that their ancestors were trained to retrieve game from water. But this does not mean that you can just toss your little pup into the water and expect him to swim. He has to learn how to swim just like he has to learn everything else.

If there is an adult dog to imitate, your pup will learn how to swim from him. If not you too could wade into the water and let him follow. But just watch out for those sharp little puppy claws! They will really dig into you if he tries to climb up on you while in the water!

When you first introduce your pup to a large body of water, let the entry be very gradual. There should be no current in the water and there should be no sharp drop. Allow your pup to splash around by himself. Gradually he will gain the confidence to go deeper and swim on his own.

A word of warning, do not let your dog go alone into the water. Even if your dog is a good swimmer, he might find it difficult to get out. He also needs help to get out of the pool. Another thing is that Labs shed quite a lot of hair, so check your filter to prevent it from getting clogged with doggie hair.

10 How are Labradors with children?

By and large Labs are very good with children. But do not let pups and children be alone together unsupervised. Neither of them is really aware of their strength or size. They could accidentally harm or hurt each other.

A Lab would never hurt anyone intentionally. However, they could knock a child over in their exuberance to play. Vice versa, a child could also hurt the pup! You have to teach your child how to play with the pup. You also have to train the pup about how it must behave with a child. Please remember that if your Lab is not exercised sufficiently he is more likely to cause accidents.

Chapter 2

Why is training essential?

Training is a part and parcel of everyday life. It may not occur to you, but you are imparting training to your dog whenever you bar him from doing something he oughtn't. When you encourage him to do something good and positive, that too is training.

Training is a process of guiding your dog to a happy and healthy lifestyle. Training has so many advantages. Here are a few of them.

- 1 Training will help your Lab become a well-adjusted animal in the human scheme of life.
- 2 His good manners will also earn him good friends.
- 3 He will be an asset to you.
- 4 He will be a pet that you will be proud to show to your friends.
- 5 You will enjoy taking your trained dog for walks.
- 6 He will not be an embarrassment to you on your outings, as he will not unnecessarily chase other dogs or kids.
- 7 He will not pick fights with other animals either.
- 8 Training him keeps your house free of doggie poop and pee.
- 9 Your trained Lab will not steal food.
- 10 He will not nip your friend's ankles or jump up on guests.

You are doing your Lab a great big favor by training him. Training stimulates his brain and awakens his intelligence. You train your dog because he deserves it. He is a beautiful animal who must spend his life beside you amidst a loving family. He must definitely not be relegated to the dark recesses of a garage or tied to a stake in the yard. Are these not reasons enough for a responsible dog owner to train his pet dog?

1 Pack Behavior

Training a dog establishes the master and follower relationship. Dogs are basically pack animals. That is why they easily accept a master as their leader. In a pack, the one who gives the commands sets the rules, and makes the decisions is considered to be the leader.

Their pack mentality is what enables dogs to carve a comfortable niche for themselves among humans. Isn't it nice to know that even if your family comprises of only you, your Lab will consider it as a pack to which he belongs. You will not find any cat following any such behavioral patterns. Cats are solitary creatures.

A dog loves to belong! So if your Lab is given the clear message that you are the boss and he is the subordinate, you will find it easier to train him!

On the flip side, if you do not establish yourself as the leader, you will find yourself facing a very queer situation indeed! If you are not the leader your dog will consider it his duty to take on the role of leader himself.

How will this behavior manifest itself? Your doggie will start exhibiting rather rude and disrespectful behavior. Of course your doggie does not really realize that his behavior is rude or disrespectful, he is merely doing what a doggie pack leader does.

2 Follower dogs

Labrador Retrievers just love being follower dogs. In the doggie world things are much simpler! When you are the leader whom your dog can implicitly trust, then things are just cool for him. He does not have to be concerned about anything at all. He knows that you have things under control. While he follows instructions, you

take care of all the decision-making. You are the one who keeps things under absolute control. He needs to have no concern with the complicated happenings of the human world around him.

Your Lab laps up the appreciation and compliments that people around him shower him with! He thrives on love! And he is an intelligent animal. So when you teach him anything, he learns it quite easily. Since he is so willing to learn and listen, you on your part find it easy to teach him good positive behavior. Goodness is contagious. So because your Lab is well behaved and content, you find it an easy and joyful experience to take him out with you wherever you go. As a result he loves this and loves you even more. Oh what a wonderful life dogs lead!

To add icing to the cake, a dog that is a follower knows that the consequences of his behavior are tons of praises, plenty of petting, and heaps of rewards. So why would the dog want to be anything else? The intelligent animal that your dog is also knows just the kind of behavior for which he will be scolded and reprimanded, so he steers clear of that sort of behavior too!

A well-trained dog soon understands the meaning of human sounds. With this he develops a sense of belonging to the human pack! He feels he understands what is happening around him and feels in sync!

Another interesting thing to note is that a dog that is a follower tends to have a better-developed brain! In other words, the more you teach and the more he learns, the more his brain tends to become stronger and faster! What an interesting state of affairs! The more he is taught, the more his capacity to learn new things increases.

3 Teaching Respect

Once your Labrador Retriever learns to respect you as his pack leader, you will find it much easier to teach him anything. This is because dogs want to please the leaders whom they respect. They are happy being followers.

Your Lab will love you, as all dogs just blindly love their masters. But he will respect you only if you have earned his respect. And always keep in mind that teaching him to respect you will in no way diminish his love for you. What must be uppermost in your mind is that if you want to take proper care of him, you must teach him to respect you. Respect is something that will create a mutually beneficial bond.

4 Educating your Labrador Retriever

Once you have taught your dog to respect you, you have begun the process of educating him. You were sent to school to get an education and as a result you can live peacefully in society today! Similarly, an educated dog will find it easy to adjust well in the environs of human society.

When you educate your dog, you teach him lots of words and their meanings too. While this process is happening, your dog is gradually building up his respect for you. He is learning to see you as a leader who is fair, worthy of respect, and a capable leader. This brings about a change in his attitude towards you; his behavior will become much better towards you.

Once your Lab has acquired an education, he becomes a happy, smart, and confident pet. A veritable pleasure to own! With an understanding of some of the words of the human language he has become very confident. His education has equipped him with the knowledge of how to exhibit good behavior. He also knows what is

considered bad behavior.

The fact that he knows what to do, as well as what not to do, makes him so very secure too! Dogs simply love security. In his little world you are the giver of knowledge and dispeller of darkness. So you are the absolute light of his little universe! He knows you are a person whom he can trust and look up to. Since he believes in you, he will do just about anything for you. Isn't this what you want from your loving pet dog?

Another thing that you must realize is that if you want to enjoy the benefits of a true companion, you must educate your Lab. An uneducated Lab will be just another casual pet. He will never get to be the dog that he could have been. He will never get to know his own capabilities or his own true worth. And you must have heard the ancient saying that says, "A mind is indeed a terrible thing to waste." So put in your best effort and train your lovely Lab!

A Labrador retriever is such an intelligent animal that he could actually be classified as a true "thinking" dog. He looks at your face, gauges your facial expression, understands your body language, and listens very carefully to what you say. What a lovely pet to have for a companion. So make the most of it!

Dogs are not human – they are canines

In all our enthusiasm in showering our pets with love and affection and care and cuddles, we sometimes tend to overlook the fact that our four-legged furry companion does not belong to the human species. Unless we take enough care to see that he learns the nuances of being accepted into human society, he will exhibit his predominantly canine traits and characteristics.

1 Barking for no apparent reason

Barking is a very natural phenomenon for a Labrador Retriever. It was a means of communication of the dog with his master when

the dog was used to retrieve hunted game. Today a dog that is domesticated and brought home to be a pet and companion will bark for numerous other reasons. Some of these reasons could be as follows.

- 1 When he is bored, lonely, distressed or scared.
- 2 To attract attention.
- 3 Barking when defending his territory.

Excessive barking can also be accompanied by howling, which sounds really sad and morose. But there are very simple remedies for this excessive barking in most cases.

- 1 Exercise
- 2 Healthy food
- 3 Plenty of love
- 4 Tender care

Make your dog feel wanted. Regulate the temperature of the room so that it is in comfortable levels. Do not leave him in a dark room. Dark rooms can be rather desolate. Leave a light on if you are unlikely to be home before it gets dark. To give him a feeling of companionship, turn the television set on or let there be some music fill the room. All of these factors will add up to reducing his tendency to bark or howl in excess.

2 Soiling the house and surrounding environment

This is a lesson that must be taught very early in the dog's life. Otherwise, life will be really 'messy' for both you and your dog. You must teach your dog that he is to relieve himself only in the spot that you designate for him. He has to be taught in no uncertain terms that he cannot relieve himself anywhere else. It is absolutely forbidden.

Dogs have a habit of marking their territory by squirting their boundaries with urine. You have to curb this habit of his too. Otherwise, you stand the risk of having your curtains, upholstery,

and furnishings squirted with smelly stuff. He needs to understand that when he is part of a family he cannot keep marking his territory.

When he does accidentally soil the place, you have to clean up with organic digesters to rid the place of any remnants of smell. If any smell remains, he is likely to soil that area again. You must never use bleach or ammonia for cleansing. Both of these cleansing agents closely resemble doggie urine.

3 Dragging things all over the house

Labrador Retrievers are given to dragging stuff all over the house. It is part of their natural instinct as hunters and retrievers. So if you are careless enough to leave your clothes or shoes lying around, you will find your doggie dragging them and leaving them all over the house. Thus in the initial stages of the pup's life you will have to be careful about stowing your things away in cupboards and closets.

And do not forget magazines, newspapers, or any other documents too! Your pup could pick up just about anything that catches his fancy. So store your papers safely in your desk and your magazines in appropriate racks that your dog cannot get at!

One way of distracting your pup from your belongings is to give him his own toys to play with. Also, provide him with plenty of physical exercise so that he works off all his excess energy and is too tired to attack your belongings. A tired dog will not be inclined to disturbing your possessions.

4 Chewing your precious possessions

You do not want the marks of sharp little puppy teeth on your furniture or other knick-knacks that may be lying around the

house, do you? So put away potential objects of attack in safe, inaccessible to the puppy places. Those objects that cannot be put away should be coated with bitter apple. This is a spray that a puppy naturally abhors.

When you catch him in the act of chewing, you can cut the process short by making a loud noise. Then tell him “No” in a very firm and authoritative voice. You can give him one of his toys to chew on instead.

5 Digging holes

Digging is another very common doggie trait. Your Lab will dig to bury bones, chase and retrieve prey, or just for the sake of entertaining himself. Digging is a very inherent characteristic for a Retriever, so you really have to use your ingenuity to prevent him from doing so.

It is also a trait that you, as a Lab owner, will not really like. After all, you do not want unsightly holes appearing all over your well-manicured or smooth, clean yard. So one good idea would be to provide one area of your yard where your Lab can dig to his heart’s content. This intelligent animal will soon recognize the area where he can freely dig.

Another thing that you will have to ensure is to keep your yard and garden free of other living creatures such as rodents, rabbits, or raccoons. The presence of these animals can trigger your doggie’s hunter instincts and drive him simply berserk.

6 Dog fights

When you have a well-trained Labrador Retriever with you, you will find that he will not get into unnecessary scrapes with other animals. This is because of the discipline that training ingrains in him. When you are with him and you sense that things are getting

rather tense and a fight may be in the offing, just ask him to sit or stay. Then, gradually diffuse the situation by slowly taking him away from the potentially volatile scene.

Do not yell or scream at your dog. This will only excite him further and add fuel to the fire. If a dogfight does start, spray the sparring dogs with water, preferably from a hose. Aim at the legs and not at the head.

If there is no water hose near by, the owners must try to grab their respective dogs by their tails to break up the fight. Grabbing the dog's tail will lift the dog's hind legs off the ground. This will startle them and take their minds off the fight.

Once the fight is history, make your dog understand that this kind of behavior will not be accepted or condoned. You have to be very firm about this.

7 Chasing cars or kids

The instinct to chase anything that moves comes very naturally to Labs. If you train him then he will listen to your command to refrain from chasing. In the kind of world we live in today, the objects that your doggie is likely to chase are cars or kids! Chasing kids could be disastrous if your dog catches the child and sinks his teeth into the little child. So you have to prevent your dog from giving in to his chasing instincts.

8 Biting without any provocation

Here are some factors that can be instrumental in exciting your dog into sinking his sharp teeth into a persons flesh.

- × Anger
- × Fear
- × Illness
- × Sudden movements

× Unexpected noises

How do you recognize the fact that your dog may be bracing himself to attack? Observe whether his ears are lying low against his head, his hair standing up on his back and legs, or he is emitting deep and low throaty growls. These are indications that he is going into self-defense mode. So watch out!

So what should you do when you are faced with such a situation? FREEZE. Yes, do not move. Quick movements only frighten the dog further. Slowly count up to five under your breath. Then move very slowly. Slow movements are indications that you are not his enemy.

Another thing NOT TO DO is staring into your dog's eyes. Your dog will get the feeling that you are daring him to attack. Also, never shout at him or throw any sticks or stones. Once your dog is calm, he will listen to you. If you still find him snappy, it would be best to consult your vet. Extreme cases might require your dog to be muzzled.

Why do I need to train my Labrador Retriever? After all he is just going to be a companionable pet!

Because you are human and your dog belongs to the canine species. Obviously there are so many differences between you both. He is a four-legged furry animal with a tail and he speaks no known human language. He simply barks. Yet a dog is known to be man's best friend! How is this possible? How do you as a human communicate with him?

The answer to this is training. Training your dog is a means of communicating with him. Training makes your dog happier since it takes care of his basic instinct to follow a leader. Training in obedience also makes his life safer in the environs of human habitation. Above all when you train your dog

your bonding with him increases multi-fold. These are sufficient reasons for you to train your pet Labrador Retriever.

I want my Labrador Retriever to be my friend. So why should I want to consolidate my position as the leader?

Understand that your Lab is totally dependent on you for his very existence. You provide him with food and shelter. You look after his every need whether he is well or in ill health. The goofy animal simply does not understand that stones and sticks in his mouth can hurt him. Neither does he understand that the bitter pills and potions that you force down his throat are for his own good.

Friends are our equals. There is no question of a master and follower relationship in a friendship. But a friendship sort of a relationship will just not work with a dog! He is, after all, dependent on you for everything. So you must establish yourself as the undisputed leader of the pack. He will respect you for being the pack leader. Rest assured that there will be absolutely no resentment from his side.

Chapter 3

Selecting a dog trainer

Training your Labrador Retriever yourself is a good option. But if for some reason you are unable to do so, either due to scarcity of time or a very demanding work schedule, what is your next best option? Well you can seek the services of a professional dog trainer.

You have to be very careful about selecting a good dog trainer and so you must know what to look for in the person you select. We shall go through some of the qualities that the American Dog Trainers Network (ADTN) looks for in their affiliates.

1 **Reputation**

A good trainer must have an excellent reputation. So ask around and evaluate the kind of answers you get from various people who have known the trainer. The categories of people you could contact for references include vets, the ASPCA, your city's animal humane societies, and other reputed trainers in your area.

2 **Experience**

Experience is another important point of consideration where training is concerned. Question the trainer about the number of years he has been in the business of training dogs. Ask him about his areas of expertise. Put forth any other questions that might come to mind. You have every right to clarify your doubts.

3 **Genuine love for dogs**

This should be one of the foremost qualities that will shine in the trainer's eyes. You will be able to recognize it at once. It is either there or it is not. A genuine lover of dogs will simply be

passionate about dogs. He will answer all your queries about dogs with great ease, care, and concern.

4 Knowledge

A good trainer will keep himself up to date with all the latest dog training and handling techniques. Whenever possible he will attend dog training conferences or seminars to meet with other trainers and exchange views and news. You can ask the trainers you meet about their methods of keeping up to date with the latest changes in dog training land.

5 Humane training methodologies & animal handling skills

A good trainer will have the welfare of his animals uppermost in his mind at all times. Hence they will never indulge in abusive or harsh handling methods as they are well aware of the fact that harsh handling is only counter-productive.

