



DEAR OLLIE,

The story of my Hooch is one I love to tell everyone because my family was adopted by this big brown lug of a dog in a very special way.

Here is how the adventure began. I started to get a sense that something was wrong or different in my neighborhood when my garbage was invaded every Monday by something much bigger than the local raccoons. Stories began circulating among the children that a huge pile of brown leaves near the large pond by my home was moving. Then, I would hear police sirens as the local police department was called by the local children reporting a large monster that needed to be captured. This monster was living in the pile of leaves by my pond. The police would come and the leaves would become quiet. This went on for about three months, food was missing, leaf piles were moving and sirens were blaring. Finally, a large dog was spotted and I went to investigate. What I found was a sweet and frightened dog that weighed over 100 pounds living and hiding in the leaves and wandering the neighborhood in search of food. He was a beautiful sight to see and won my heart. I began taking care of him. I wrote ads for the local paper asking who was missing this fine and gentle animal which was part Labrador, part Pit bull and part Mastiff.

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Hooch and I were definitely bonding during this time and I was keeping my fingers crossed that no one would respond to the ad. When it seemed clear that I could adopt the big “fella,” I called the local Humane Society and brought Hooch to them for an evaluation. While he was there, I thought about him all the time. What was he doing, or more appropriately, what was he chewing? This dog was bigger than me and I wondered if I had the strength to train him properly. I also wondered if we had the right home for him and if he'd really be happy. The folks at the Humane Society told me that to adopt him would be a commitment and I needed to think about it carefully. When I visited Hooch and saw him in his cage, there was no question that he was going to make his home with my family. He had his shots, was neutered, examined by a veterinarian and given a clean bill of health. I took him home immediately.

I bought a dog training video and every morning, Hooch and I work on his deportment. I am very pleased to report that, 26 pairs of shoes later, he is doing just fine. My question is this, he is a gentle dog and wants people to love him yet they are afraid of him. What can we do?

Renee, Chapel Hill

DEAR RENEE,

It is a special thing when a dog adopts a person and a person's place. Dogs know a lot of things simply by instinct. They don't choose just anyone because there are many stories of dogs that search for and choose the right person for them. Hooch made the right choice.

How to Avoid Calling the Canine Coach

By Valerie Broadway

Why do some people need help with their dogs from the Canine Coach or other behavior specialists while others don't? Why do some people need help with a certain dog when they have had many other dogs with no difficulty?

Like humans, dogs have a wide variety of personalities and histories that affect the way they behave. Sometimes the issues develop long before the dogs arrive at their permanent homes. Other times the issues develop inadvertently as a result of something happening in the home they live in. It may be a single traumatic incident, or a generally stressful atmosphere around them. It could be due to dogs never receiving consequences for bad behaviors that escalate over time.

Understanding how and why dogs get “off track” is a big part of preventing having dogs with big problems.

Most people want puppies and the unwanted behavior prevention plan starts before even meeting them. There are things to understand even before the search for puppies begins. Knowing the puppy's history can help determine if behavior issues are more likely. Avoid puppy mills or unscrupulous breeders. Most pet shops get their stock from puppy mills, and many online websites are beautifully designed, deceiving fronts for puppy mills. It's best to see puppies in person and the parents, if possible. If there are multiple litters of puppies available at the same location it's probably a puppy mill. If conditions are filthy and the puppies' parents are in bad physical or mental shape, look elsewhere.

Before selecting a puppy take time to observe the litter in action. Avoid the bossy pups who seem to bully the others. They will come preprogrammed to be pushy and demanding. Also avoid the most shy of the litter, often the runt. (This one is irresistible to most people.) These pups have often have had a hard time with their littermates that may result in a lifetime of anxiety. Picking any other puppy in the litter will be easier than these two. It's also not a good idea to get siblings at the same time. Get one and come back in a couple of weeks for the other. If their bond is not broken they will have a difficult time attaching to humans. If the bond is not broken usually one pup will become the follower of the other and they both will be very insecure when not together. Once in their new home it must be a priority for the humans to regularly do things with each puppy individually.

