



## Things I Have Learned From My Tibetan Mastiffs

### ***They do not belong to you.***

You belong to them. You are their property to protect and they take that responsibility very seriously. They will guard and protect you against all perceived threats, whether you want them to or not.

### ***They do not like change and take a long time to adjust.***

That includes going to a new home with new owners as a puppy. TMs instinctively are wary of people they do not know. You are going to have to earn their trust. Do not be disappointed or discouraged if your puppy seems stand-offish at first. They are evaluating the situation. Expect at least a 3 month adjustment period before you see your puppy let his/her guard down and his/her true personality come out.

### ***TMs do what they want to do.***

Your job is to make them **want to do** whatever it is you **need them to do**. You cannot force a TM to do anything. Do not try to use heavy-handed training or discipline. You will wind up achieving the exact opposite of what you expect. Give them a positive reason to respond to your commands. Sometimes treats work, sometimes they don't. Lots of praise, petting, and hugging usually works well.

### ***TMs are more intelligent than you can imagine.***

They are also very observant, which leads to them seeing you do something, like open the latch on a gate, and copying it. Assume that if you can do it, they can do it. I also firmly believe they have the gift of logic and reason: If I do this, then this will happen, or if I want that to happen, I need to do this. The best advice I can give is to be one step ahead of them. Look around you, ask yourself what a TM could possibly eat, chew, tear up, open, etc., and take steps to prevent it before it becomes a problem. Puppy-proof your home just as you would child-proof your home if you were adopting a toddler.

### ***TMs are master escape artists.***

From jumping fences, to climbing them, to digging under them, or squeezing through a spot that you didn't think a mouse could fit through, where there's a will, there's a way. A 6 ft high fence is highly recommended, with the bottom wire buried, and just as a word of caution, the only fence we have ever had a TM get out of was chain link—the fabric is flexible, and TMs are powerful enough to push their way through. We also know of TMs who have chewed their way through a door or the side of a barn, and we had one that jumped through a closed window when a thunderstorm came up suddenly when we were not home. "Crash and dash" can have a whole new meaning to a TM owner.

### ***TMs love to chew.***

On pretty much anything that is handy, such as shoes, sunglasses, or a TV remote, but especially wood. Wooden chair legs. Wooden table legs. Door frames. Window seals. Deck railings. All very yummy. Cute, fluffy, stuffed animals last about 1 minute before a TM will tear the stuffing out. Be practical when buying chew toys for your TM, and get something they can actually chew and teeth on. We just gave our pups chunks of apple branches that we pruned from our apple trees. Other good options are Kong toys, deer antlers, knuckle bones from the butcher shop, bully sticks, and

Himalayan yak milk chews. Our dogs LOVE the Himalayan chews, but a word of caution: When they chew them down to a size that they can swallow and choke, take it away.

***Chewing on hard objects is good.***

Chewing on people is not. Please do not let your puppy chew on your fingers or any part of your body. Dogs use their mouths to communicate, and a puppy who is trying to bite you, even as play, is trying to assert dominance. If the puppy is not taught not to bite, the adult dog will not understand why it is suddenly not OK to do so. If your puppy is play biting, firmly say, "No bite!" and either walk away or give the pup something else to chew on. Be firm and consistent.

***Puppies need to be fed at least 2-3 times a day.***

Their tummies are small and cannot hold enough food to last them all day. We are currently feeding them 3 times a day. We would recommend you continue this until they are about 6 months old and then you can cut down to twice a day. A high quality puppy food for large breeds is recommended until at least a year old. Do not over feed. Everyone likes a cute roly-poly puppy, but excess weight stresses the joints and has been identified as a major contributor to the development of hip dysplasia.

***TMs like to bark.***

They are guard dogs, not attack dogs. They do their work by barking and attempting to scare off predators so that a confrontation is not necessary. They need to be taught when it is appropriate to bark and when it is not. If your TM is barking at something, check it out, and let them know you have the situation under control and they no longer have to bark. Do not say "It's OK", because it isn't OK for them to bark after you've stepped in. Give the command to "Quiet" or "Leave it" or whatever command you choose; and if they don't, remove them from the situation. Somewhere between 9-12 months and lasting until about 18 months, TMs generally bark at just about everything. The joke in the breed is that they bark every time a leaf falls. I have concluded that their guardian instincts kick in and they become aware that they are supposed to bark and guard against something, but they aren't sure exactly what, so they bark at everything, just to be sure. With time and your help, they learn when it is appropriate to bark and when it is not. Please note that they are "night barkers". This is what they were bred for in Tibet. If you live in suburban America, please bring your TMs inside at night.

***Have a command for everything your TM can do.***

Don't stop at Come, Sit, Down, and Stay. If your pup can do it, you should have a command for it: Jump; Turn; Touch; Don't touch; Off; Bring it here; Drop it; Let's go; Heel; Quiet; Leave it; etc. The best piece of advice I think anyone ever gave me was that a command is a command, not a suggestion. If you give a command, follow through and make it happen.

***Whatever you want your pup to accept as an adult, introduce as a puppy.***

If you like to take long car trips, get your puppy used to riding by starting out with short local trips. Take them through McDonald's drive-thru and get them a burger. If you plan to go to dog shows, take them to a hotel overnight and get them used to riding the elevator. If you have kids and they want to have friends over, have lots of kids over while your puppy is still young. Have a sleep over on the weekends. If you use loud machinery or farm equipment, get your puppy out around it right away. Our dogs are used to vacuum cleaners, lawn mowers, weed-eaters, hedge trimmers, chain saws, even gun shots (our neighbors target practice just about every Sunday afternoon). If you want to take your dog to the park or to dog shows, get them going as soon as their vaccinations are complete. Do it all, and do it young, and your pup will be well socialized as an adult.

***Crate train your puppy.***

So many people think this is not necessary and even cruel. No, it's not. At some point in his/her life, your pup is undoubtedly going to have to be crated. If you take your pup to a groomer, he/she will be crated when not in the bath or on the grooming table. If your pup gets sick and has to spend the night at the vet, he/she will be crated. Better to learn at home with you than to be crated for the first time when your dog is sick, frightened, and alone.