6 Good communication & interactive skills

These skills are obviously in the trainers favor. A trainer who can speak and interact well with his enthusiastic dog owners will obviously be knowledgeable about his wards. He will also make learning a lively and enjoyable process.

7 A sense of humor

This is an additional bonus for both the dog and the owner. Humor can be fun for everyone concerned.

8 Ethics

Check out whether the trainer you are considering is in the business for the love of money or for the love of his wards. Nothing is wrong in earning your bread from dog training, but ethics in any play an important role in any business. Use your discretion in making such judgments.

Ask the right questions

In order to make a correct assessment of your trainer you must know the right questions to ask. Some of these questions could be as follows.

- What is a Labrador Retrievers general temperament like?
- What will my Lab's weight and height be when he reaches his full size?
- How will a Lab react to kids?
- What are the chronic problems that are normally associated with Labs?
- What is the normal life expectancy of a Lab?
- How much hair does a Lab shed?
- Do Labs require a lot of grooming?
- Are Labs easy to train?
- Are Labrador Retrievers noisy dogs?
- What kind of special care will you have to give a Lab?

Advantages of finding the right trainer

- 1 A professional dog trainer will diminish your dog's behavioral problems.
- 2 A good trainer will use only positive reinforcement for training.
- 3 This will make your Lab a happy and well-educated dog.
- 4 As a trainer would have handled a vast cross section of dogs, he will easily be able to identify the nature of your dog. With this he will be able to employ the right kind of strategy to train your pet.

Trainers to avoid

- 1 Trainers who give guarantees about their results. This is just not possible with any living creature. Dogs too have minds and will powers of their own, which just cannot be controlled or dominated by anyone.
- 2 Trainers who use physical punishments on their dogs. If the trainer recommends that you punish your dog to get him to obey, just walk out of there. And never go back or recommend that guy to anyone. He has no understanding of doggie nature.
- 3 Watch out for untrained people who try to pass off as professional trainers. They have neither the qualifications nor the natural flair for training dogs.

Selecting a dog trainer

While you are in the process of selecting a professional trainer for your dog, you can ask the prospective trainer whether you can actually witness a class in progress before you sign your pooch up for training.

A good trainer should have no objection to your attending a class. When you attend a class you must look out for the following factors.

- 1 What is the size of the class? The number of animals in the class must be small so that they can get proper individual attention.
- 2 Are puppies and dogs accommodated in the same class?
- 3 Does the trainer separate the dogs into different levels of training? The different levels could be as follows.
 - Beginners
 - Intermediate
 - Advanced
- 4 What methods does he use for training? Are they harsh or humane? If harsh methods are being used walk out of the class.

- 5 Is the trainer being flexible enough to modify his methods to suit the individual needs of various dogs?
- 6 Do the dogs look happy in the class? What about the owners, do they look happy?
- 7 Is the trainer encouraging participation in class activities from the owners?
- 8 Does he give the owners homework to do with their dogs once they get back home?
- 9 Does the trainer praise the dogs when they learn their lessons well?
- 10 Does he insist that your dog must be vaccinated before he enrolls for the class? Does he ask for a vaccination certificate as proof of vaccination?
- 11 Is he forthcoming in information regarding grooming techniques, learning, or any other doggie related problems?

Necessary precautions

There are some other precautions that you need to take before you take your Lab to a training class. They are as follows.

- 1 Get a clean certificate of health from your vet just to ensure that your doggie is not infested with any parasite such as ticks or fleas.
- 2 Do not give your dog a huge meal just before taking him to a class. For one, a heavy meal will make him slow and sluggish. Secondly, most trainers use treats rather generously to encourage dogs to learn. So let your doggie also have enough space in his stomach to enjoy his doggie treats at school.
- 3 Practice whatever is taught at doggie school with your pooch at home. This is to ensure that he learns his lessons well.
- 4 If the trainer asks you to bring any training equipment along for the class, please ensure that you do so.
- 5 It is good for you to know that taking your dog to a class helps him to socialize well with other dogs too.

If you require any more information about dog trainers, you can contact the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT) P.O. Box 385 Davis, CA 95617800-PET-DOGS.

∂ ‘What would it cost to get my Lab trained professionally?’

Training can cost anything from \$30 to \$60 per hour. Costs normally depend upon the area where you are located. It also depends on the kind of class you select. If you want your dog to get individual attention then the cost could go up. Group training sessions will cost less. Some animal shelters offer subsidized training ranging from \$35 to \$90 for the entire course! So you could check these options out too.

∂ ‘Can you suggest who would be the best person to train my Lab? I mean at home, not professional.’

Any member of the family can train your Lab. This is what is so lovely about this training technique. You need no special qualifications. Patience, persistence, and consistency are all you require to turn out a well-behaved dog. But it is necessary that the dog recognizes one member of your family as the undisputed leader.

Chapter 4

Advantages of training

The chief advantage of training your Labrador Retriever is that it establishes you as the leader and him as the follower. So he knows that he must obey you, as that is his place in the hierarchy of human society. And when you have a well-trained educated dog, you have opened up a great way to communicate with your canine friend and companion.

From the Lab's point of view, it is to his advantage to learn just what kind of behavior is acceptable in human society. He can only learn this when he is trained and taught by a human being. And that human being is you, as his owner and the person responsible for making his life on Earth comfortable!

What happens if your Lab is not trained?

The poor guy is at a total loss! He does not know what you expect from him. He behaves just as his natural doggy instincts dictate. And these instincts include digging the yard as he pleases, barking excessively, digging, mouthing, and humping. Wouldn't you cut a sorry figure with your friends and relatives if you owned such a dog?

An untrained dog normally makes a nuisance of himself wherever he happens to be. This adds to the general anti-dog feeling among people as a whole. The dog lovers' fraternity will simply not appreciate such anti-dog sentiments.

Surprisingly quite a number of dog owners are of the opinion that when they bring a puppy home, the little fellow will soon learn the ways of his human family by himself. But this is far from the truth. The little guy has to be given a formal schooling. Otherwise he will live by his natural instincts and become an embarrassment to you and your family.

1 Excessive Barking

Have you ever been kept awake by a dog that would not stop barking or howling through the night? If yes, you know just how irritating such behavior from a dog can be! And this is not just restricted to you alone. The whole neighborhood will turn hostile if you have a dog that barks too much.

It is a dog's natural instinct to bark. But a dog that is a family pet will bark in excess if he is bored. And when does he become bored?

- 5 When he has not received enough exercise to keep those strong muscles well toned.
- 6 When he is lonely, afraid, or depressed.
- 7 When he is desperately seeking attention.
- 8 When he is defending his territory.

So how does training curb excessive barking or howling? A well-trained Lab will willingly follow you wherever you take him to exercise his limbs. You will also enjoy taking out a dog that is obedient and listens to your commands.

It is a good idea to exercise your Lab just before you go out for the day. In this way he can come back and rest his weary muscles. Leave a lot of his playthings around for him to amuse himself with while you are away. This way he will not just lie moping around or worse still disturb the neighborhood by howling. Mark off an area for him where he can play to his heart's content.

Before going out you must ensure that his water bowl is full of cool, clear water that will suffice for the period that you are away. Make sure that the room he is in is well ventilated too. If you know that you will not be home before it gets dark, you must make arrangements for a light to be switched on for him. Otherwise he might get scared and uneasy.

Of course the best antidote to barking or howling is the tender loving care and attention that you shower on your beloved pet. Nothing can compensate for the feeling of security that you provide him with.

If, however, your dog turns out to be a chronic barker, you can opt to get him a collar that sprays citrus mist under his nose whenever he barks. This is bound to keep his barking under control!

2 A dog that chews your belongings!

Once you bring your Lab puppy home, you will find that he loves to chew on just anything and everything lying around the house. Isn't this just like a tiny little tot who just loves to pop whatever he comes across into his mouth! Chewing is indeed natural doggy behavior. It is an expression of curiosity in a dog. In a growing puppy it could be teething that is causing the pup to work on something to relieve his itching gums!

When you train your dog you will teach him what can be chewed and what is out of bounds for chewing. This way you will be happy that your precious belongings do not end up between doggie jaws. And your dog will be spared of the consequences of your wrath!

If you do come across your dog chewing, however, you could try to warn him off by making a loud noise. The loud noise should be an indication to stop him from chewing. You must praise him when he stops chewing. Then he knows that what he has just done is good and appreciated by you!

3 Scratching, digging and dragging

Oh! What a messy scenario an untrained dog can create in your

house or yard! He will scratch your furniture and drag your rugs, carpets, and clothes around the house, spoiling them in the bargain! He will create unsightly holes in your yard or dig up your lovely lawn! And won't all this type of behavior simply upset you? It definitely will!

But when your Lab has been well trained, he will know exactly what he can dig, drag, or scratch at and what he should not do. Again, training helps in carving out a comfortable niche for him in human society. A well-trained dog does not create a pandemonium.

4 Getting into dogfights!

A good fight can be so irresistible to a dog but it can be such a source of embarrassment to you, as a dog owner. If your dog has been trained, when you sense a fight brewing, you can always order your dog to stay close to your heels, stay, or sit. And a well-trained dog will definitely pay attention to your command and obey, however enticing the temptation.

5 A dog that loves to chase

A Labrador Retriever was originally bred to chase and retrieve game. So you cannot totally subdue that inherent trait to chase a moving object. But when you train your dog, you can definitely have better control over his movements to chase and retrieve.

Advantages of training a Labrador Retriever

A well-trained Labrador Retriever is an asset to you and his training is a big help to him also. Here are some of the spin-offs of a well-trained dog.

- 5 His exemplary behavior is the key to his acceptance in society. You can let him loose among your friends and family without any fear of his misbehaving. You do not

have to supervise his movements all the time.

- 6 When you have spent a good amount of time training your dog yourself, you will be able to gauge and analyze any changes in his behavior. Thus you will be able to detect any symptoms of oncoming illness. Early detection definitely goes a long way in treating an illness.
- 7 Your well-trained dog will allow you to check his body for any external injuries, fleas, or ticks. Detection will enable you to provide the right type of medication.
- 8 A Lab is a wonderful companion. So when trained, he will enjoy being near you and listening to you pamper him with praise and instructions. This is one method of keeping him safe and near you.
- 9 You will enjoy going for a walk or run with your dog obediently and faithfully beside you on a leash.
- 10 When your dog obeys commands such as “Drop it” or “Leave it,” you have built up a safety net. So if he picks up something that is dangerous, he will drop it as soon as you tell him to do so.
- 11 Teaching him not to cross physical boundaries such as gates, fences, or doors are also teaching him safety.
- 12 Obedience training is also essential for the overall welfare of your dog. It can help prevent potential tragedies from occurring. If your dog were to somehow escape from his leash and / or collar and dart out into the street with oncoming traffic, you can control him just by using verbal commands. You can ask him to stop, sit, or stay until you have reached him and secured him sufficiently.

- 13 A well-trained dog is happier in human society because of the freedom that he is able to enjoy. He can even walk into stores where you shop! He will not embarrass you with any untoward behavior. His excellent manners will, on the other hand, garner welcome attention from your co-shoppers and staff at the store.
- 14 A trained Lab is definitely much more responsive than an untrained dog. Proper socialization plays a major role in such behavior. If a dog somehow lands up at an animal shelter, then a trained dog has a much better chance of getting adopted than an untrained dog.
- 15 Above all, your Labrador Retriever will make an excellent companion with whom you can foster a wonderful and lasting relationship when he is well-trained. This relationship is based on mutual trust, confidence, and a golden bond of undying friendship. You are his friend, guide, and mentor for life. This builds a platform of mutual respect and understanding as well an unbreakable bond of love.

Chapter 5

Positive Reinforcement

What do we actually imply when we say positive reinforcement? Well, reinforcement actually means making stronger. So when we talk about behavioral reinforcement we mean behavior that the pup must repeat again and again. By positive we mean constructive behavior. So by positive reinforcement we mean strengthening positive behavior.

In order to keep strengthening positive behavior, you can reward your dog with little treats in the form of snacks that he enjoys. Positive reinforcement can also be rewarded with a warm hug or plenty of praise. You can see your Labrador Retriever positively glow when you praise him. This breed thrives on being loved by you.

Training increases the desirable traits in your dog. It also subdues the negative traits in the animal. If you probe deeper into a dog's psyche, you will find that most problems arise in the dog's behavior because he is unable to cope with a situation. Training raises the dog's ability to cope with stressful situations. With less stress in his life, your dog is definitely much happier too.

Today positive reinforcement is a very powerful training tool used by humans to train their canine pets. You can use this theory before you give your dog anything that he really enjoys. So before you give him a meal or take him out for a walk, ask him to perform a trick for you or obey a command such as sit, stay, shake hands, roll over, etc.

A few examples of following such regimes are listed below.

- 1 Ask him to "sit" while you attach his leash to his collar.
- 2 Ask him to "stay" while you fill his feeding bowl.

- 3 Ask him to "sit and shake hands" before you throw his ball for him to catch.
- 4 Ask him to "lie down and roll over" before you pet him by scratching his head or rubbing his belly.

The crux of the situation is that he must obey you. If he does not do so, you do not give him what he wants. Again, persistence and perseverance will pay off. Do not fall under the spell of his charms and give in to his wily ways.

This kind of positive reinforcement has numerous benefits.

- 1 Your Lab will acknowledge you as the undisputed leader.
- 2 Your doggie will know for certain that he cannot just charm you with soulful looks or affectionate licks. You are the boss and you mean business. So he has to obey your commands.
- 3 When a dog obeys commands, he builds self-confidence. He also feels secure when he can please you by listening to you.

The reason why this sort of treatment works well with dogs is simple. Dogs have descended from wolves. Wolves are pack animals. They live in a social group that has a well-defined hierarchy. So when you firmly establish yourself as leader in the dog's mind, he feels comfortable, safe, and secure.

Punishment & Correction

This is something that you simply must remember at all times. Dogs have no memory recall of what happened earlier. So if you want to correct your dog for any wrong action you must catch him in the act. Scolding him later is futile. You will leave him totally confused.

If you find your dog sitting on your couch, do not scold him for doing so at that moment. When you catch him in the act of jumping up on the couch, then you can admonish him with a firm "No."

He will then associate jumping up on the couch as behavior that is simply not accepted by you. You can then ask him to "sit" and praise him for doing so. In this way you are merely correcting his incorrect action. You are not punishing him. So it is positive reinforcement at work again. Your Lab forms a clear impression of what behavior is acceptable and what behavior is just taboo.

Positive reinforcement is such a powerful yet simple training tool. It is not a drain on your purse as it costs you nothing in terms of money. All it demands is that you abundantly shower your pet Labrador Retriever with oodles of praise whenever he does what you ask him to do. The tone of your voice and your actions must leave no doubt in his mind that you are happy with what he is doing.

Your Labrador Retriever likes doing nothing better than making you happy. That is his very mission in life. So make full use of it in training him with praise and love from the very beginning. This is a sure way of securing the love, admiration, and adulation of a very lovable doggie companion.

But there is really one small matter that you simply must remember. And that is the timing of your praise. You must praise your pet soon after he performs. So when you ask him to "SIT" and he does so, praise him immediately. So not delay the praise. If you praise him later, he will be kind of confused. This is because your dog does not really understand English or any other human language. What he responds to is the love and affection in the tone of your voice!

You must also be consistent in praising him. Another thing that you must ensure is that all other members of your family also use the same type of lingo in praising the Lab. Different types of words and actions from different people may result in confusing the dog.

2 “Should punishment be used while training a Lab?”

The answer to this question is simply **NO**, never use punishment in training a dog. Do you know what your Lab would tell you if he could talk?

He would turn those soulful eyes on you, give you a beseeching look, and say, “Please spend some time training me. Have some patience with me while I am learning. Teach me whatever it is you would like me to do. I can promise you that if you do this much for me, you will never be disappointed. I will turn out to be just the dog you want. So let us spend the few years that we have together in the most pleasant manner possible.”

