

Training Tip Tuesday: Managing multiple dogs

Many of you are fortunate to live in a multi-dog household – and while this can be wonderful, it can also drive you slightly mad! There's an old saying "Two will do what One will not" This means Groups = Shenanigans! Even humans fall under this spell; you might normally be quiet and shy, but when you're with a group of your friends you suddenly start skipping down Cary St! Dogs are the same; your pooch may be the sweetest most well-behaved dog on the planet when he's flying solo – but get him with his friends, and your house becomes host to a three-ring circus! The more you try to control one; the more chaos ensues...

Whether you have several residents, or your dog has friends over; the key to managing multiple dogs is to treat them as individuals! This means taking the time to work with them one on one and make sure they know (and fully understand) the words you are using, you have proofed your words around other distractions and you've built up a positive, trust-based relationship. It also helps to start practicing around other dogs, and incorporating them into your teaching routine. (If the only time your dog ever gets to see other dogs is at the dog park, and you get to the gate and let him go full tilt into the group – and the only time you ever call him is to hook him up to go home – guess how long its going to take him to figure out that coming to you ends all his fun... within a few days you'll be that person that cant catch their dog and spends waaay longer at the park than you'd planned!)

It is true that dogs will learn from each other; and often having an older, seasoned dog will help teach the younger one new skills – but it works in reverse as well. Bad habits are passed on just as quickly as everything else (often times quicker – I swear!). If you know you have a crazy dog, or a barky, growly, spastic dog – he's NOT one I would include in your early training!

So - to manage multiple dogs; pick a few cues and make sure each individual dog knows and understands them well! Practice with them alone, then in sight of another dog, then finally together. If you have more than two; add dogs one at a time. (Make sure two will listen, then ask for three. If three listen, add four).

Practice releasing them to play, then calling them in to you, loving them up, then sending them back to play. Any time *they* choose to come check in with you should also be rewarded!

Manage your household! If there are certain times or situations your KNOW your dog can't control himself when he's alone; don't expect it to be any better when he has a friend over. Use crates, or baby gates, or ex-pens to put your dog away a few minutes before you expect him to overreact to something.

Make sure all dogs have the means and opportunity to get away from each other. They may be best buds; but everyone needs space from time to time. Never crate dogs together; they should each have their own! And if you see one dog trying to walk away, and the other dog just won't leave him alone – its time for you to intervene.

Work on behavioral issues individually; if barking at the door is a problem – multiple mouths will only make it worse. Just like the basic cues; teach the dogs one at a time, then bring them back together. Manage the situation while you are teaching to prevent them from practicing bad behaviors.

The four dogs in the video below all know each other; and they have worked individually with me; but they have never worked together like this. Its not perfect – its not supposed to be. It's just a loose leash walk; with control (and trying to stay in sight of the camera! Lol)

<https://youtu.be/Dfc5mhrtojg>