

Bring the Dog In

Karin Larsen Bridge

Get S.M.A.R.T dogs
Delta Behavioral Trainer

Dog owners come in two distinctly divided groups – those who like to have their dogs in the house and those who prefer to keep them outside. The 'inside' group can't see the point of owning a dog if it doesn't share your home with you. The 'outside' group firmly believe that a dog's place is out in the fresh air, that to bring a dog in would make it 'soft' or 'spoilt' as well making the home less pleasant for its' human occupants.

Opinion on whether a dog should be kept inside or outside stems from a mixture of cultural background, personal experiences and practical considerations such as the set-up and size of your home, how many dogs you have and your dog's role in the family. In Australia, with our mild climate, working dogs were traditionally kept outside and many people carry on this tradition with their pet dogs. In the colder climates of Europe, even farm dogs traditionally lived-in with the family and the trend continues today with millions of pet dogs still sharing small apartments with their owners.

Today a growing number of canine behaviourists and trainers recommend bringing your pet dog be allowed inside.

Reasons to Bring Your Dog In

Dogs are social animals

Dogs make wonderful pets because they are by nature a 'social' animal. They have a strong need to belong to and interact with, other members of their 'pack' either canine or human. If your 'pack' spends most of its time inside your home, that is where your dog will want to be.

More value for your money

Most people keep dogs today not to fulfil any work function but rather for companionship. It is a fact of modern life however that we spend less time in our homes than ever before and therefore less time in the company of our dogs. If, added to this the dog is not allowed inside, the time you spend together becomes negligible. To get the most value out of the cost and effort of owning a dog, it makes sense to let your dog in.

Inside dogs exhibit fewer behaviour problems.

Outside dogs are more likely to exhibit serious behaviour problems associated with boredom such as excessive barking, destructive chewing, separation anxiety and self-mutilation. A bored and lonely dog finds minor disturbances like people passing, kids playing or birds chirping, a great excuse for barking which quickly develops into a self-rewarding habit.

Better Protection for YOU not your backyard

Your most valuable possessions are *inside* your house – including yourself and your family. A dog inside your house is a much bigger deterrent to an intruder than an outside dog and much harder to deal with. An outside dog can usually be easily released and/or stolen. When you answer the door to a stranger, a dog by your side is a better deterrent than a dog shut away in your backyard.

Observation and interaction - a natural way to learn.

Your dog is learning from you every minute you are together. This give the inside dog who shares your home a great advantage over an outside dog. The inside dog soon learns what leads to attention, cuddles, car trips, walks and treats as well as what doesn't! Even without any formal training, the inside dog will probably learn to 'fit in' just as he would in the wild – through observation and experience. You too will learn to 'read' your dog more easily if you are able to spend time observing him in the comfort of your own home.



Compare this to the amount of feedback the outside dog is able to gleam from the relatively small amount of time you and your family spend outdoors. The outside dog must struggle to learn human protocol and is less likely to ingratiate himself into your heart.

If you don't have a *philosophical* objection to having a dog in the home, it is likely that *your dog's behaviour* is keeping him at bay. Many young dogs appear to be a whirlwind of destruction when first allowed inside a home. Like children dogs need to be taught how to behave in our human environment. The ideal time to start is of course with a puppy, but the same principles apply to dogs of any age.

If you follow the six simple steps below, your dog too can earn the keys to the 'executive suite'.

Six Steps to Raising the Perfect House Dog

1. Housetraining – your #1 priority!

All dogs without a physical disability, can be trained not to soil in the house. The key points to remember are:

Select - a suitable area, not too far from the house where you will encourage puppy to 'do his business'. The substrate you choose (usually grass) will become puppy's preferred toileting surface.

Supervise - watch your puppy for sniffing, circling behaviour – usually a precursor to toileting. Take your puppy out after every meal, playtime, sleep, and drink and encourage him to toilet.

Management - if you cannot supervise, leave him in a 'safe' area where accidents are not a problem. Realise however that allowing your dog to toilet on more than one surface (e.g. newspapers and grass) while unavoidable may lengthen the housetraining process.