Persistence, patience, and consistency in training your dog will pay off. Punishment will turn your loving Lab into a snappy creature. He will also learn to be distrustful. Punishment involves pain. So he might turn around and bite in self-defense. Punishment can be postural, verbal, or physical. But do not use any form of punishment. It will be detrimental to your training efforts.

Tips for ensuring positive reinforcement

1 An early start

"The early bird catches the worm" is a popular old saying. So also when you start training early in the life of your pup. The positive effects of training get reinforced. Lessons taught early in life are easily learned. As a dog grows older you might have to make him un-learn many things and this is a very difficult task.

2 Gentleness & humanity

Along with a positive approach you must be gentle and humane with your pup. Motivational methods work well. Cheer adds a

great deal of life to any training session.

3 Attention seeking

Attention seeking gimmicks must not be encouraged. They can be damaging. So if your dog jumps at you while you are just lounging or standing around, do not encourage him. A positive approach to this is to provide your Lab with sufficient exercise. Discourage begging for scraps of food from the table too. A positive way of doing so is to ensure your dog is fed before you sit down to eat.

4 Commands must be followed

When you give a command to your dog to follow he must obey it. If he does not do so and you do not reinforce your desire on him that the command must be obeyed, you are running the risk of him getting the message that he only needs to obey when he feels like it.

5 Single command, single response

This attitude evokes quick response from an alert Lab. So when you say "Sit" he sits. Do not say "Sit, sit, sit" a number of times when you want him to sit only once.

6 Do not combine commands

This will only confuse your Lab. Do not say "Sit down" when what you want him to do is just sit. Down in your Lab's vocabulary means going flat down on his stomach with his nose to the ground.

1 Voice modulation

Proper modulation of voice is a very positive mode of reinforcement. The tone of the voice conveys a lot of meaning to the Lab. A calm and authoritative tone is very reassuring for your Lab. He will readily respond to such a tone.

2 His Master's Voice

Your Lab loves hearing your voice. So if he keeps hearing his name being repeated by you, he will feel simply great. Make sure that you use his name only in conjunction with positive words. Do not use his name when you are scolding him. He must get the feeling that when he hears his name it is for something positive.

3 No punishments, only correction of bad behavior

Communicate your requirement to your Lab. Do not beat him to teach him. It will only damage your relationship and kill all the joy of learning.

4 Timing

To correct bad behavior, you must catch your Lab in the act of doing it. Only then will this lovely animal get the message. If you try to correct him after the act, it will be futile. This is because dog's have a rather short memory recall. But if you catch him trying to swipe food off the kitchen counter, firmly tell him "No." Telling him later will serve no purpose.

5 Ignore

You have to show him who the boss really is. So when he does misbehave, you can pay him no attention at all. This will reinforce the fact that you do not want that particular kind of behavior in his life.

6 Patience

This is totally your forte and so essential in reinforcing good behavior in your Lab too. You have to maintain your cool and composure in training that lovely Lab who is your responsibility for the rest of his life.

Chapter 6

Preparing to train

The health of your Lab

When you have decided to train your Lab, the first thing to do is ensure that he is in good health. Make sure that the structure of his body is capable of withstanding the rigors of training. Since the hipbone takes the brunt of the training tricks you must make sure that your dog does not suffer from hip dysplasia and the soundness of the hipbone must be tested. An OFA or Penn hip certification will tell you about the status of your dog's bones.

Will my doggie be a good student?

You can evaluate whether your dog will make a good student from the following factors.

- 1 Does he accept domination?
- 2 What is his level of curiosity?
- 3 Does he fetch or retrieve promptly on command?
- 4 How high is his level of stamina?
- 5 Does he get motivated easily?

You will be able to get a fairly good idea from the above factors about what your Lab's reaction to obedience training or agility tricks will be.

How you should prepare yourself

This is really very important because you are the leader and your dog is totally dependent on you for every aspect of his short canine life. So you really must be exemplary in your behavior towards your pet!

1 Patience & Persistence

These two factors form the very crux of a successful training schedule. You would need to be very patient if you were teaching

your little child anything, wouldn't you? Well in the same manner you have to draw on your vast reserves of patience to teach your puppy.

Actually your patience may be pushed to its limits. After all you are dealing with a species that is not human. So you have to establish a wavelength that both you and your four-legged friend can understand.

Never, ever give up your quest for turning out a well-trained dog. If you do, you are relinquishing your status as the leader. Your Lab will instinctively try to test how far he can push your patience by not listening to you. Do not fall into the trap. Once you have established your clear-cut leadership role, you will literally have your pooch eating out of your hands.

2 Consistency

Consistency is very essential when you are training your Labrador Retriever. This is because he is a creature of habit. He loves routine. So you must conduct his training sessions at the same time everyday and preferably maintain the same period of duration too. This way he will soon start looking forward to his training sessions. Do not disappoint a willing student.

3 Repetition

Along with being consistent, you need to be repetitive too! You have to ask your dog to answer to the same command or perform the same trick over and over again. You have to continue this process until his reaction to your command becomes second nature to him. This is the key to successfully training your beautiful Labrador Retriever. The duration of repetition will vary from dog to dog.

4 Simplicity

All of your instructions to your doggie should be absolutely

simple. They should involve no more than two or three actions when your doggie is a puppy. The level of complexity can increase only as the puppy grows in age. This is very much in keeping in line with the fact that we first send our children to play school, then to kindergarten, and so on.

5 Brevity

Keep each training session short and brief. You do not want your puppy to get bored with his classes. You want him to be alert and attentive. Since the puppy's attention span is rather short, do not keep any single session too long. Once you feel that the puppy's attention is wandering, stop the class and just play with him. In this way you can have brief sessions lasting 10-15 minutes about 2-3 times per day.

6 Respect

Any living creature appreciates being respected. This will even work with your dog. Respect the Labrador Retrievers keen sense of canine intelligence and when you teach him something, give him time to assimilate the facts and then perform the task.

Talk to your pet as you would to an equal. Explain things to him. He may not understand a word of what you are saying. But your mannerisms and the inflection of your voice and your actions will have a lasting positive effect on him. Talking to your dog while training is a strong way of bonding. You ensure that all his attention is focused on you and you alone.

7 Recognition & Rewards

When your dog responds to any command, you must recognize his efforts and intelligence in doing so and praise him lavishly. You can reward him too with little treats. A warm hug can also work wonders. As a result, your Lab will soon associate rewards with his ability to respond to your commands. This way he will be even more responsive to your commands.

8 No punishments

Never ever carry out physical or verbal punishments on your dog. It will only damage your relationship with him. A firm “NO” is sufficient to make him understand that you are not happy with what he has just done. You can bar his negative actions by using your hands to restrain him. Never hit or physically abuse him.

Now that you have mentally prepared yourself to tune in all the aforesaid qualities into your training scheme, there are a few other things that you need to be acquainted with to make a success of training your Labrador Retriever.

Your agility and footwork

You will have to be physically agile as well as mentally agile to train your dog. You have to be really quick on your feet to avoid tripping over a playful pup simply bursting with energy. You have to watch out for accidental trips, especially when you are executing quick turns. Tripping over might hurt you or your pup and disrupt your training schedule.

The pace at which you move should be comfortable for the pup too. If you move too quickly you could tire him out too fast and reduce your training period. Standing with your feet placed in a “T” position while turning is an ideal stance.

Timing and body language

Your little Lab needs time to process your commands in his mind. So once you give a command, do not expect immediate response. Wait for about 5 seconds at the least. Soon the time lapse between your command and your pup’s reaction will fall into a perfect synchronization.

Constant interaction with your pup will keep increasing your

rapport with him. He will soon be responsive even to your body language. Your smile will brighten up his day and set his tail wagging. Your sigh or cry will bring him running to you to lick your tears away. This is the beautiful relationship that you will develop with a well-trained Lab.

Leash handling

Leash handling is an important lesson for a potential trainer like you to learn. It will increase the comfort level for both you and your dog. The leash is the link between you and your dog, so learn to handle it properly.

- Stand with your arms dangling loosely by your sides with the palms facing inwards.
- Loop the leash over your right thumb and let the loose end cross your palm.
- Then fold the leash accordion style, allow the loose end to show under your little finger.
- Let the leash pass along the thumb, index finger, and palm of your left hand.
- Attach the leash to your dog's collar.
- This position is called the control-start position. It gives you a better control over your dog.
- You must keep your right hand stationary. Make all corrections with the other hand.

What to teach your puppy at 8 weeks

The right age to start teaching your puppy is at about 8 weeks. And where do you start? At the very beginning start by teaching him simple things such as the following.

- 1 The place where his water bowl is placed.
- 2 Teach him the location of his food plate.
- 3 Let him learn the timings of his various meals.
- 4 Teach him where his bed is placed.

- 5 He must also learn the timings when he is expected to go to bed and when he should get up.
- 6 It is most important to teach him where to go to the bathroom.
- 7 He should know the timings for his walks or runs.
- 8 He must also be aware of where his toys are kept.

Your puppy must be aware about all of the above routines simply because a puppy simply loves routine. A routine gives him a feeling of security and safety. He feels reassured when he knows what is coming next. As a baby he is not comfortable with surprises – pleasant or unpleasant. Above all a routine gives him the reassurance that he can depend upon you.

At this age he can also learn to respond to some simple instructions such as the following.

- 1 **Obedience** – Obey simple commands such as “No” or “Stop That.”
- 2 **House breaking** – Your 8-week-old infant pup can be introduced to his toilet area. This will be the beginning of his house training. You can make a commitment to take him out to his toilet every 2 hours for him to get used to relieving himself there.
- 3 **Crate training** – He should follow your instruction to go to his crate and stay there quietly.
- 4 **Handling** – He should learn to stand still while you brush him, clip his nails, or open his mouth to clean his teeth.
- 5 **Mildness** – Mildness is a much required quality in a dog. He should know how to take things gently from your hands. Grabbing, biting, or clinging should be firmly discouraged.

What to teach your puppy at 3-4 months

At this age he should be alertly responding to the following commands.

- 1 Sit and Stay even when you walk away from him or when a lot of other factors are likely to distract him.
- 2 Lie down.
- 3 Look towards you when you call him by name.
- 4 Come when you ask him to do so.
- 5 Walk happily beside you on a leash.
- 6 Drop whatever he may be carrying in his mouth when you tell him to do so.
- 7 Be quiet whenever you order him to stop barking.

At this stage he must not yield to the temptation of running away from you. Neither should he be uncomfortable when other animals or people are around.

What to teach your puppy at 4-6 months

At this age your puppy should have progressed enough to do the following.

- 1 Listen attentively whenever you speak to him.
- 2 Catch and fetch a ball when you throw it for him.
- 3 Never run out of the gate even if the gate is left open and unattended.
- 4 Stays lying down without getting in the way while your go about your daily chores.
- 5 Greet guests in a polite manner.
- 6 Do simple tricks such as shake hands, roll over, play dead or speak.
- 7 Recognize names of members of your family.
- 8 Play games such as Hide and Seek.

Training materials that you will require

For yourself you must ensure that you are comfortably dressed. Flat rubber soled shoes for your feet, well fitting trousers, and a comfortable shirt will be the ideal clothing ensemble. You should be able to run, walk, bend, or squat without any encumbrance in such clothing.

There are a few a material requirements that you will have to get together for your Labrador Retriever.

- 3 **Collar** - Even when your Lab is a puppy get him used to wearing a little puppy collar. If you don't, then it may be difficult to get him used to wearing a collar at a later date. Wearing a collar is essential for a dog as it carries his identification tag. You also attach his leash to his collar! Even though your puppy might not welcome the idea of wearing a collar do not give in to his moody behavior.
- 4 **Leash** – You should get a good strong leash to attach to your Lab's collar. After all you are the leader that your pack dog has to follow. You will find that your doggie will soon grow to love the leash because it signifies that he is being taken outdoors.
- 5 **Treats** – These are essential tools to reward and recognize good behavior.
- 6 **Toys** - Your dog's toys are very special to him. They keep him company while you are away or busy with your other chores. So when you go to buy toys for your dog, there are a number of factors that you must take into account before you decide what to buy.

Your foremost concern should be for the safety of your pet. Check for small objects on the toy that can be swallowed by your Lab. These objects include small squeaky objects, buttons, ribbons, rubber bands, etc. The toy must not be too small. Otherwise the risk of the entire toy being swallowed is high. Worse than swallowing is the risk that the dog could choke on the toy.

Never buy a toy with parts that can be broken apart. These sorts of toys are very dangerous as your dog will be able to bite on the toy

and break it into many pieces. These smaller components can be swallowed with fatal consequences.

Look for toys that are marked as safe for children below the age of 3 years. Normally such toys will be safe for your dog also; as such toys do not contain potentially harmful fillings, polystyrene beads, or nutshells. Toys for below three-year olds are normally soft toys that can be machined washed too. So they are convenient for you to maintain as well.

Avoid toys with squeakers. The noise will rouse your dog's curiosity and he will pry it out of the toy and swallow it. The consequences of this can be really devastating.

After consulting with your vet, you can get your Lab toys that are chewies. These toys are normally made of rawhide and are considered to be safe. They also keep the dog occupied.

You can consider the following types of toys for your doggie.

- 1 Toys made of hard rubber. They come in various shapes and sizes and are ideal for carrying around.
- 2 Rope toys that are shaped like bones with knotted ends.
- 3 Tennis balls are good too. But once your doggie has chewed his way through them, throw them away. The little bits and pieces that come off can accidentally be swallowed.

Comfort toys

Your pet Labrador Retriever is like a little child. He needs toys that can provide him with some kind of solace and comfort. You can consider getting him soft toys that he can easily carry around.

Toys to kill!

Some doggies like to shake their toys up in their mouth in a manner similar to that of killing a prey. So the size of the toy

should match that of a mouse, rabbit, or duck. This will satisfy your Lab's natural instincts. After all, his ancestors were bred for hunting and retrieving!

Solace toys

To give him the feeling that you are nearby you can give him an old shirt of yours. He will find the smell very comforting. It can also function as his security blanket.

Hide & seek

You can use his toys to play hide and seek with. Hide a toy and ask him to find it. This game will provide loads of fun. It will also hone his smelling and tracking instincts.

Do not put all of your doggie's toys out for him to play with at one time. Keep rotating them. Otherwise he will get bored of them very quickly. If he has one particular favorite, you can make an exception and permit that one to be with him at all times.

Once you have all these preparations in place you are all set to train your Labrador Retriever into a dog that will be the envy of the neighborhood and the owner's pride.

1 "At what age should I start training my dog?"

You can begin training your dog in earnest from the age of 6 months old. Even earlier you are always training your dog when you talk to him and tell him what to do. And when you prevent him from doing something wrong you are weaning him away from bad behavior.

There is no reality in the saying that, “You cannot teach an old dog new tricks.” A dog can always be taught even up to the age of 13 years or more. The time taken to teach him might take much longer but go ahead and teach. Do not give up. The dog is willing to learn if his master is willing to teach.

2 "What are therapy dogs?"

Health care providers are using therapy dogs quite a lot nowadays. Therapy dogs are used to visit people who are ill or elderly. These dogs provide a source of comfort and solace to these people who are in distress. Research has shown that petting, grooming, or hugging a dog provides a safe outlet for emotions for people who may have no other outlet for their pent up emotions. So hugging, petting or just fondling a dog helps these people recover faster from their ailments or feeling of loneliness.

3 "My Labrador Retriever is now 8 months old. I want him to become a therapy dog. How do I go about accomplishing this?"

This is a really noble thought! Now you need to assess if your Lab fits into the general characteristics that suit the profile of a therapy dog.

- ✓ Is your dog well behaved?
- ✓ Does he have a calm and unflappable nature?
- ✓ Is he obedient?
- ✓ Does he readily respond to commands such as sit, stand, down, heel, come, etc.
- ✓ Is he comfortable with strangers?
- ✓ Does he allow himself to be petted by people whom he has just met?

- ✓ Does he willingly shake hands or give paw to them?
- ✓ Will he be happy to plant a slobbering kiss or lick on the face of an almost total stranger?
- ✓ Will he stand calmly by if children want to stroke him or hug him?

