



### **Holidays are the Olympics of Dog Training – by Lorraine May, M.A.**

Our dogs get excited about the holidays, too. They smell the tantalizing odors, notice the deviation from our routine, and even mistakenly construe all of the decorations and gifts that are on the floor (dog country) as their new toys.

Planning (training) with your family (team) before the holidays (Olympics) begin can help you avoid mishaps of a comical, frustrating or even dangerous variety. Here are a few areas where forethought can reduce the drama.

#### **Good Manners**

Any time is a good time to reinforce basic cues like sit and down. Right before the holidays is critical though, because after the cheerful chaos begins it may be too late. During the holidays, introduce a scrumptious treat for stronger motivation.

#### **Greeting Company (or not)**

If Spot tends to rush the door, to jump on people or to try to escape, then rehearsing the behaviors you desire can replace those you don't. Try having Spot on a leash to allow him to learn that sitting and staying calm earn him treats and attention. It is also perfectly acceptable to have Spot in a different room or behind a gate until he calms down. Be certain he is wearing his collar and ID at all times.

#### **I Smell It, Therefore It's Mine**

Just as I would assume that holiday candy was intended for me as your guest, dogs assume that the tasty food is for them. It is our task to keep everything out of reach, especially trash cans with bones and foil, for their safety and our sanity.

#### **Quiet Time**

Affording your dog a quiet area where he can't be disturbed will contribute greatly to the merriment. Take him there from time to time, saying softly 'quiet time' accompanied by a terrific treat or toy. His stressors probably include unfamiliar people in his territory, untrained children in his space – especially his face (www.doggonese.com), and preoccupied owners. He may need a break from holiday stress more than we do.



Lorraine May, M.A., is the Founder, Executive Director and Head Trainer of Misha May Foundation Dog Training and Rescue, a 501(c)(3) non-profit dog rescue which offers a wide variety of educational classes to the community. Misha May was voted #1 Best Dog Training on Denver's A\*List for 2012! The foundation offers free puppy socialization. Obedience classes, behavior seminars and in-home training welcome all dogs and issues. Dog trainer and

behavior consultant apprentice programs are designed for the working person, and teach our effective reward-based, anxiety-reducing techniques.

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