

Article 7

Dogs, like teenagers, will test their boundaries

Dear Gus,

My dog Dylan (age 2) is suddenly going through a phases where he won't obey me.

He was taught the "come" command as a puppy, and has always been very obedient until recently. Lately he is in his own world, and doesn't respond to me unless we are in "the training mode". Otherwise, he ignores my commands. When in training, I always praise and reward him for obeying, but suddenly he doesn't want to obey. He knows what the command means, and what is expected of him, but just ignores me. Why this sudden change in behavior, and what can I do about it?

Annie

Annie, your problem with Dylan is most likely the same that most human parents eventually have with our teenagers!

At 2 dog years, Dylan is about the equivalent of a 15-year old and may be testing boundaries. Dylan didn't forget his training, nor is he confused. He is being very calculating, much like a human child entering adolescence, with very selective hearing. He wants to be in command, not second to you as Alpha. And just like with human teenagers, if you give him an inch. he'll take a mile.

You will need to be very firm (not harsh) in your training, or actually retraining. Every time Dylan "ignores" you, it reconfirms that fact that he can be the Alpha member of the pack. Your goal in retraining will be to reassert yourself as the Alpha, and Dylan as the second. First off, when you give a command, use your "command" voice (generally lower in tone) at all times. If Dylan does not come on a single command, you need to go put the leash on him, and have him come. Reward him on the "come" command, with verbal praise and affection. Do not allow him to ignore a single command. For right now, this means you probably don't want to call him to come unless you are prepared to go and get him. If you continue to allow him to "win" you will have a "Ten command dog"!

Retaining with Dylan will reward both of you for years to come. I hope this helps! -Gus

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