If your answer to most of the aforesaid questions has been yes, then you can contact organizations such as Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) or Animal Facilitated Therapy (AFT), etc. Such organizations are actively involved in providing therapy to the sick, elderly, or people recuperating from illnesses using the warmth and affection of animals such as dogs. They will evaluate the animal to see whether he is suited for therapy work. They will assess his overall personality, temperament, and behavior. They will then guide you about what course of action you must take to make your dog a professional therapist dog.

Your dog will then have to get used to the sights, sounds, and smells of hospitals and convalescent homes. Having a therapy dog is a commitment. So make sure that it is what you really want. You should also make an honest evaluation about whether or not your dog is suited for such work.

Chapter 7

How to train your Lab

Training is all about communication. Your Lab must understand what you want him to do. Only then will he be able to act as you command him to.

Communication has to be a two-way channel. Your dog has to concentrate and focus all his attention on what you are teaching him. You in turn, have to be considerate to your dog and standardize him on the following training commands.

- 1 Words you will use as commands.
- 2 Vocal modulation of your voice.
- 3 Hand or head signals you will use.

Experts recommend that you first teach your dog using only voice commands. Once your Lab has completely mastered voice commands, you can start using hand signals for the same command along with the voice command. Soon your pet will start recognizing and responding to hand signals. And soon you will be able to get him to perform any trick using just hand signals.

The signals you use are entirely a matter of personal choice. As long as you establish a proper mode of understanding between you and your dog, there should be absolutely no problem.

Commonly used hand signals

However listed below are a few commonly used hand signals.

- 1 Sit – Raise your index finger and point it downwards.
- 2 Down – Raise your hand with the palm facing outwards and bring it down.
- 3 Speak – Bring all 4 fingers of your hand to touch your thumb. Then spread out all the fingers at the same time. This action

could be repeated a few times if you want your pooch to keep talking.

Let us go into the details of how to actually go about teaching your Lab to follow and learn the commands you want him to follow.

✦ **Sit**

- 1 Stand in front of your Lab and extend your right arm straight out in front of you 90 degrees to your body. Hold a treat that your doggie likes in your hand.
- 2 Take the treat close to your dog's nose and give him the voice command of "sit."
- 3 Gradually raise the treat over his head. He will go down on his haunches as you do so.
- 4 Do not give him his treat until he sits down completely.
- 5 Repeat this exercise a few times
- 6 This way he will associate your extending your arm out in front of you and bringing it down with the command "sit."

✦ **Down**

- 1 Ask your Lab to "sit."
- 2 Bend your arm at the elbow with your palm facing downwards.
- 3 Bring your palm slowly down to your side.
- 4 Hold a treat for your pooch in the palm of your hand
- 5 Lower your hand that is holding the treat down to the floor between the dog's paws
- 6 His nose will follow your hand that is holding the treat and he will get into the down position.
- 7 Now you can release the treat to him.
- 8 Practice this command until he masters it.

✦ **Come**

- 1 Stand a few feet away from your dog.

- 2 Get his attention by calling out his name.
- 3 Extend your arm towards the dog and then raise it towards you in a conventional 'come' gesture.
- 4 At the same time use the voice signal of "come."
- 5 Once he follows this command, give him a treat and plenty of praise.

✍ **Voice Modulation**

As intelligent your Labrador Retriever may be, the fact remains that he does not really understand any human language. What he responds to is the sound of your voice and the kind of tone you use to talk to him. So to avoid confusing him you must standardize on using 3 types of tones, which are as follows.

Command Tone

This tone conveys authority and firmness. You must use this tone when you want your pooch to do something for you. This can include commands such as come, sit, down, heel, etc.

Praise Tone

This tone is used when you are sweet talking your dog or praising him. Endearing phrases such as good boy, sweetie, darling, etc. can be lavishly used.

Corrective Tone

This is used to correct untoward behavior. It must firmly convey that you will not tolerate bad behavior and this behavior must not be repeated. It is similar to the growl that a mother dog emits to convey a message of warning when her puppy does not behave himself.

Be consistent about the tone of your voice. Consistency will go a long way in ensuring that your dog clearly understands what you are trying to convey to him.

When you are teaching your dog a new trick, this is the sequence that you should ideally follow.

- Command
- Demonstrate
- Praise

Once he has learned the trick, you can change the sequence as follows.

- Command
- Correct
- Praise

To help you in your training endeavor with your Lab here are a few commonly used commands.

Article Search	Leave It
Bark	Narcotics / Dope
Bite	Out
Come / Here	Stand
Eat Food	Stand Still
Find Narcotics	Kennel / Crate
Go Inside	Good
Go Outside	Go Ahead
Heel	Sit
Jump	Go out
Let Go	Speak
No	Don't Do that OK
Retrieve	Fetch
Stay.	Down
Track	Guard

✍ Training Tips

Besides words, here are some other useful training tips that will go a long way in making you a successful trainer and your dog a well-

trained canine citizen.

- 1 Never be harsh to your Lab. Never hit him, whatever he might do.
- 2 You must always be in a position to correct your dog before you start teaching him a new command.
- 3 Whenever your dog reacts favorably to your correcting him, you must shower him with a lot of praise.
- 4 Be very clear and consistent in the commands that you use. Never let your body language come into conflict with your verbal command.
- 5 When correcting your dog, your timing should be apt. You must correct your dog soon after he makes a mistake. Otherwise he will not be able to correlate the correction with the incorrect act.
- 6 Use your dog's name every time you teach him something. It increases the sense of belonging that exists between you both.
- 7 Do not use his name when you are saying "No" to him.
- 8 The correction must be effective enough to ensure that your dog does not repeat it again.
- 9 When you are teaching your dog to "Stay" you must increase the time you ask him to stay very gradually. You do not want a stressed out dog, do you?
- 10 When teaching your dog to "heel," remember to walk in squares. Do not walk in circles.
- 11 Strive for perfection in whatever you undertake.
- 12 Above all, be patient and consistent

✍ Increase your dog's concentration

Your Lab has to be focused in order to learn and sharpen his intelligence faculties. Once he is focused when you are teaching him, he will be an excellent student. You will enjoy teaching him newer and more challenging stuff. Concentration helps your doggie to understand the finer nuances of hand signals too. Here

are some methods for helping your dog increase his powers of concentration.

- 1 Call your pooch and ask him to sit in front of you.
- 2 Look at him and say "focus."
- 3 Initially he will not be comfortable and will look away from you.
- 4 But keep coaxing him gently to look straight at you.
- 5 With patience and persistence you will soon be able to get him to focus and look straight at you without wavering.
- 6 This is an excellent exercise to enhance his powers of concentration.

When he does respond positively in this manner hug him warmly, praise him, and make him feel on top of the world. Keep working on increasing the period for which your dog can remain focused.

✍ **Co-ordination skills**

You can use the regular 'throw ball and retrieve' method to increase your Lab's co-ordination skills. This will give him better control over his muscle movements and increase his overall dexterity in executing various tasks.

- 1 First make your Lab sit in front of you.
- 2 Hold a ball in your hand and offer it to your doggie.
- 3 Encourage him to take the ball gently from your hand using his mouth.
- 4 Take the ball from his mouth and repeat the same exercise again.
- 5 Gradually increase the level of difficulty using the ball as bait.
- 6 Let your dog sit and watch you while you take the ball and throw it at a distance.
- 7 The natural instinct for a dog is to chase the ball as soon as it leaves your hand.

8 When he is put through such exercises both his focus and coordination skills will increase.

Keep thinking of many such challenging exercises for your Lab. This clever animal will continue to rise to the occasion and will be the darling of all eyes.

✍ Other training methods

Dog lovers all over the world are constantly innovating and thinking of newer and better methods to use to train their beloved dogs. After all, a dog is known to be man's best friend and so man has to think of better methods of training him and keeping him happy and loved. Let us see what the other methods that people use are to train their pets.

1 Clicker Training

A clicker is a small plastic box that contains a metal spring inside which when pressed, makes a "click-click" noise. Karen Pryor, who is a well-known animal behaviorist, developed this technique. It is a motivational method of training. In this method the trainer presses the clicker every time the animal does something correct. Clicker training reinforces desired behavior. Very soon your dog will associate the clicking sound with praise. It has proved to be an excellent training tool and you can use it for training your dog.

2 Eclectic Training

This method uses a combination of many training techniques to teach your dog. You combine different training techniques to make the best combination that will elicit the best performance from your pet.

3 Lure Training

This method uses toys and treats as lure to tempt dogs into doing what you want from them. It is an excellent training method for pups and timid dogs. However, you could try it for difficult or aggressive animals too! It is again a motivational training

technique. It uses the ‘do as I ask and I give you a treat’ technique to teach.

4 Target wand training

In this method of training no force techniques are employed. Really good for benevolent and kindhearted souls!

5 Play training

This is again a motivational training technique. It incorporates a lot of fun and games in the teaching process.

6 Koehler Method

This method is not recommended as it uses compulsion and punishment. The emphasis of physical correction and discipline is very high.

Once voice commands, hand signals, and focus have become familiar to your Lab he will be the ideal candidate for learning newer and more complex tricks.

🔗 What are the best treats to use as rewards when training my Lab?

You can use the ever-popular dog biscuits or bits of liver and meat as tasty morsels that your Lab will enjoy munching on at odd hours. Do not overdo giving him snacks or treats in between his regular meals. Otherwise your doggie will go easy on his meals and start to rely on the treats instead.

🔗 I want to train my Lab myself. Which would be the best time of the day to train him?

Your dog will respond best to you when he feels the pangs of

hunger in his tummy. So you need to schedule your time to impart training to him just before his regular mealtime. The little treats you offer him will spur him along to respond fast. The promise of a huge meal at the end of the session will be a great incentive for him too.

Of course there is absolutely no substitute for the patience, kindness, praise, and understanding that you can give your dog.

∞ What are the advantages in teaching my Lab to perform tricks?

Trick training is a means of reinforcing positive behavior. Other advantages are as follows.

- ✓ Your Lab gets a feeling of purpose.
- ✓ He is able to exercise better self-control.
- ✓ It increases his span of attention.
- ✓ His faith and trust in you grows in intensity.
- ✓ His channels of communication with you open up further.
- ✓ He learns to recognize and respond to signals that you teach him.
- ✓ He acknowledges you as his undisputed leader.

∞ What kind of problems am I likely to encounter when I undertake to train my Lab?

Training a dog has its fair share of problems. If your dog is stubborn and willful you will have to exercise extra care and tact in handling him. During the initial phases of disobedience he will pay no heed to your commands. And that can be quite irritating and trying on your patience.

He will test your limits of physical endurance as well by tugging at his leash. His excited nature and over enthusiasm can also test the strength of your arms as those sturdy sinews of his pull and tug you in various directions.

⌘ How do I need to prepare myself in terms of training gear before I take up the responsibility of training my Lab?

Getting ready for training your pup does not call for much preparation. Just make sure you wear comfortable clothing and sensible shoes. You should be able to run, bend, or squat on the floor with ease.

⌘ Is it correct to use a tight leash when training my Lab?

No it is not correct to use a tight leash on a domestic animal. A tight leash just makes an animal more aggressive in nature. The tightness of the leash has an emotional effect on the dog. Once your Lab is familiar with the basic obedience commands, you can loosen his leash.

⌘ How do I ensure that my Lab will not bite others?

The best way to ensure this is to give your Lab sufficient opportunity to socialize with different kinds of people. This way he will not see each and everyone he meets as a potential threat and will not give in to the basic instincts of self defense and biting.

⌘ How can I stop my Lab from barking incessantly and for no apparent reason?

You must teach your Lab a whole horde of new tricks. Keep his mind occupied. Soon he will forget to bark for no reason at

all. If you catch him barking, just call him and keep him engaged in some games or new tricks. Once his mind is gainfully employed, you will not be subject to unnecessary barking. Remember not to reward him if he stops barking. It might give him the wrong message that if he barks, he will be rewarded with a treat!

Q I want my Lab to be happy always because I simply love her. How do I make sure this happens?

Labs are dogs that were used for hunting and retrieving game. So they are used to walking and running long distances. So you must provide your Lab with plenty of outdoor exercise. An overweight, sloppy Lab who gets no or very little exercise will not be a happy dog.

Q How will I be able to recognize the fact that my Lab is happy?

A happy Lab will have his lovely ‘otter’ tail wagging nineteen to the dozen. His eyes will be bright and alert. His ears will be perked up in rapt attention. And the lovely thing about a happy and healthy Lab is that when he is happy you get the impression that he is smiling!

Q I am looking forward to training my new Lab. I am just a little worried about what I should do in case I encounter behavioral aberrations.

It is definitely better to be safe than sorry. You must be armed with the knowledge of what to do in case your Lab does show signs of behavioral abnormalities. The first thing to do is to arm yourself with knowledge about how to deal with

behavioral problems. You can gather such information from books on animal behavior, a local kennel club, or breeding center.

You can tackle small and minor problems with the information that you glean from books. However, if the problem still persists and you find it going beyond your scope of knowledge, then consult an animal behaviorist. Of course make sure you contact the right person. In order to do so, you must check out his references and credentials, too. The right person with qualities of patience and care will be able to handle behavioral problems of timidity, aggressiveness, excessive barking, howling, and so on.

🐶 I have just started training my Lab and it is really fun. But how should I ensure that he does not get bored of the training program?

Variety is the spice of life. So vary your training program. Do not keep the program the same everyday. Routines do tend to get rather boring. So after you have given him instructions such as sit, stand, down, and so on; involve him in fun and games too. Play games such as hide and seek or ball with him and watch him perk up and respond with enthusiasm to you.

🐶 My dog loves being taken for walks. But my problem is that he tends to pull on his leash when we go for walks. How do I prevent him from doing this?

This is a very important lesson to be taught by you and learned by your dog. For this you must clearly establish yourself as leader in the eyes of your pet. First make sure you teach him a few basic commands such as sit, stand, heel, and so on.

Then teach him to understand the meaning of the word "walk." He will grow to love this word. As a prelude to the word "walk" make him sit still while you hook him on his leash. Initially make him walk a short distance and then ask him to sit. When he obeys, you must praise him. When you start walking again and you find him tugging at the leash ask him to go "easy." If he tries to move, do not give in. Just stand in the same place. He will soon realize his mistake and stop pulling. Soon you and your Lab will be able to go for comfortable walks without any tussles over pulling on the leash.

Chapter 8

Why Training Your Lab Can Fail

Each dog is different and unique. He is an individual. He has a mind of his own too. And when he exhibits these streaks of independence just when you are trying to instill some discipline and manners in him, it can really try your patience.

Therefore it would be right to say that no one can with total certainty say that they can train any dog. Even a professional trainer cannot exude such pride and arrogance. And if you come across one who does brag about 100% results be very wary.

Reasons why a dog cannot be trained are many and widely varied. However, let us just go through some of the reasons that keep a Lab or any other dog, for that matter, from getting trained and becoming a well-adjusted member of society.

1 Time, your dog, and you

Time is so important. Your dog will never get his puppy days back no matter what you do. So you, as a responsible owner, must carve out some special quality time to spend with your pooch. It is your moral responsibility to do so. Do not be too lazy or too preoccupied to consider time with your dog important. You must build training time into your schedule for the day that you have a dog who is trained enough to get himself accepted into society.

2 Travel a lot - Busy are you?

3

If you say yes and you have no time to spend at home because your busy traveling schedule keeps you away from home, then why did you adopt a dog? Once you adopt a dog you are totally responsible for him and his welfare. Even if you get him trained by a

professional trainer, you have to take him back home at some point of time and know how to deal with him within the precincts of your home and hearth.

3 Get the dog trained professionally and take him back

Your dog is an animal that lives and breaths. He has a heart and he has feelings too. He is not just some gadget that you can buy and chuck into a corner once you outgrow the fancy of owning an animal. So if you decide to keep a pet please do love him and care for him with warmth and a great deal of love.

4 Do you baby your dog?

Well if you love your dog as you would your baby, it is great. But you must remember that your dog is a creature that belongs to the canine species and has natural canine instincts that he must abide by. You have to let the dog know that you are the leader and he has to listen to you. Failure to do so will result in gross injustice.

