

## Training Tip Tuesday: Guests!

The holidays are right around the corner. For many people, this means lots of visitors and overnight guests. Don't wait until the Turkey is in the oven, or Santa is on the roof to start teaching your dog how to handle this change in his environment! Plan ahead. Think about what your festivities will look like. Think about where and how your dog fits in this picture. Be realistic. Be fair. You may want your dog to play center stage and help unwrapping presents, but if you have a high energy, nervous, or reactive dog; he may prefer to have a quiet space to himself. If you have a young puppy that is still figuring out and learning how to behave; throwing him the middle of a gaggle of over-stimulated children is not going to help him. Older dogs may enjoy \*some\* attention but at the end of the day; they may tire of all the attention; especially if pint-sized people are clambering and climbing over them!

Guests may not know your house rules; and doors and gates may be left open. Have a plan for keeping your dog safe! If you don't have wonderful doorway manners; consider gates, or keeping your pup on leash. Make sure he has a collar and current tags on – just in case!

Your guests may not think about where they put things; if you have a nosey pup, a counter surfer or a table thief you'll have to pay close attention. Many holiday goodies are toxic to dogs; not only food but decorations (think tinsel on the tree, poinsettias, etc)... Keep your dog close and on leash to prevent him from hoovering dangerous goods!

Presents under the tree offer a unique temptation to curious pups. Especially if they have a special smell! While it can be great fun to wrap up presents for your dog and help him rip the paper open to find a special goody; make sure this only happens under supervision and with designated gifts!

If you are expecting four-legged guests; really, really plan ahead. Even the best of buddies may find it difficult to navigate the holiday stress and excitement. What starts as play could escalate into something else. Make sure everyone has time and space to themselves. Don't expect your dog to share everything he has for days at a time!

Always watch for signs of stress. You may have the kindest, calmest, most wonderful beast on the planet – but everyone is entitled to an off day. If he needs to take a break – let him! Whether that's some quiet time in a room by himself, or a walk with just his person; pay attention to what your dog is saying and respect him enough to listen!

One of the ways we manage doorways is with our 'place' cue. When we practice this; we teach our dogs that when they hear a knock on the door one or two woofs is okay, but they should go to their place and wait there until released. This allows time for us to greet our guests, escort them in, and get everyone settled. Start by teaching and proofing your place cue, then start adding the knock at the door. I start by standing next to the place mat, knocking on the wall, and verbally cueing the place. After a while, you can fade the verbal cue, and the knock itself will become the cue. Work in baby steps; and if you have to break it down even further – do so! Dais did not really know this cue in this context before the video – what you see is the result about 30

minutes of teaching. One of the things I had to break out and work on separately was me saying 'Hello!'.. every time i did my greeting - she would break and go to the door, so I asked her to place, said hello while standing right there, and rewarded immediately if she stayed on the cot. Gradually i added distance. Then we started adding the other components.

Take your time with it; and start working on the cues you need to make your holidays go smoothly!

<https://youtu.be/2t6YGFBA-AA>