



PDA – Puppy Display of Affection

It's a common sight – a dog lovingly licking his owner's face or hands. As humans we like to think that the dog is kissing us because they love us. While it has not been proven that dogs *do not* "kiss", it has not been proven that dogs *do* kiss.

Often licking is submissive behavior, especially if the dog is new to your home or is very young. The dog wants you to know that he knows you're in charge. The behavior may subside as the dog adjusts to the new home or matures.

To help a dog get used to a new home as quickly as possible, do obedience exercises with him. Personally, I think that everyone should take a new dog to class whether it's a puppy or full grown. Even people with experience training dogs can benefit from having another pair of eyes to offer suggestions. Plus, the experience of having a "date" with your dog and taking him to a place where you must work together to tune out distractions can strengthen the bond between you and your dog. (<http://www.apdt.com> has a trainer search feature if you need help finding a trainer near you.)

If you do not take your dog to classes, then make sure that you spend at least 10 minutes every day reviewing sits, downs, stays, attention, etc. By reviewing commands with your dog, you let him know what kind of behavior is acceptable to you. I also recommend requiring dogs to obey a command before they get valuable resources like human attention, food, treats, toys, or play time. My dog and I just finished playing fetch and before I threw the toy each time, he had to obey a command. It didn't add much time to the game, but it reviewed my expectations of him, and he had fun showing off for me.

While you work on the obedience, you can also work on redirection. When the dog begins to lick, send him to do something else. Always keep a toy nearby and redirect his attention from you to the toy. Or when he starts to lick, you can give him a series of commands that prevent him from licking. He probably cannot lick and shake at the same time, or lick and sit or roll over.



Some trainers advocate putting the unwanted behavior on cue and then rarely give it. To do this, encourage the dog to lick and allow him to do it once or twice. Then give him a command such as "enough", "stop", or even "dry up" and gently disengage yourself from the so he can no longer lick. The first few times he makes the connection and stops the licking before you must move away, you can let him go back to licking just a little bit as a reward.

A final thing that you can try is to have zero tolerance for the behavior. This is what I have done with my dogs. When my dogs started licking me, I simply send them away or I myself stand up and walk away. My dogs now never lick me unless I really encourage

them to, but they will lick anyone else who will hold still long enough. So, beware - the zero-tolerance method may work well for you, but it will not necessarily stop the dog from licking others!