5 Just pedigree is not enough

You might have the best pedigreed dog that money can buy, but is that enough? Definitely not! Even the best dog of pedigree must be well behaved and pleasant to have around. Even pedigreed dogs that pull, jump, bark, growl, or attack other people and dogs can be quite a nuisance. So a pedigree dog with bad manners is not going to be a crowd puller. Think about spending time on training him!

6 The size of the dog is unmanageable

You always yearned for a large dog. One that would be fun to take along for long jaunts or one that could provide you with a feeling of security. But with such ideologies in mind you need to consider the time, effort, and money that you will have to spend on such a large animal. If you happen to be elderly or stricken with some

physical ailment, a large animal may not be the best choice to handle. So consider all the pros and cons before you decide.

7 Warning signs

Your dog will exhibit all typical doggie behavior such as snapping, growling, chasing, being aggressive, etc. Do not think of these sorts of behavior as just temporary passing phases. Work on eliminating or at least curtailing them. If you ignore them they will stay and probably get worse!

8 Leave it to the kids

Do not assume that now that your kid has the dog that he always wanted, then the kid will be able to suitably train the dog too. This is far from true. This is mainly because your kid does not know how to train the dog. Training is chiefly your responsibility and you must find the time to execute it with responsibility. Think about it, an untrained dog will be destructive. Lack of proper grooming and cleaning will also add to your vet bills!

9 A defective dog!

You might have owned a number of dogs before this particular Lab came into your life. Plenty of behavioral differences might exist between this Lab and your earlier dogs. But do not make comparisons. Each dog is so unique in his own way. What you consider to be defects may just be behavior that can easily be corrected with proper training. Give training its due importance.

10 Why blame it on the weather

If you love your dog and you want him to be a good canine citizen, you must find time to train him. Regardless of the dictates of weather you must devote time to the dog.

Chapter 9

Training & Behavior

Your Labrador Retriever will make a wonderful pet if he is able to blend with ease and harmony into the social elements around him. That includes easy camaraderie with your friends and relatives as well as an easy relationship with other animals.

Socializing your Labrador Retriever

This kind of behavior will happen only if your little puppy is well socialized at an early age. Socializing is introducing your pup to other dogs, animals, and people too. In other words socializing is teaching your dog to get along in the big, wide world. How you do this is entirely up to you!

If your dog is well socialized he will gracefully accept changes in environment easily. Strange new faces, sights, or sounds will not disturb him. Thus early exposure to different settings is essential. A lot of early impressions are formed by the time your pup reaches 3 months of age. It shapes his social behavior and molds his personality.

Socializing at home

Once you bring your puppy home from the breeder, your responsibility towards the little one begins. You begin his socialization process by first introducing him to his new surroundings, including your home and the members of your family. Once he is home take him around and let him get used to the sights and the sounds of his new home.

Remember to introduce him to a cozy corner that he can call his own. This corner could be a kennel, a crate, a box, or a basket.

Whatever it is make sure it is well lined with comfortable blankets and exudes warmth. This is where the little fellow must feel secure. You are trying to provide him with an atmosphere that is a substitute for his mother. Just keep this in mind and it will bring out the better ideas in you!

Your puppy must never have occasion to feel scared or defenseless. Any negative experience will be a setback in the process of socialization. So watch out! His initial encounters with strangers should be pleasant and very positive.

Socializing with your friends

Once your puppy has found his puppy paws firmly and happily in his new home you can start expanding his circle of acquaintances. Call your friends over to meet the latest addition to your family. They will have a chance to coo over the little guy! And the little guy will have the opportunity to sniff out new smells, see fresh faces, and hear new voices. It will be so exciting for him! His cute little ‘otter’ tail just will not stop wagging! And won’t you be simply delighted to see how well your charge is adjusting to his new home!

Socializing outdoors

When you find that your pup is quite content and comfortable in the company of your friends and acquaintances who come over, it is time to start expanding his social circle. Now you can start taking him with you on small outings. Take him for a short stroll down the street. Or take him for a little jaunt in the nearby park.

Such outings will really perk him up. He will be so alert and attentive to the new world that he encounters. He will really look forward to these outings. As soon as you pick up his leash, he will be full of excitement to accompany you outdoors.

If you have a park nearby, do take him there. He will get to see other dogs of all shapes and sizes. He will also get to see children of various ages. The various activities that the kids indulge in while they play will also become a learning experience for him.

Pitfalls to watch out for when socializing

- × Your puppy should start socializing with other dogs only after he has had all his vaccinations.
- × He must not go to places where dangerous germs could infect him.
- × Do not try to pack too much of the socializing process in one day. It could result in overexcitement for the little guy.

Factors that affect your Labrador Retriever's behavior

Every little dog's behavior is molded by his own unique individuality. This behavior is affected by various circumstances that the dog went through as a puppy. Some of the factors that influence his behavior are as follows.

1 His parents

Genetics play an important role in the behavior of a dog. Good-natured parents will have good-natured puppies. Vice versa, parents with aggressive temperaments will produce puppies with aggressive traits.

So this is indeed a leading factor to consider when selecting a pup. Observe the nature of the parent dogs. You will get a fairly good idea about how the nature of the offspring will be. So avoid buying a puppy from a pet store. You will never be able to see the parents in a pet store.

2 His early environment

If your puppy was exposed to any incident that left him frightened and scared, it will leave an indelible impression on his young and impressionable mind. This will definitely have a negative impact on his behavior.

3 When did your dog leave his mother and siblings

A puppy should not leave his mother till he is at least 7 weeks old. If the pup is taken away from his mother earlier than that he grows up to be a rather snippy dog. This is because he does not learn the important canine social signal of bite inhibition. Things like bite inhibitions can only be learned by a puppy from his mother and siblings.

Ideally a puppy should leave his mother only when he is about 12 weeks old. By this time the “pecking order” of the litter is clearly established. At this age you will be able to recognize whether the puppy is dominant by nature or submissive.

4 How you socialize him

Socializing a puppy impacts his behavior. The 7 weeks to 6 months period are very critical. Adolescence is a rather difficult period amongst humans. Similarly adolescent dogs too go through a bit of a trying phase. The adolescent phase for Labs ranges from 6 to 9 months of age till about 1 – 3 years.

Thus you might find a normally well-behaved dog acting strangely all of a sudden. Adolescence is an awkward stage. When the hormones suddenly play out you might find your dog’s behavior becoming rather unpredictable. This will be a rather trying period for you as an owner of a moody dog!

Your behavior affects your puppy too!

Do not be surprised but the way you react to your dog is bound to affect his behavior to quite an extent. Here are some factors that can affect your Lab.

- The tone you use when talking to your doggie.
- Your facial expressions when you look at your dog.
- How you react when you call him and he does not come.
- What is your reaction when you tell him not to do something but he continues to do it nevertheless?
- How much you pet and cuddle your dog.
- How you talk to him in a way that he understands.
- How do you react if he makes a fuss while you are brushing him down?
- How do you treat your dog if he darts away from you?
- What is your reaction if your doggie acts aggressive towards strangers?
- How do you calm your pup down after playtime is over?
- What is your reaction if your pup pees or potties within the precincts of your house when he is excited or very nervous?
- Do you clean up the place he has messed up properly with the right cleaner so that he does not have an accident there again?
- What kind of place do you provide your pup to sleep in?
- How do you treat him when you have to leave him alone at home? Do you say and do the right things?
- Have you given him a comfortable collar to wear?
- Do you use an appropriate leash when you take him out?

✈ Training and your behavior

✓ Rewards

Rewards are the secret to success in any training program, especially where dogs are concerned. Dogs only understand the language of love or the language of food. Food is a substantial and

tangible treat so use it to your best advantage.

The more often you reward your dog, the quicker his response to learning. So you should teach him a particular trick. Then keep repeating it until he masters it. Of course do not do it to such an extent that the dog gets absolutely bored and disinterested. When he starts performing as desired, you must reward him.

Always praise and reward your dog. It is the way of the world, we forget to praise, but we never forget misbehavior.

1 Criticism

Do not criticize your dog to such an extent that you become a nag. Your dog thrives on praise. So when you have to correct him, instead of criticizing him use a firm “NO” to prevent him from indulging in incorrect mannerisms.

For instance, if you catch him climbing on to your sofa, firmly say “No.” You can use your hand to push him away. Then guide him towards his toys or to his bed to show him the kind of behavior that you approve of.

With the right kind of voice modulation, your doggie will know just when you are displeased with him. When you correct him, make sure your words are short and sharp. Do not nag or keep on scolding him. And in no situation should you beat him, kick him, or hit him. Use of physical force will only make things go sour between you. It will also turn your dog into a shy, scared, and aggressive dog. Such dogs are really not very pleasant to have around.

2 Aggression

Aggressive behavior can be attributed to a number of causes. Any untoward incident in the puppy’s life can make him aggressive.

However, in some pups the aggressive behavior is inherent. Such traits become obvious by the time a pup is 7 weeks old. So when you go to buy a pup, remember to ask the breeder about the personality traits of the pup. A good breeder will not hide anything from you. The good news is that if aggression is recognized as a problem in the early stages it can be treated with medication. Healthy, mature Labs rarely suffer from aggressive behavior.

Milestones in growth

- 1 A puppy opens his eyes when he is three weeks old.
- 2 From that time until he is 14 weeks old, he develops bonds with other people and animals around him.
- 3 This period is very crucial in ensuring that he has only good and positive experiences.
- 4 Breeders normally recommend that you take a pup away from his mother only when he is 8 weeks old. This way he is not very small or vulnerable and neither is he too old to fall into your scheme of life for him.

My Lab loves me, but how do I make him understand the meaning of the word "No?"

The secret to getting your Lab to understand just what you mean when you say "No" is to catch him in the act that you are preventing him from doing. Then use a very firm tone and say, "No."

You can keep a rattle tin handy when you want him to stop a particular act. You can make a rattle tin by filling a tin with small pebbles or beans. Shake it when you want him to stop.

Alternately you can use a hand held horn to stop him too. If you find him attacking your lawn or bed of flowers sound the horn to stop him. The sudden sound will startle him into

stopping. Whenever he does listen to you, ask him to sit and praise him.

I have a Lab puppy. He is really cute. But he kind of loves to indulge in playing rough. How do I control him?

You are really justified in being concerned about rough play. It may appear to be fun when a little pup plays rough. But if this behavior continues in to adulthood it can become a real nightmare. So nip it in the bud and play safe.

The best way to do so is to discourage rough games such as tug-of-war. Such games rouse the aggressive streak in the dog. Use gentle games such as catch and fetch a ball. Gentle games will underplay the aggressive behavior.

Can I get control at all over the rather excessive barking of my Lab?

If your doggie is really barking so much in excess that he disturbs not only you, but also the neighborhood in general, then you have to be really firm with him. You will have to try to hold him and try to get him to close his mouth and say "No bark." Of course exercise great care when you are trying to shut his mouth. Do not hurt him or yourself. When he does stop barking you must praise him for doing so. Of course you cannot stop barking altogether. After all, it is your dog's mode of conveying to you that there are strangers around. Barking can also alert you about perils like fire too.

Barking cannot be discouraged altogether as sometimes it is the barking that alerts us to the presence of an intruder or fire. Monitor the barking so that he must learn when to stop. Say: "No

bark” and make him “sit”-- when he listens, treat him/praise him.

My dog eats feces. How do I get him to get rid of this rather disgusting habit?

Do not get too depressed about this rather disgusting habit. A lot of dogs do this. When you find your dog doing so, startle him with a very loud noise. This ought to startle him and stop him. Clean up after him so he does not get a chance to eat his own poop.

Is there any method of evaluating the intelligence levels of dogs?

People who have been involved in the research of behavior of dogs have evolved a number of tests to measure their intelligence levels. They have then ranked the levels and this is how the ranking stands.

Rank 1-10	-	Brightest Dogs.
Rank 11-26	-	Excellent Working Dogs.
Rank 27-39	-	Above Average Working Dogs.
Rank 40-54 Intelligence.	--	Average Working/Obedience
Rank 55-69 Intelligence.	-	Fair Working/ Obedience
Rank 70-79 Obedience Intelligence.	-	Lowest Degree of Working/

Chapter 10

Excessive Barking & Howling

Barking and howling are characteristics that are inherent to wolves. It is their mode of communication in the wild. Now dogs are believed to be descendants of wolves. So they too bark and howl since it is their natural behavior and mode of communication with their own kind.

However, excessive barking or howling when living among human society is just not acceptable to the human race. Your neighbors are sure to object if your Lab starts howling continuously at any part of the day or night. So you have to find ways and means of refraining him from making unwelcome sounds.

This problem can be tackled in numerous ways. It all depends on the nature of your pet. Your pet is like a little child; he needs constant love, care, and attention. He also needs to be told what to do.

A domestic pet will bark in excess if he is bored. So your endeavor as a dog owner should be to keep him engaged in some useful activity during most of his waking hours. When you keep your pet engrossed in various activities he does not have time to get bored and bark.

If you find your pet howling, then first and foremost check him out for signs of illness. Howling is normally considered to be a sign of grief. So if you find your dog howling then he is definitely under some sort of stress or strain.

Check whether any of the following factors are traumatizing him.

- 1 Is his collar is too tight?
- 2 Are his paw-pads free of thorns or any other object that

could hurt?

- 3 Check between his toes to ensure that there are no small stones or pebbles hurting him.
- 4 Run your hands over his entire body to check for any thing that might be hurting him.
- 5 Relieve him of any such external stress causing factors.

If you find no such problem that could be causing him physical discomfort, try to analyze other factors that may be causing him to howl. Have you been leaving your Lab alone for too many hours in a day? If yes, try to take some corrective action. Your Lab simply loves company. He cannot tolerate the idea of long hours of loneliness. Loneliness can really depress him.

But what do you do if you are left with absolutely no choice but to leave him alone for some time? Try some of these preventive measures.

- 1 Leave a timepiece that has a comforting tick-tock sound near him. This gives him a feeling of reassurance that someone is around. If he is just a pup, wrap the time piece in some cloth and place it near him. It will give him the feeling that his mother is around.
- 2 You could turn on the television set or radio to give him the feeling of having people around him.
- 3 You could play some soft music to give him a feeling of comfort.
- 4 If you are likely to get home after it is dark, leave a light on in the room that your doggie is left in. Dogs can get rather petrified of darkness and combined with loneliness, darkness can upset a dog to a great extent.
- 5 Ensure that the heat and humidity in the room is maintained at optimum levels. Overheating is very stressful for a dog. Cold temperatures can also cause terrible chills and discomfort.

Animal behaviorists are of the opinion that occupational therapy

can take care of most doggie problems. In occupational or work related therapy you determine the needs of your pet. Then you work on providing appropriate solutions to these problems.

If you are unable to arrive at the identification of any such need, then you must first consult a vet to get a medical opinion regarding the state of health of your dog. If all is well on the physiological front, then you have to explore the gray areas of psychological aberrations. So consider consulting a professional animal therapist. Minor problems can be treated with drugs and you will have to follow the treatment recommended by your animal therapist.

Again you must be careful in your selection of a therapist for your dog. Ask around to locate a good, ethical, and reliable person. Referrals are very important in getting the right therapist. Credentials alone will not suffice. A therapist with ethics will patiently probe to understand your problems. He will not pressure you to make an appointment. It is very important for a therapist to show characteristics of care and concern. A therapist who delegates may not be a good choice.

You can ask a few questions to gauge the veracity of your therapist. Given below are a few sample questions.

- 1 Who should be present for a therapy session?
- 2 What will the duration of each session be?
- 3 Where will the sessions be held?
- 4 How many sessions will be held?
- 5 What will be the course followed for each session? Will it involve talking, training, etc?
- 6 What will the corrective actions involve? Any punishments involved?
- 7 Will any equipment be used?
- 8 What will the entire session cost?
- 9 What happens if the problem is not solved and continues to persist?

