



LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Q. How can I know if my dog thinks of me as the pack leader? Is it possible to maintain the position of pack leader if I allow my dog on the couch?

A. At the advice of trainers, humans have done many unusual things in order to be pack leader. In the outdated methods of dog training, dominance theory techniques included alpha rolls, scruff shakes, and harsh corrections. We were told to exit doorways first, only feed our dogs after we have eaten, never play tug of war, keep our dogs off the couch and even sit in their bed for certain periods of the day. While it is true that dogs benefit from leadership, the way that we provide that leadership has changed from using physical force to controlling resources. This promotes a relationship built on trust. The leadership program that is now widely recommended is known as the Nothing in Life is Free program. (NILIF)

Leadership is established by having the dog earn the resources such as going for a walk, having dinner, coming up on the couch with permission or access through a doorway to a desired location by complying with a request to sit, down or wait. So in your case, yes the dog is allowed to come up on the couch if that is acceptable to you. However, being on the couch is a resource that you can use to provide leadership for your dog by having him sit politely and wait for permission.

To Implement a NILIF program have your dog earn anything that he finds rewarding with a chosen cue. Remember to be consistent. You will find that when you pull

out the leash your dog will sit and wait until you clip it on. At meal times a dog on the program will see the bowl and politely sit and wait until he is given permission.

A leadership program also teaches your dog how to say please and teach your puppy impulse control. Instead of jumping up on you when you pick up the leash your dog will sit and wait until you snap it on because he knows that is how to get what he wants, that is how he can train his human