

Modern Manners

Petiquette questions answered



Dear Miss Petiquette,

I walk my dog in a quiet park and recently I've had a problem with a new morning dog walker. The problem is that she's not 'walking' her 30 kilo, ram-bunctious Doberman. She comes to the park to meditate and while doing so, her dog is running loose and annoying other dogs. I've heard she was banned from another park because her Doberman was hassling small dogs and things got nasty. How can I tell this woman that her dog is a nuisance and I'm feeling anxious about my dog's safety?

Dog Lover

Dear Dog Lover,

I do see the problem here where this woman's path to enlightenment and achieving a state of zen is making your morning walks increasingly stressful. But first let's deal with something more serious—dog park gossip.

Honestly, these dangerous dog stories can get out of control and spread viciously like parvo at a puppy party. I've had to break up dog gossip rumours that have escalated into modern folklore. Within a blink of bared teeth between two dogs comes tales of rabid, unprovoked attacks. An ill-bred and unsupervised Chihuahua becomes the victim of a Pit-Bull attack, when in fact it was just a brindle coloured mix that had enough of a nipping, barking nuisance.

But let's look at a possible solution with the Doberman's meditating momma. I would approach this woman without your dog in tow. Take five long deep belly breaths and notice your body's resistance to changing your breathing patterns. Then calmly interrupt her morning meditation and explain that you feel uncomfortable with her unsupervised, marauding dog and try to come to some arrangement. Perhaps suggest she walks her dog and then returns to the park to meditate sans pooch. Another community minded compromise would be to 'arrange' a time where you regularly walk your dog and she agrees to not be in the park around that time.

Remember that forgiveness is the universal solvent and opening the heart and keeping it open poses a challenge even to the most loving among us—even us dog walkers!

Dear Miss Petiquette,

When I met my wife, I had a rotti X called Sampson. He's since passed away and now my wife is talking about getting a Poodle. I love dogs, but I want a real dog and she's started looking for breeders. I'm afraid if I let her know that I don't want a Poodle that she'll go ahead and get it anyway. Don't get me wrong, I really want another dog, just not a Poodle.

Sincerely,
Harley Man

Dear Harley Man,

Come now, are you afraid a proud and primed Poodle will wrestle with your manly notions of dog ownership? I've known many a Hog riding machismo who's fallen for the charms of a Poodle—from tea-cups, miniatures, toys to standards. This smart and noble breed has much to offer and needn't be considered a 'Claytons'* version of a dog.

Your wife is sensibly sourcing respectable and reputable breeders and you would have more cause for concern if she turned up with something rhyming with Doodle from a pet store. If she's set on getting a Poodle then I suggest you play a big part in choosing the right one for your home unit. I think you should voice your concerns about your stereotypical views on this breed, however make some agreement that it won't be dyed and clipped into something resembling the dog of a Barbie doll. Inside even the most coiffed Poodle lies the heart of a fearless, protective and loyal lion. No dog—big, small, fluffy or hairless should mess with your inner Alpha male.

*Claytons – for those of you too young to remember, Claytons was a non-alcoholic beverage coloured and packaged to resemble bottled whiskey.

Miss Petiquette (not her real name) lives in a cramped urban cottage with her dog, two cockatiels and a partially blind bunny. Newly single, she's got plenty of time on her hands to answer your questions regarding manners in the modern age for pet lovers. Miss Petiquette is on hand to deal with your perplexing petiquette problems. Email her at behaviour@urbananimal.net



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