His answers will give you a fair idea about his methods of therapy. Are they humane or otherwise? You will also have an idea about the time and money that you will have to invest in solving your Lab's barking and howling problems.

Chapter 11

Basic Training

Housebreaking

The most basic training that you must provide your handsome Labrador Retriever with is definitely housebreaking. Bathroom manners rank very high on the list of required training. This is one very important guarantee of your puppy finding a warm and welcome place in your household.

Housebreaking teaches your Lab to trot outdoors to answer Nature's calls. But if you have identified a place indoors for him to do his job, you can teach him to go there. But do remember that your pup must be at least 16 weeks old before he can be housebroken. He needs to reach a certain age before he can exercise control over his bladder and bowel movements.

There are numerous methods of training your dog. Your doggie will develop whatever housebreaking habit you provide him with. If he is trained to go outside, then that is what he will do. If he is given an indoor spot to pee or potty in then that is the habit that he will develop.

If you are teaching him to go outside to do his business, you can have a little bell rigged up near your exit door to the yard. Provide this bell with a long bell pull that your dog can also tug at. Whenever you take him out, just tug at the bell and then go out. Soon he will learn that whenever he wants to go out, he must tug at the bell. This way whenever he feels the urge and wants to go out, he will go and ring the bell. This will be an indication for you to let him out.

3 Please provide me with a checklist of things I need for housebreaking my dog.

It certainly is a good idea to be armed with all the things that you will need to housebreak your dog. So here goes the list.

- Get a comfortable, well-fitting collar. Make sure it is not too tight. It should not be too loose either or your pup will slip it right off his head.
- A leash to attach to your pup's collar.
- A crate. Buy one of a size that will accommodate even a fully-grown Lab.
- Organic cleansers to clean up when your pup messes up where he should not. (You do not want repeat accident do you?)
- Food – preferably of the same brand as that used by the breeder you got him from.
- A baby play pen and gate.

Crate training

What is a crate? It is a well-ventilated box with a lockable door. The advantage of using a crate is that you can take it along with you in your car if you have to take your dog out with you. It provides your Lab with a comfortable little den to call his own. When you go to buy a crate, ensure you get a crate of a size that will accommodate your Lab even when he is a fully-grown adult.

You have to help your pup initially get used to using a crate. For this, leave the door to the crate open so that your pup can explore the insides whenever he feels like it. His naturally curious nature will definitely take him there soon. You can entice him to stay inside by leaving a little treat or one of his favorite toys for him inside.

Once he settles down inside, close the door of the crate for a short period of time say 5 – 10 minutes. This way he will not object to your locking him in if the need arises. Also when you open the door, try to do so without attracting his attention. Though you can gradually keep increasing the time for which he is kept locked in his crate, make sure this period does not exceed 4 hours.

The crate is a multi-purpose facility. It acts as your Lab's bedroom too. Soon he will be going to the crate on his own without any prompting from you. Another advantage of using a crate is if you have more than one dog. You can serve the dogs their food in their crates. This way they will all get their fair share of food without the dominant ones wolfing it all down.

Another major advantage of a crate is that if you were to go out of town, you could leave your dog along with his crate with a caretaker. The familiarity of the crate will provide your dog with a lot of solace.

You will find that dogs are naturally clean animals. They do not like to soil or dirty the area in which they sleep. So if your dog has to pee and potty inside, you can have another crate for this purpose. Line the bottom of this crate with leak proof material. On top of this you can place a few old newspapers. The newspapers will absorb the mess and can be easily disposed off.

Access to the right place

In this approach to bathroom management, you provide your dog with a means of letting himself out through a doggy door to the yard outside where he can freely go. Otherwise he should have access to an indoor litter box or a corner well padded with newspapers. In other words you are providing him access to relieve himself at a scheduled spot.

4 How does crate training help in housebreaking my Labrador Retriever?

Dogs, being clean creatures, do not like to mess up the place where they have to rest or sleep. So if your dog is kept locked in his crate he will not like to dirty it. He will wait for you to come and take him out. This waiting will teach him to exercise control over both his bladder and bowel movements.

He will relieve himself only when you take him out of the crate. Then he will rush to the spot where you have taught him to relieve himself and do his business there. It will really teach him that he cannot relieve himself just anywhere and at any time.

5 Will there be any negative impact on my Lab if he is kept locked in his crate for too long?

Any dog kept locked up for more than 4 hours will not react favorably under any circumstances. So as a responsible owner you must take care to see that your pet is not driven to his absolute limits.

A crate serves the purpose of confining accidents to a restricted space if your dog is kept locked up in it for too long. But do bear in mind that such accidents will only set your training back quite a bit.

Try to avoid using the crate as a means of punishing your dog for any misdemeanor. Also never forget that he is locked up in the crate. Such slip-ups will have negative implications on your dog.

6 Tell me just how often a little pup needs to relieve himself.

A pup has to relieve himself very often. Listed below are a number of factors that influence this necessity.

- ✦ If your puppy is a tiny tot then his intake capacity is also small so he has to be fed small quantities many times a day. And you must take him out so that he can relieve himself every time he finishes eating or drinking. Take him to the spot that you have identified he can use to relieve himself. The smells prevailing in that area will instigate him to relieve himself.
- ✦ Taking him out is the first thing you have to do after you get out of bed. The moment he hears you stirring he will eagerly be waiting to be taken outdoors. So be considerate about this matter. After all, the little guy has held it all night long.
- ✦ It is also your duty to take him outdoors every night just before the entire household retires to bed.
- ✦ Through the day it is good to take him out at intervals of 45 - 60 minutes even if he has not been fed. This is because his tiny bladder and bowels get full rather fast and must be emptied regularly. Isn't it better to go out at regular pre-defined intervals, instead of cleaning up doggie mess indoors?
- ✦ Once you have taken him out give him the time to do his job. When he does do his job, praise him generously. Leave him in no doubt that you are really pleased with what he has done.
- ✦ If you find your pup with his nose down and busily sniffing around, just pick him up and rush him out. He is looking for a place to relieve himself!

You have to be on a constant alert until your pup has been properly

housebroken.

Q My dog has been house broken. However he still has a number of “accidents”. He lifts his leg and pees in certain areas. Why does he do this? Please help!

A dog has an instinctive trait of wanting to mark his territory. This is what instigates him to lift his leg and squirt urine in areas that he considers to be his territory.

In order to prevent him from repeating this rather disgusting habit is to clean up the area he has messed up with an organic cleanser that leaves absolutely no remnants of smell. If even a little bit of smell remains, he is likely to be tempted to urinate there again.

Do not use ammonia or bleach to clean the area, as they both smell strongly of dog urine. An old school of thought recommends the use of garlic paste in such areas as the smell of garlic overpowers any other smells.

You must continue to take him out to do his business at regular intervals. Praise him when he does his business. You can reward him with treats too. Whenever he has misbehaved you can express your displeasure by shutting him up in his crate for some time.

Of course if you catch him urinating inside, be very firm in letting him know that you are not at all happy with his behavior. If you have prevented him from urinating indoors be sure to put him on his leash and take him out immediately. Your firm attitude in handling his misdemeanors will soon put an end to his untoward behavior. Your Lab is a family dog and he wants to be an integral part of your family!

Chapter 12

Types of Training

Training is a multi-faceted art and not one the easiest of things to do. Especially when it comes to training a species that does not speak your language. Dogs have their own instinctive and natural code of conduct. They also have their own unique attitudes and mindsets too. When you take up the challenging task of training your pet dog, you will be faced with all these challenges. Your dog might even be stubborn, moody, or domineering too. Such a situation will dwell upon all your resources to do a good job of extracting the best from your dog!

Fortunately for you, a Labrador Retriever is a very intelligent animal. So you can put him through various types of training. This will bring out the sterling qualities of this lovely animal. Various types of training include the following.

- a) Behavior training
- b) Obedience training
- c) Activity training
- d) Show training
- e) Trick training

a) Behavior Training

This training is all about behaviors that teach your dog to become a good canine citizen. It teaches him the nuances of learning what is acceptable and what is just not accepted in human society. Some etiquette that you can teach him to be a well behaved dog includes the following.

- 1 How to behave with other dogs and other people.
- 2 Behavior with other people.
- 3 Appropriate behavior when you take him out on a leash.

- 4 Housebreaking.
- 5 Food training which includes not to beg, not to eat off people's plates, and not to 'steal' or 'help themselves' to food that may be lying around.
- 6 To resist running out of open doors or gates.
- 7 Refrain from chasing kids or cars.
- 8 Abstain from chewing or scratching household articles.
- 9 Not to bite.

All of the above training schedules will help in making him more acceptable and likable among your friends and family, as well as with other dogs.

b) Obedience Training

Obedience or etiquette training includes obeying simple conventional commands such as the following.

- ⇒ Sit
- ⇒ Down
- ⇒ Heel and many more.

It provides a foundation for dealing with canine related issues. Training opens up channels of communication with your dog. Communication enables you to convey to your dog what exactly it is that you want him to do.

With this type of training your dog will be prompt and precise in executing your order. This type of training is very essential for your daily co-existence with your dog. This training truly makes dogs obedient to their masters. It is necessary for the safe survival of your Lab. It is not some kind of forced and artificial activity.

Obedience training can prove to be instrumental in helping to keep your dog safe and well too. Once your Lab has learned to respond to your verbal commands, he will listen to you under any circumstances. Thus if one day he gets out on a busy road without his leash, you will be able to ask him to stay at one place until you go and fetch him.

Besides day to day household survival commands, obedience training covers lessons for professional dogs such as dogs used for sniffing out narcotics, bombs, etc. Service dogs used to help handicapped people and search & rescue dogs also need to be trained very well in obeying commands. This makes them very useful to human beings.

Here are some major advantages of obedience training.

- 1 Obedience training helps solve doggie behavioral problems. When you teach your Lab something new and he does what you want and you praise him for it, a lovely new personality emerges from your dog.
- 2 A wonderful feeling of bonding and great friendship grows with obedience training. The bonding enables you to recognize your pet's needs and interpret his behavior as well.
- 3 When your dog obeys you, he gets a natural instinctive feeling of belonging to a pack and following a leader.
- 4 Your already intelligent Lab's intelligence levels will rise even further with the obedience training that you give him.

c) Activity Training

This type of training refers to specific activities such as search and rescue, hunting, and retrieving. Nowadays with hunting being restricted to preserve wildlife activity, training includes sports such as Agility, Frisbee, Fly ball, and so on.

d) Show training

As the name suggests this training teaches your pet how to conduct himself when you allow him to compete with other dogs in the show ring for Dog Shows and Competitions.

e) Trick training

These tricks are good stimulants for your Lab's mind. This intelligent animal's mind definitely needs stimulation. They keep him from getting bored. Besides mental stimulation the physical exertion of these tricks exercise the dog's muscles too! The tricks add fun to your life as well as to that of your dog!

Trick training is fun. It builds strong and lasting bonds between the trainer and the trained. It stimulates the body and the mind. It instills discipline. The positive behavior it reinforces spreads friendliness and good cheer.

Now as a dog owner, your mind will probably be swamped with questions regarding how to go about imparting the most appropriate training to your pet. Earlier on, dogs were trained by just sheer instinct or trial and error. Today the world has changed tremendously. Training methods available today are all tried and tested and very well-documented too.

In order to find the right method you must get an exposure to the various methods of training available. You can read books on dog training. You can contact your local kennel club, local breeder, or local training school for necessary information. Talk to other dog owners about how they went about training their dogs. Pay attention when they tell you about the various kinds of experiences that they encountered during their dog training days.

This kind of background search will give you a fair idea of where to culminate your search. A very reliable source of information will be from the owners of the parents of your pup. The advantage here is that you will be able to learn about the hereditary traits that

your pup might have inherited from his parents.

Your search for the right training school for your dog should be as meticulous as the search you would conduct in finding a suitable school for your child. Then the entire training process should be a fun filled experience for both you and your dog.

A formal training school will certify your dog for the following characteristics that indicate how well-trained you have trained your dog.

- Accept friendly strangers.
- Sit politely when being petted.
- Good grooming.
- Easy walking on a leash.
- Well-mannered walk amidst a crowd.
- Response to obedience commands such as sit and stay.
- How he interacts with you.
- How friendly he is with other animals.
- His reaction to distractions.
- His behavior when isolated.

7 Why should I put my pet Lab through the rigors of trick training? After all he is just a domestic pet!

Your pet is first and foremost a domestic pet and I am sure you love and care for him very much. So you really need to know that trick training acts as a means of reinforcing positive behavior in your pet. Here are a few important aspects to encourage you to impart trick training to your dog.

- 1 You communicate in a clearer and more consistent manner with your dog. Your understanding of each other improves by

leaps and bounds.

- 2 Newer and more challenging tricks give your pet a positive new sense of purpose and help him exercise better self-control.
- 3 Trick training helps increase your Lab's attention span. And this is really a great achievement, because normally a dog's attention span is rather short.
- 4 Training also enhances your Lab's faith and trust in you.
- 5 Your position as the pack leader is established in your dog's mind.
- 6 Clear channels of communication are established between you both.
- 7 You both experience a heady sense of achievement when your understanding of each other improves and your dog is able to respond to your signals.

Don't you feel that all these positive points definitely warrant your spending some amount of your time and energy in trick training your dog?

Chapter 13

Training to correct bad behavior

An untrained dog can be a source of embarrassment. His untrained mannerisms are actually just manifestations of his natural doggie instincts. Unfortunately, these mannerisms are classified as bad behavior in the human world.

So the chances of his misbehaving are rather high simply because he does not know how to behave himself in human society. And this behavior will cause you and whoever comes in contact with him a great deal of heartburn.

It will be a no win situation. You will suffer as an owner simply because you let him misbehave. Your neighbors will suffer, as they have to tolerate a dog that disturbs the neighborhood with his incessant barking and howling. His behavior like messing up the lawns and yards and thus spreading unpleasant odors will also be a source of irritation to your neighbors.

Are you aware that every dog lover in the vicinity will be against you? This is because the presence of a badly behaved dog spreads anti-dog feelings among people in general.

Do not follow this line of thinking that quite a few dog owners seem to subscribe to. Many people feel that once they bring a puppy home, he will gradually learn the order of things in the house from the family. This is far from true. Remember your dog is a canine, and so different from you who are human. He has to be taught what humans consider right and what they consider wrong. The absence of such training will permit him to live by his own natural instincts.

Correct your Lab's bad behavior

An untrained dog with bad behavior can threaten, offend, and even hurt others. You must take adequate steps to curb such bad behavior. You must teach your Lab what to do by communicating and correcting him.

Do not ever beat or punish him. Corporal punishment will not get your message across to him. It will only have negative repercussions and weaken your relationship with him. It will also take all the fun out of training and weaken your bonding with him.

In order to get your Lab to listen to you, fill a can with dry beans or pebbles and rattle it. The noise is bound to catch the attention of your wayward dog. You can call this can your "Shake Can."

Begging

A lovely Lab begging is just not acceptable. It is rottenly bad behavior. So curb it by following a few of these remedies.

- 1 Food at regular meal times only.
- 2 No snacks between meals.
- 3 No scraps from the dinner table.
- 4 A test of your will power – give him nothing when he begs. Say a firm "No" and look away and ignore him. He will soon get the message that you mean business when you say "No."

Biting

If you find your dog getting nippy, first check the state of his health and make sure he is not hurt or in pain. Ill dogs tend to bite. Your dog could bite if forced into a threatening position.

A puppy that is teething normally bites.

A dog that feels threatened can also resort to biting.

An injured, abused, or dog in heat can also bite.

Remedies

- If your puppy bites or nips say, "no" firmly and use shake can.
- Provide your pup with enough toys to chew.
- Do not allow a child to tease a dog.
- Teach the child to treat the dog with kindness and care.
- Do not leave a child unattended with your dog as this breed is not particularly fond of children.
- You can place a muzzle on a dog that is injured or in pain to prevent him from biting.

If your dog is over 10 months old, have a dog trainer or vet evaluate him to determine whether it's safe to keep her.