Reward - with praise and a titbit when puppy toiles in the preferred spot. It is essential that puppy understands, you *like* toileting by establishing a 'reward history' for the right behaviour.

Interrupt – your pup if he starts to toilet in the house – *as mildly as possible to get the desired effect*. The intention is to stop your dog in the act, not to frighten him. Lead him to the appropriate area and encourage him to finish the job. If you frighten the pup he will soon be convinced you have a hang-up about bodily functions and refuses to toilet in your presence - preferring privacy behind the couch or under a bed.

2. Constructive Ways to Avoid Destruction

Restrict your puppy to a safe area, complete with suitable chew toys and a sleeping area. Take him out to play and toilet. In this 'errorless' environment, your puppy will be set up for success.

Develop a '**chew toy**' habit by stuffing toys such as kongs and smoked marrow bones with kibble and titbits to make them more interesting. Rotate toys so there are always one or two 'new' ones to explore.

Avoid inadvertently teaching your dog that 'stealing' leads to a great game of 'catch me if you can!' Instead **practice lots of 'swaps'**. Even when your dog has things he is allowed to have, take them from him, have a look and then give them back. Occasionally swap them for something better like a treat. If your dog learns that allowing you to take things from him leads to something of equal or better value for him, there will be no need to run from you or worse still develop 'possessive guarding' behaviour.

As pup learns what is expected of him, his area can be increased. It is **not necessary for your dog to have full run of the house** to feel a part of the pack. If you prefer, your dog only need access a well-frequented part of the house such as a kitchen or family area where the 'pack' gather to watch TV or chat.

If you prefer train your dog to **settle on a mat** whenever he comes into the house. This can easily be taught by keeping your dog on lead and sitting next to his mat. When the dog begins to relax and settle reward with quiet praise and titbits. Use a cue word like 'mat' or



'go to bed' and your pup will soon understand that if he wants the privilege of being inside he must lie quietly on his mat. Your dog will still appreciate having gained a 'foothold' into the 'den' and will enjoy being able to observe family interactions from his special spot.

3. 'Four on the floor' and no more nipping!

Right from when puppy first arrives, reward him for keeping 'four (paws) on the floor', by giving him lots of cuddles and attention down at his level.

NEVER reward jumping up with your attention – of any kind. To many dogs even negative attention can be considered fun or a game.

Train an **alternate behaviour** such as 'sit' and reward with what pup wants most – your attention.

Teach everyone in the family, especially children to '**make like a post**', fold their arms and look away, if pup gets very excited and/or nips and jumps. Fence posts are not much fun and pup will soon lose interest.

If puppy is really excited put him in his safe area for some '**time out**' until he settles.

4. Rover goes to school – basic obedience training.

As puppy gets older, **attend a training class** where you will learn how to teach your dog basic behaviour like 'sit' 'stay' 'come' and 'walk nicely'.

Training should be **fun and stimulating** for both you and your dog – look for a class you will both enjoy.

Training games are a great way to satisfy your dog's need for interaction and stimulation without having to leave the house.

Training will help you to establish a more satisfactory relationship with your dog based on **understanding and mutual respect**.

5. A snip in time saves lives – allergies and dog hairs.

If you did some research before making the commitment to buy a dog, you will have been forewarned. You cannot blame the dog for shedding hair anymore than you can blame a person for being bald!

There are breeds of dogs which do not shed hair and which are suitable for people with allergies.

Only allowing the dog in a back part of the house, keeping him off the furniture and regular brushing, will go a long way to controlling the problem.

6. 'Corgi Clean' - is your dog fit for a palace?

Properly cared for, dogs are **perfectly suited to sharing our homes** – just ask H.M. the Queen!

Your dog can and should be kept **free of external and internal parasites** as well as being generally clean and well groomed.

Guide dogs for the blind and Assistance dogs for the disabled accompany their partners not only in their homes but in public restaurants, theatres and even surgeries and hospitals as well.

Your **dog's condition is a reflection of your attitude toward him** and is much more easily monitored when he shares your home. A clean, healthy dog is a loved dog.

Doggy doors are a great way to increase the quality of life for both you and your dog. Your dog has the freedom to come and go as he pleases and you get to stop playing doorman!