One of the easiest things to do to avoid having to get professional

behavior help is to skip puppyhood altogether. Many people find the most challenging phase of a dog's life is from six months to one year old. Puppies need training and clear direction to know what is expected of them. They must be supervised or somewhere where they won't get into trouble. The most common age people surrender their dogs to shelters is one year old. They couldn't take the energy, poor manners, or destructiveness of the puppy. Getting dogs when they are two years or older will ensure the likelihood that the dogs will be much easier to live with. The puppy shenanigans are behind them and there's no guesswork about personalities, and the likes and dislikes they will have.

The more time people spend with their dogs, the better the relationship will be. People and dogs are typically closer when dogs live inside the house. Dogs are social beings and don't do well spending a lot of time alone. Lonely dogs are prone to developing anxiety and anxious dogs will chew things up and potentially develop other unwanted behaviors.

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A factor people don't often consider is determining the type of dog with an energy level that matches the family. Most dogs are athletes and need to run every day. They are not a weekend hobby. Dogs are a daily commitment. People sometimes have “fantasy thinking.” This is when they get a dog based on an unrealistic expectation; such as a dog they saw in a TV show, or because it looks like a dog they had in the past. When they get the dog they are disappointed that it wasn't what they were hoping it would be. Another aspect of “fantasy thinking” is adults expecting children to be completely responsible for their dog's care. Most children fall off the job after only a few days. It is not fair for pets to suffer when no one is taking proper care of them. When getting any type of pet, parents are ultimately responsible for them.

It is important to socialize dogs around different people, places, things, and animals. This should begin when puppies are still with the litter. Most breeders don't do this, so it is critical to make up for this once puppies are

The Canine Coach BY VALERIE BROADWAY



in their new homes. Dogs only learn to be comfortable with what they are positively exposed to. If they rarely leave home they will become nervous in unfamiliar situations, and in some cases become overly territorial about their house and property. They want to keep strangers away and may behave aggressively towards them.

Every dog should be taught to walk politely on a leash. Leash-work is the easiest way for dogs to understand the human is the leader. It must be clear as to who is deciding where you both go and at what the pace will be. Dogs will believe they are the leader if every time they stop to sniff or mark something the person stops, too. There's nothing wrong with letting dogs sniff some and relieve themselves on walks, but they must understand that the person on the other end of the leash is allowing them to do these things. When dogs believe they are in charge they are more likely to be difficult to live with. Dogs are always assessing the hierarchy within the group they are in and they usually respect the leaders. They tend to ignore or can even become aggressive towards those they feel are beneath them. Spaying females and neutering male dogs generally results in dogs who are easier to live with. Some people (usually men) have no issue spaying a female but completely refuse to neuter their male dogs. As far as behavior issues are concerned it is more important to neuter than spay since unaltered males are the most likely type of dog to bite people.

Dogs are expected to be extremely tolerant of children. However, it is very important to teach children to be respectful of dogs. A responsible adult should always be present whenever dogs and young children are together. In many dog-to-child aggression cases dogs just couldn't take it anymore and growled, snapped, nipped, or bit a child. When this happens the first question to ask is, “Where were the adults?”

There aren't many professions where the workers think it would be great if their services weren't needed anymore.

The Canine Coach, and probably most dog behavior specialists, would in fact be thrilled if this were the case. What a wonderful world it would be!

Valerie Broadway, the Canine Coach, is a dog trainer and behavioral specialist. For more information, call 919-542-4726 or visit www.caninecoachingservices.com.

If Hooch is being trained on a leash and you or someone else is with him, he can sit at your side. When sitting, and in your control, Hooch can be selective and affectionate with those people that he chooses.

I hope you have replenished your shoe wardrobe. My human says this is the perfect time to buy shoes because the sales are terrific. Good luck.

Ollie is a rescued black and white Shih Tzu that turned his passion for helping other pets into a popular advice column. Ask Ollie questions by emailing him at chathamcountyline@gmail.com





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