8 My Labrador Retriever is behaving so very badly! He is aggressive towards other dogs and people. What can I do? Help!

- 9 Your Lab loves companionship. Do not leave him alone for too long. Lack of companionship drives him to do things that he oughtn't. And this includes aggression.
- 10 Provide him with plenty of exercise. A big dog, such as a Lab, must be given sufficient opportunity to exercise those powerful muscles. A tired dog will not be aggressive.
- 11 If his bad behavior verges on picking up fights, then use water to squirt him on him and cool him off.
- 12 You must not allow him to win any game of aggression. This can encourage his aggressive behavior by sending the wrong signals to him.
- 13 Again, do not underestimate the importance of exercise. A tired dog will not get aggressive.
- 14 A warning for you, never use your hands to try and separate fighting dogs. Use a generous squirt from a water hose!

- 15 You have to be firm and consistent in your quest for disciplining your dog. Labs are very intelligent dogs and will continue to test your patience for as long as possible.
- 16 A Lab can become possessive about his favorite person to the point of being aggressive. So this kind of aggressive behavior must be nipped in the bud.

⌘ My doggie is great! The only problem with him is that he cannot resist an open door. He simply streaks out of the house like a flash of lightening every time someone opens the door. Help me with my predicament

This kind of behavior might culminate with very disastrous consequences and you have to teach him to be obedient. Be very firm when you are imparting obedience lessons to him. We do not recommend physical punishment of any sort, but you could try alternate forms of punishment such as withholding his meal for some time when he does not obey.

Hold practice lessons inside the house. Before you open a door and find he is waiting to bolt through it, you must very firmly say, "stay." Then open the door. When you find that he obeys, praise and reward him. Repeat this exercise over and over again through each day and for many days, until your dog obeys without succumbing to temptation. Obeying this command can be a matter of life or death for him!

⌘ My Lab loves to lick anything and everything he comes across in the house. How do I prevent this wayward behavior?

I am sure you are tired of cleaning up the rather wet slobbery mess that your Lab makes after he has bestowed his affection on various objects that he comes across in your house. So here

is a simple remedy. Coat the objects that you want to save from his slobbering tongue with a bitter substance that he will find distasteful. You could also think of spraying objects with something that your dog finds rather foul. This too will keep his investigative tongue away.

Encourage him to play, chew, or lick his toys instead. A distraction such as toys will keep him away from other household objects.

Q My Labrador Retriever has been house trained. He is now 4 years old. But quite often I find that he has started to have accidents around the house. I am rather concerned. How do I tackle such a problem with an adult dog?

This really is a cause for concern. If he is 4 years old and has suddenly started having accidents then the reason for this could be illness of some sort. It is advisable for you to take him to the vet for an examination. Do not delay the visit.

Q My Lab is great in every way except one. He just cannot resist digging when he goes out into the yard.

Your concern is palpable. The sight of your otherwise well kept yard being pock marked with unsightly holes must be very disturbing indeed. So here is what you can do.

First get rid of any other form of life that may exist in your yard. This can include rats, rodents, chipmunks, rabbits, or any other life form. Digging is a natural activity for a Lab who is a retriever by birth. So segregate an area that can be cordoned off as digging ground only.

To distinguish the area where your dog can dig mark off the area. That could be, say 3' x 3' in size, dig it out and fill it with sand and mud. Lead him to this spot. Let your Lab dig all that he wants only in this part of the yard. You can surprise him now and then by burying bones, toys, and rawhide in this pit for him to find. This will encourage him to dig there only.

Q I have a Lab who is quite well behaved. The only problem I have with him is that he loves to jump and paw at people. Do tell me how to discourage this rather irritating habit.

Jumping and pawing are two very doggie ways of seeking attention. So do not react when your doggie jumps at you or paws you for attention. Just ignore him and walk away. He will get the message that you are not happy with what he is doing. If he still persists, then order him to sit. When he does obey you must praise and reward him. This will reinforce the kind of behavior you expect from him.

Q The Lab that I have loves to bite or mouth my hands and fingers whenever he can. His sharp little teeth can hurt quite a bit. How do I prevent such behavior?

On no account should you condone such behavior. Whenever you feel the bite, yell loudly. Let him know that his biting hurts you. Say "no" in an extremely firm manner and walk away from him. When you repeatedly do this, he will understand that biting or mouthing your hands and fingers will just not be tolerated by you. A Lab is a dog that thrives on your love and he will do anything to ensure that you do not ignore him.

Q I want to teach my Lab to give me some sort of signal when he wants to go out. How do I do it?

Getting your dog to give you a signal when he wants to go out is a great idea. You can do this by hanging a bell somewhere that he can access easily. Teach him how to tug on this bell. Each time you take him out, you pull on the bell and then teach him also to tug on the bell. This way he will associate tugging on the bell with going out. Soon he will tug on the bell whenever he wants to go out.

🐾 My Lab seems to be a slow learner. He is taking a very long time to get house trained. What should I do?

House training is a very slow process. It will really test your patience. But there is just no other way. Keep a close eye on your puppy. As soon as he shows any signs of wanting to relieve himself, like putting his nose close to the ground and sniffing busily around, pick him up and rush outside. Establish a regular feeding schedule too. And take him out after every single meal. Take him out every hour too even if he has not been fed. The entire process will try your patience but the results will definitely be worth the effort.

🐾 If my Lab behaves badly can I punish him occasionally?

Experts and people who have done research on doggie behavior simply do NOT recommend punishment. They say that it will be a setback on all that you have done for your dog. Punishment will also make him fearful and scared about you. So be very careful about punishing him. Being kind, understanding, and loving go a long way in correcting your dog's bad behavior. Praise and reward are the best tools to arm yourself with in the training process. No punishments please!

⌚ How do I correct my Lab's bad behavior?

The only way to correct your Lab's bad behavior is to catch him red handed (pawed). Nab him in action and then very firmly say "No." You can prevent him from indulging in that particular act by using your hands to push him away. You can startle him into stopping by rattling a can filled with pebbles or a hand held horn. But no physical punishment should be used.

⌚ Tell me about the normal behavioral problems that I can expect to find in a new puppy that I bring home.

If you have had the opportunity of dealing with little children, you will find that puppies have a lot in common with tiny tots. Puppies will stick their noses into any new object that they encounter. They will also pick up anything that they come across with their mouths. So you have to watch out for the objects that are lying around the house. Potentially harmful material should be carefully stowed away, well out of reach from prying noses and clattering paws.

Besides this, puppies will climb on anything they find worth exploring. They will chew and bite and even exhibit aggressive behavior. The world is a brand new place for them and they want to know about everything that is new and interesting to see. It is your responsibility to keep them safe from harm!

⌚ My Lab chooses to chew everything lying around except his toys. What do I do to divert his attention towards the toys that he must actually be chewing?

An excellent way of doing this is to remove whatever your Lab is chewing and replace it with one of his toys. He might be a little reluctant to let go of the object of his choice, but this is where you will have to really exercise your authority as the leader. You will have to use all your leadership skills to coax

him away from the object and immediately shove his toy in front of him. Distraction will work as a dog has a rather short span of attention.

🌀 My Lab loves to howl at the moon. This sounds really morose and dreary. How do I stop him?

Dogs do not howl at the moon. If your Lab is howling, it is just a natural way for him to communicate with another of his own kind. You know dogs are descendants of wolves. And wolves communicate with other members of their pack by howling before they set out on a hunt. Dogs like the huskies of Siberia even get together for a group sing!

So if you find that your Lab is howling, check out whether he is ill or is feeling uncomfortable about anything. Once the cause of discomfort is removed a normal, healthy, domesticated dog will not howl.

🌀 I have a really queer problem. My dog does not respond when I call him. What should I do?

Patience is the name of the game when you are teaching or training your dog. This includes a simple command such as "come." Your dog must associate the word "come" with something pleasant or he will not respond. Here are some methods to ensure that your dog will respond when you beckon him to you.

- ✦ Make it a pleasant association.
- ✦ Never scold him or grab him when he comes.
- ✦ Praise and reward him as soon as he responds.
- ✦ Reward him with surprises. Then he will look forward to what you are going to do. Surprises can include giving him a treat, toy, praise, or just playing with him.
- ✦ Use positive body language. You can crouch down to his

level and hug him. You can clap your hands and smile at him. He will love it.

- ✦ Show him that calling does not put an end to his exercise or play time. So sometimes you must allow him to return to what he was doing.

You must also be aware that these are some methods that will ensure that your dog does not come to you when called.

- ◆ If you call your dog and then do something he dislikes. This could be giving him a bath or cutting his nails.
- ◆ Calling him when he is in the middle of playing a game.
- ◆ If you call him and then ignore him.
- ◆ If you call him in an angry tone of voice.
- ◆ If you call him and immediately put him in the crate and then leave the house.
- ◆ If you call “come” and then lunge towards him to catch him.

🌀 **Help! My Lab has suddenly started going crazily round and round in circles. Has he gone absolutely bonkers?**

You need not get worried. This is normal doggie behavior and he is just playing crazy dog like lots of dogs do. He will keep low to the ground and run flat out. He might run round first in one direction and then in the reverse at a terrific hurricane like speed too. He will tire himself out in short while and flop down in tired stupor. Relax and let him have his fun and frolic. Allow him to just let his hair down and freak out!

🌀 **I am really worried about my Lab. I think he is really bored. How do I tackle this problem?**

Boredom can be easily tackled. Teach your doggie new tricks. A dog that is bored will rapidly learn new tricks. Keep his

mind occupied with all sorts of tricks. They can include tricks that are useful, fun, tricks that are stimulating to the mind, or tricks that require the use of agility. Once he is occupied with learning and practicing new tricks his ennui of boredom will fast vanish. Not only will he be rid of boredom, he will become a source of fun and entertainment for you, your family, and friends too.

🌀 My pup is proving to be rather expensive. He loves to chew on his expensive leather leash rather than walk on it. What can I do?

Your puppy is just a baby. So anything that moves is like an invitation for him to sink his teeth into and chew to his hearts content. He will outgrow it soon. But until then you can try coating it with something bitter that he does not like.

Alternately you could switch over to a metal chain leash. The feel of cold metal against his teeth will be positively discouraging. Once the pup grows up you could replace the metal leash with a stylish expensive leather leash that you will be proud to lead your lovely Lab on.

🌀 My young Lab seems to have become an absolute brat all of a sudden. What could be the reason? And how do I handle such behavior?

Suddenly turning into brat is an almost certain sign of your Lab having entered that awkward stage of adolescence. Brat-like behavior is a dog's way of saying, "Look I have grown up now. And I am now independent. Leave me alone and do not fuss with me."

Just like a human teenager, isn't it? To keep him under control

you will have to re-assert your position as the undisputed leader to whom he just has to listen and unquestioningly obey. So step up his obedience-training schedule and spice it up with plenty of fun tricks. Keep him busy. This is the only way to keep him out of mischief.

⌘ How can I make absolutely certain that my dog does not bite anyone?

To ensure a bite free life, you must begin your puppy's training early. He must be allowed to socialize to different kinds of people. When your dog does not feel threatened by people whom he considers strangers, he will not feel threatened and bear his fangs! He should also be taken to new places and exposed to new environments too. Meeting other animals will broaden his outlook and expand his horizons.

⌘ My Labrador Retriever puppy is teething. Save me from the onslaught of those sharp little puppy teeth that love to chew up just anything that they find.

Here is a great solution for your teething pup. Take a stout and sturdy rope and knot it both ends. Soak it in water and freeze it and then give it to your pup. Biting on this frozen rope will provide relief to his gums that are causing him irritation.

Of course, make sure the rope is not too long. Otherwise your little fellow might just get it around his neck instead. You can also give him ice floating in water to relieve his itchy gums.

Chapter 14

Training you can use to your advantage

You are so fortunate! You have a lovely Labrador Retriever that makes an excellent companion, as well as a dog that is faithful and true. So do you want things to get even better? You can do so by training your pet to do a few simple chores for you. Let us go through some of these odd jobs that you can think of delegating to your four-legged furry friend to make him into your Man Friday!

1 A Door-man (Door-dog)

People are always leaving doors open and letting in the cold air and this can be really irritating! It is time for you to use the services of your doggie and teach him to shut doors. Let us see how to go about it!

- 1 Go to a room with a door that can be pushed shut.
- 2 Let the door remain ajar.
- 3 Hold a treat that your Lab loves close to the door at the height of the dog's nose.
- 4 Call your doggie to you.
- 5 He will follow his nose and head for the treat in your hand near the door.
- 6 Now remove the treat.
- 7 As you remove the treat, make sure that your act of removing the treat makes your doggie shut the door with his paws and nose.
- 8 When the door is shut, say "Shut Door" and shower him with praise and give him his treat.
- 9 Keep repeating this exercise until he understands fully what "Shut Door" means.
- 10 Soon he will follow your command, even without your offering him a treat.

And voila! You have a doorman (door-dog) at your service!

2 Doggie – Turn off the Light

Get into bed, sink your head into your soft pillow, pull up the sheets, and call out to your doggie to turn off the light. No, this is not just a dream! You can make it a dream come true! And this is how you go about it.

- 1 With your doggie's favorite treat in your hand, position yourself near the light switch.
- 2 Beckon your dog to you.
- 3 He will eagerly come towards you to get his treat.
- 4 Just as he moves towards the treat, move the treat away and let his paw hit the light switch and turn the light off.
- 5 As soon as he hits the switch and turns the light off, say "Lights Off."
- 6 Now reward him with his treat.
- 7 Soon he will recognize the command and you will be able to stand at a distance and ask him to turn the "Lights Off."
- 8 After some time you will be able to recline anywhere and your willing aide will help you to put your "Lights Off."

And lucky you can luxuriate in the comfort of having someone else turn off the lights for you!

3 Put away your toys

No one likes to have extra clearing up to do, especially after a long and strenuous day. So having to clear up after your dog has been playing with his toys will only add to your woes. Well have no fear; help is at hand in the form of your lovely Lab and here is how.

- 1 First teach your doggie to "fetch" his toy when you order him

to do so.

- 2 Then teach him to come to you and “Give” you the toy by placing your hand below his mouth.
- 3 Gradually teach him to “fetch” his toy and “drop” it at your feet.
- 4 Then instruct him to take the toy and “Drop in basket.”
- 5 Remember to praise him at every step.
- 6 When he is through with all the basic steps, graduate to the next part of the exercise.
- 7 Leave a toy lying somewhere in the room. Call your doggie. Ask him to “fetch” the toy and “Drop in basket.”

Your intelligent Lab will soon be carrying out this exercise like a pro and this will make you really proud of him!

Want to make him really useful around the house? Then try this. When your kids leave their dirty socks lying around the place, ask your dog to pick them up and drop them in the basket. What more could you ask for?

4 Doggie Alarm

Hmm, what about having a nice, loving, devoted, furry doggie licking your face to drag you out of the depths of slumber? Sounds good doesn't it! So much better than the strident notes of a rather rudely ringing alarm clock!

Well go ahead and use the intelligence of your Labrador Retriever to do this job for you. And this is how you go about doing so.

- 1 Initially get up before it is time for your alarm to ring.
- 2 Once it rings call your Lab to you. He will come running and clamber on to your bed and start licking your sleepy face. Let him do so.
- 3 As the alarm ceases to ring, order him off the bed.
- 4 Repeated practice of this scene will teach your Lab that as soon

as the alarm rings, he must jump on to your bed and lick you till you wake up.

What better way to start your day than with loving licks from your much-loved dog?

Your 'fetch & carry' doggie

It is indeed nice to have someone to fetch & carry for you, especially if you are weary and feeling a teeny weenie bit laid back or just plain tired. Well, with a smart Lab around you can use his intelligence to do just this. So here is how to achieve this remarkably helpful feat.

- 1 Initially place your doggie on a long leash.
- 2 Wave a toy of his in front of him and then throw it so that he runs to "fetch" it.
- 3 Urge him to bring the toy to you.
- 4 Tug at his leash to make him come towards you if required.
- 5 Once he brings the toy to you, ask him to "drop" it at your feet.
- 6 Remember, do not forcibly take the toy from him. Force can damage the toy.
- 7 Remember to praise him at every step that he completes.

