



APBC

ASSOCIATION OF PET  
BEHAVIOUR COUNSELLORS

Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors  
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## ADVICE SHEET 3

# Using a Houeline

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### Introduction

A houseline is a simple but extremely useful and effective piece of equipment. It is a lightweight nylon line about 6-8 feet long, which can be shortened to suit a smaller dog. It is used to give the owner more control over the dog in the home environment, in a safe, gentle and non-confrontational way.



For many dogs, “grabbing” at his/her collar is a very threatening approach and is likely to worsen his/her behaviour. Dogs learn to take steps to avoid this including:

- turning it into a game by dodging away.
- lying on their backs and refusing to move.
- mouthing the owner.
- enjoying the extra attention or
- in extreme cases, biting the owner who attempts this.

The houseline means that this does not occur and the dog is not rewarded for unwanted behaviour by becoming the centre of attention.

The houseline is attached to the dog’s collar only when someone is at home to supervise. The dog simply drags it around behind it.

- The houseline is not used to fasten the dog, nor for you to

hold on to him/her for long periods of time.

- The houseline must be removed when you go out and also overnight. Keep an eye on your dog to ensure that he/she does not tangle him/herself around furniture, doors, plants in the garden etc.
- Use a normal buckle collar on your dog. It is dangerous to use any kind of collar which can tighten, such as a choke chain or half check.

The houseline can then be used to prevent or to interrupt unwanted behaviour, such as jumping up at visitors, mounting, barking at the window, silting on the couch and many other misbehaviours.

When your dog misbehaves, or is about to misbehave, simply pick

up the end of the line and call the dog towards you (in a pleasant tone of voice) and ask him/her to do something for you, such as “sit”. Now you have the opportunity to reward him/her for a good behaviour, instead of being told off for doing the wrong thing.

If your dog will not respond to you in this situation, simply use the line to gently remove him/her from the situation. When he/she is calmer, ask your dog to look at you and reward him/her with praise, perhaps a treat, and by letting go of the line again.

The dog learns that he/she will get no attention for misbehaving, but lots of good things for behaving in the right way.

The more a dog is rewarded for a good behaviour, the more likely he/she is to repeat it!