Soon you can get rid of the leash. He will "fetch" and "drop" the toy at your feet without it. You can use your dog to do this trick by fetching you useful objects such as getting your slippers or fetching your newspaper. Isn't it a good idea for your dog to run to the porch, pick up your newspaper, and run with it in his mouth towards you? What luxuries you can enjoy with a properly trained dog.

Take me for a walk

Now that your Lab is smart enough to fetch you your slippers or

your morning papers, he can become smart enough to remind you to take him for a walk. So teach him to fetch his leash when it is time for his walk.

- 1 When you are ready to take him for a walk and are attaching his leash to his collar, say "leash." This is an indication that you are ready to go out for a walk.
- 2 Soon he will associate the word "leash" as synonymous with going for a walk.
- 3 Later, even if going for a walk slips your mind, your pooch will remind you by coming to you with the leash in his mouth.
- 4 Remember to keep his leash at the same spot all the time for your pooch to find!

Go to your room

As the channels of communication between you and your pooch keep increasing, you will grow to love the way your dog responds to you. Like a little child you will soon be able to even order him to go to his room, crate, or kennel as the case may be. For the sake of convenience let us call it his "room." To train him to obey these commands follow this training schedule.

- 1 Make a trail of his favorite treats from the room you are in right up to his room.
- 2 Say "Go to your room" and let him follow his trail strewn with treats up to his room.
- 3 Once he is in the designated area, order him to "stay."
- 4 Praise him for obeying.

Soon he will go to his room at your command without having to be bribed with treats.

Give paw

This is a favorite trick with kids. Even your little one will be able to teach this to your doggie. It is the human equivalent of shake hands.

- 1 First ask your dog to sit.
- 2 Pick up his right paw in your right hand and say "shake."
- 3 Now let go the paw, put your right hand forward, and say "shake."
- 4 Gradually he will start lifting his right paw and placing it in your extended palm without much prompting,

What a nice way of greeting guests! They will love such a well-behaved dog.

Goodbye

A dog that not only shakes hands, but waves goodbye too will really be a crowd pleaser among your friends!

- 1 Ask him to "sit" and then "shake."
- 2 As he lifts his paw to shake, raise your hand up and out of his reach.
- 3 At this moment say "Goodbye."
- 4 He will lift his paw to keep up with your hand.
- 5 Do appreciate this gesture with lavish praise.

Soon he will be merrily waving goodbye whenever asked to do so.

Lift Paw

Now this is a trick to help you while you clip his nails or clean his dirty little paws.

- 1 Ask him to "sit" in front of you.
- 2 Then ask him to "lift right paw and hold."
- 3 "Hold" is important, as he will have to sit with his paw up for quite some time until you finish the necessary grooming.
- 4 You will need to carry out this exercise with all four paws.

✍ **Shake yourself dry**

This is a self-help measure for your Lab. It will save you the trouble of running after him to ensure that he has totally dried out. It is such a useful trick for those monsoon days when he will come back wet after almost every trip outdoors. Another thing to note is that all doggie drying should be restricted to only one designated spot. Otherwise you will have showers of water flying all over the house.

- 1 Dogs have a natural instinct to shake themselves dry every time they get wet. Say the words "Rock & Roll" just as he starts to shake himself dry.
- 2 Say this phrase whenever you find it appropriate.
- 3 Thus he will associate "Rock & Roll" with shaking himself.
- 4 Eventually when you see that he is about to shake himself, lead him to the designated shake dry area. This area can be free of furniture or clothes that you do not want wet with water from a very wet dog.

✍ **Prayers**

End the day with prayers just like with your kids. This is really sweet. Your kids will love it if their dog accompanies them in their daily prayers to the Almighty. So here is how you go about it.

- 1 Sit in front of your dog.

- 2 Place a low stool in front of him.
- 3 Place one of his paws on his stool.
- 4 Follow this with the other paw.
- 5 Place a favorite treat of his between the two paws.
- 6 His head will come to rest between the two paws right where you have placed his treat.
- 7 When he is in this position say "pray."

He will gradually learn what to do when you say "pray" after a few practice rounds.

These are some of the doggie tricks that are not only fun but also very useful for your dog to know. Use your imagination and think up of some more tricks. Your Labrador Retriever is such an intelligent animal. He will happily keep learning new tricks all the time. They will keep him mentally stimulated and physically alert too!

Chapter 15

Fun Training

Once your Labrador has been put through the paces of basic training, such as behavioral training and obedience training, he is ready to graduate into bit more advanced fun training sessions. Teaching him new stuff will keep his mental agility skills strong and alive. These tricks are just for sheer fun. They are entertaining and good for laughs too. And there are numerous such tricks that a dog as intelligent as your Labrador Retriever can perform.

✍ **Play Scooby Doo**

This is a really cute little trick where your dog will cover one eye with a paw and give you an embarrassed look! And here is how you get him to perform.

- 1 Make your doggie sit in front of you.
- 2 Blow some air onto his face in the general direction of his ear.
- 3 The airflow will make him raise his paw and try to cover his face. (He might try to run away too. Try to restrain him.)
- 4 Say "hide face" when he covers his face.
- 5 Be consistent in practice and soon you will have a Scooby Doo act being performed by your pet.

Now play G I Joe

Add to the novelty of fun training by teaching your pet to "crawl" along on his belly just like the soldiers out in the field.

- 1 First ask him to get "down" on his belly. He will be on the ground with his nose down on the ground too.

- 2 Keep him on his leash, place a treat directly in front of his nose (not too close), and say "crawl."
- 3 Move the treat along the ground without giving it to him.
- 4 Do not allow him to raise his butt from the ground. Press down with your hand if required.
- 5 Cover a short distance in this manner for starters.
- 6 When he has "crawled" for a short distance give him the treat.

This is not a very easy trick and could take up to 3 –4 weeks for him to learn. Be patient. Your G I Joe will soon be crawling the entire length of a room without much prodding!

Speak

You definitely do not want a dumb dog, do you? Go ahead and teach him how to speak!

- 1 Start by using food as the incentive and place a dish of food in front of him. But do not give it to him until he "speaks" (barks).
- 2 When he does bark, say "speak."
- 3 Use a hand signal as well as voice command. Place all four fingers of the hand against your thumb and then open out all the fingers and thumb of your hand. This signal should indicate that you want him to bark.
- 4 Once your doggie has learned this trick you can modify it slightly. Play some music and signal to him when you want him to bark.
- 5 Dogs are quite rhythmic. They respond well to music. So you can have your dog singing along to some melodious music too!

A dog that kisses

With music in the air, can love be far behind? Teach your pooch how to kiss too.

- 1 Sit in front of your dog and give him a nice warm hug and draw back.
- 2 Then say, "Kiss," make a smacking sound with your lips, and turn your cheek towards your dog.
- 3 Your dog will plant a great big slobbering kiss on your cheek as a token of his affection.
- 4 Practice will teach him to associate the word "Kiss" with the action of planting a slobbering lick on your cheek or anyone else's for that matter.

Your children will love being kissed by their pet pooch. He too will enjoy all the adulation and praise he gets because of the actions he performs.

A dog that agrees

With music and love in the air, the atmosphere around ought to be one of general camaraderie and agreement. So teach your pooch how to "agree" with you too.

- 1 Make your dog sit in front of you.
- 2 Hold a treat in front of his head.
- 3 Say, "Do you agree" and move the treat up and down.
- 4 In this way your doggie will move his head up and down as if nodding his head in agreement as his eyes follows the treat in your hand.
- 5 Give him the treat when he moves his head up and down.
- 6 Soon the phrase, "Do you agree?" will be sufficient enough to encourage him to move his head up and down.

And you will have a dog that readily agrees with whatever you

say!

✎ **A Mathematician!**

What fun to have a pet that can count! Yes, you can teach your pooch to count and this is how.

- 1 Your doggie will count by barking as many times as the number of objects being counted.
- 2 To guide the number of times he barks, he must first be taught to recognize your silent hand or head signals.
- 3 Place a number of objects that you want him to count in front of him.
- 4 Then say "count."
- 5 He should then give short barks for every signal that you show.
- 6 When he has barked the required number of times, signal him to stop.
- 7 Practice until perfect in counting.
- 8 You can modify the trick by placing two different types of objects in front of him, say 5 yellow balls and 3 red balls, and then ask him to "add."
- 9 Use the same ploy as used for counting.

Your friends will be simply amazed at the intelligence of your pet!

Play dead

All good things do come to an end. So when the trick show is nearing its end, the last logical trick should be "play dead."

- 1 Ask your dog to go "down."
- 2 Once down, ask him to "Die." With this command, gently nudge him to roll over onto his back with all his paws in the air.

- 3 You can practice "Die" a number of times.
- 4 You can then play God by bringing him to life again by saying "Alive" and prodding him to get up onto his feet again.
- 5 Of course praise him at every step.
- 6 Want a variation of "Die?" Then use the "Bang, bang" plan.
- 7 When you say "Bang, bang" teach your pooch to lift one paw in the air at first. Next he should go flat down on his tummy pretending that he is injured and then he should roll over with paws in the air and play dead.

With this act you can bring the curtains down on your fun trick doggie show.

Chapter 16

The Lab's Sense of Scent & Associated Tricks

Labrador Retrievers have been used for hunting and retrieving through the ages. Thus a Lab is blessed with a very keen sense of smell. This gift can be used for pursuing occupations such as tracking missing people, locating misplaced articles, sniffing out contraband drugs, narcotics, or even bombs, and for trailing miscreants too.

Tracking

This is something that your Lab will love to do. It was the very lifeblood of his ancestors as they hunted and retrieved game.

- 1 Allow your pooch to sniff at an object like a bunch of keys or handkerchief.
- 2 Then ask someone else to take that object out doors, go some distance, and hide it in the bush or amongst a clump of plants or grass.
- 3 Place your pooch on a leash and take him outdoors.
- 4 Tell him to "trail" and "find."
- 5 He will follow the scent and run along it.
- 6 Once he reaches the object, he will be overcome with excitement and probably begin barking at it.
- 7 This is an indication to you that he has found the object.

Reward and praise him well. Developed along a more serious note, this is the principle used by dogs that work in "Search & Rescue" operations.

Find objects outdoors

This is such a useful trick. Your Lab is familiar with all the objects in your house and they carry smells that he is very familiar and comfortable with.

- 1 Allow him to sniff a particular object. It could be anything like a handkerchief, bunch of keys, glove, or a pouch.
- 2 Then take it and hide it somewhere outdoors.
- 3 After some time tell him to “find” and “fetch.”
- 4 Use a leash at least in the initial stages. Later you can let him off the leash to run and locate the object.
- 5 Remember to gesture in the general direction of the object before you release him to find it.

After a little practice your pooch will be able to pick out your belongings from a heap of mixed articles that do not belong to you.

Indoor hunts

These are good variations of hide & seek with objects to play indoors. Especially when the weather does not permit you to go out for some good doggie entertainment.

- 1 Let him smell an object of your choice.
- 2 Then take it away and hide it. Do not let him see where you are hiding it.
- 3 Say, “Find it.”
- 4 Your doggie will be able to sniff out the trail of scent left by the object and follow it to its hiding place.

Reward him amply for work well done!

Guess which hand?

This is another favorite trick that kids like to play with their dogs!

- 1 Take a doggie treat and hide it in one of your hands.
- 2 Clench both your fists and place them in front of your doggie.
- 3 Ask, "Which hand?"
- 4 Your doggie will sniff at both your fists and nudge the one holding his treat with his nose.
- 5 At this moment catch hold of his paw and place it on the fist with the treat.
- 6 When he does that, praise him so he knows that this is what you expect him to do.
- 7 Repeat the process until he begins to lift his paw and place it on your fist by himself.

This trick guarantees loads of fun for your children and their friends.

Chapter 17

Training & Show Biz

The Labrador Retriever is a very handsome dog. He has sturdy fore quarter and sleek powerful hindquarters. He is so intelligent that it appears that he might just speak at any moment. His movements are swift. His keen dark eyes take in every development that is taking place around him. His temperament is unflappable. He looks like he is wearing a smile at all times. He is a wonderful hunting dog and also makes an excellent family pet.

Is it any wonder that he ranks high on the popularity list of dogs in the USA? In the year 2002 there were more than 1,540,000 Labrador Retriever registrations with the American Kennel Club. 45,000 litters were also registered with the AKC that year.

With such a favorable reputation this breed is a hot favorite in the show ring. His intelligence also makes him a favorite for competitions too.

Registration

If you want to make your Lab into a show dog, the first thing to do is to register him with a Kennel Club. If he is a pure pedigree then you must register him with the American Kennel Club (AKC). AKC registration does not ask for the dog to be neutered. But if a female is in heat she cannot enter a competition.

What happens if your dog looks like a pure bred but you have no papers to prove that he is a pure bred? Well, there is a way out. You can get an AKC Indefinite Listing Privilege or ILP registration. This is indeed a blessing for dogs from animal rescue shelters. But AKC demands that such dogs be neutered.

Obedience trials

You can take your Lab for obedience trial competitions. Here are some of the maneuvers that you will have to go through with your dog.

- 1 Walk with your dog at your heel in a particular manner.
- 2 Take turns to the right and to the left upon command with your dog.
- 3 Walk at different paces with your pet – normal, slow, fast, or halt in any random order.
- 4 Your dog should sit when you stop.
- 5 These maneuvers will have to be done with the leash and without the leash too.
- 6 Other commands include walking with your dog in the figure 8 around two people standing at least 8 feet apart.
- 7 The following exercises will also have to be done – sit, down, and stand for scrutiny by the judges.
- 8 You will have to summon your dog from a sit or stay position. As he approaches you, he will have jump when you ask him to do so.
- 9 On reaching you, he will have to come to heel, and then sit down.

Dog shows

Dog shows are platforms on which the best of breed can be judged. This is accomplished by comparing each dog with the ideal physical standards of that particular breed. The dogs that come closest to ideal breed standards are much sought after for breeding purposes. The temperament of the dog is also judged in these shows.

Following are some of the vital personal statistics for a Labrador Retriever.

Height	-	Dogs 22-24 inches (56-61 cm) Bitches 21-23 inches (53-58 cm)
Weight	-	Dogs 60-75 pounds (27-34 kg) Bitches 55-70 pounds (25-32 kg) Some males can grow to 100 pounds (45 kg) or more.
Life Expectancy		10-12 years
Coat		Short and dense
Color		Yellow, black, or chocolate coats
Personality		Outgoing
General		Stable dog with plenty of energy. Adjusts easily to new surroundings.

Your Labrador Retriever is a lovely creature. His loving companionship is going to provide hours of happiness, warmth, and comfort. So it is your responsibility to provide him with the training that he needs to live in comfort, happiness, and joy as a domestic pet.

Adopting a pet is making a commitment to this little life for whatever span of life he has on this planet. The only way you can ensure this is to train him well enough to be accepted as a good canine citizen amidst the society filled with humans that he lives in. And training can be really good fun for both you and your pet if you have the right attitudes. The right attitudes include dollops of love, tones of patience, and a generous icing of consistency. All these factors generously packaged with tender loving care will help your dog become the envy of the neighborhood and your source of unmitigated pride.

Training today is a medley of so many good things. It includes music, tricks, sports, agility, and so much more. With a little ingenuity, you can keep adding to this interesting and ever growing list.

And think about it, as you go about your duties as a responsible dog owner that includes long walks and runs and other forms of exercise, you are adding to your own healthy disease-free lifestyle too.

If you have the inclination to use that superb dog of yours for social activities such as using him as a therapy dog, you are truly blessed. Not only has this wonderful dog brought joy into your life, but he has also brought so much cheer to the lives of people, who are in need of someone to love, hold and cherish. He will bring smiles to people's faces and warmth into their desolate eyes. Happiness truly heals.

Your Lab can truly become your gateway to many more cherished and long lasting relationships with other people also. Consider yourself very fortunate and blessed at having found such an affectionate handsome dog and give him all the very best training you can find possible. The effort you put into his training will pay you exceedingly rich dividends.

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