

Early Puppy Training

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Raising/Training Puppies

The belief that pups should not be trained until they are at least six months to one year of age is not true. All dogs can benefit from obedience training as early as seven weeks and also when the puppy enters its new home. By six months of age, almost all behavior problems are already in place. This means that early training can be used to avoid problems before they become more difficult and frustrating. Bad habits are hard to correct, therefore owners should never allow nipping, chewing, digging, barking, mounting, etc. which are all normal behaviors but, if left uncorrected, can lead to behavior problems. Dogs learn each day what behavior will or will not be allowed. Remember that bad habits are hard to change. To learn more about the first year of life and the three periods of development (Primary, Socialization, Enrichment).

Some General Rules:

1. Remember that preventing problems is easier than solving them.
2. Do not leave children alone with a new pup. Inevitably, the pup will view small children as a littermate. They will nip, jump and begin to seek dominance and a pecking order.
3. Do not allow the pup to join in running games with children. The pup will begin to think of children as "prey" and might begin to nip.
4. Never allow aggressive play and avoid tug-of-war with a puppy. This can lead to aggressive behavior and biting. Instead, throw a ball for the pup to chase. Tug-of-war before four months of age also stresses the elbow joints and is not recommended.
5. Remind children to leave a sleeping puppy alone. Enforce the idea that pups need their rest. Do not surprise pups or adult dogs. A serious incident could occur.
6. Encourage everyone in the home, including the children, to think of the puppy as a sensitive, living thing, with needs and desires and not a toy.

Training Pups, Children & the Family

Parents have an obligation and should not assume that the mix of children, dogs and pups does not need supervision. Children lack adult judgment, therefore all child-dog interactions should be monitored and yes, there will be times when you will have to protect the pup from children and vice-versa.

Over Indulgence

The term "good owner" is used to mean that rules are always enforced and that the good behavior is always rewarded. Dogs look for leadership from their owner. Indulging in bad behavior such as nipping, begging, stealing from the table, barking, etc. are all bad habits. Do not make excuses for these behaviors and do not allow a pup to develop unpleasant behaviors. A trained pup will become a trained dog and those who come in contact with your pup/dog expect good behavior. Do not tolerate jumping, growling, snapping or nipping. This behavior must always be corrected so it is always seen as unacceptable to the pup/dog.

Do not allow a pup or dog to steal food or garbage. Always correct this behavior and do not let it become a bad habit.

Remember that a dog that is indifferent to his owner's commands has learned not to respect his owner. This means the owner has lost control. Turn this around. Be consistent with your commands and always reward good behavior.

Dogs that constantly demand attention are over-indulged. When this occurs ask yourself if you are "buying" the pup's love with permissiveness, with over petting and coddling. Each pup will naturally find its place in the family pack. Owners must always assume the "leader" position to provide the security the pup needs./p>

Leadership

Dogs require leadership, structure and security. Pups already know and understand these things because their mother's corrected them with firm, swift, and instant corrections. She would shake them by the neck, clout them with her paw, or pin them to the ground until they would submit. She made sure they knew she was the "boss".

In a new home a pup will look for the same structure and leadership. If none is provided they will begin to assert themselves. This is usually seen in the form of growls, nips and other kinds of dominant behavior.

All members of the family must agree to behave consistently toward the pup. There can be no exceptions, "Oh, just this once" is the beginning of confusion for the pup. The pup does not understand inconsistency. For example, if your house rule is that the pup will not be allowed on the furniture, it must be all the furniture all of the time. Do not allow the pup on the couch one day and scold him the next. This is very confusing. Once they learn they are allowed on furniture, it is very hard to stop. The owner's body odor is the attraction and it is on all of the furniture even your favorite chair or your bed. To the dog it is all the same. Your body odor represents you and that is the attraction. Therefore, you must have one rule for the furniture with no exceptions.

Socialization

Socialization is a necessary and important part of good development. Exposing a pup to new and different places teaches them to be comfortable around strangers and changing situations. By eight weeks of age a new puppy should be accustomed to normal household sounds: the vacuum cleaner, dishwasher, TV, radio, toilet, etc. Ideally, this was begun by the breeder. Take the pup on short car rides to get him/her over motion sickness. New and different environments such as a walk in the park, school ground, construction site, busy sidewalk, and shopping mall all provide interesting smells, sounds and opportunities to explore. Much more has been written about socializing your pup. For more information go to [Early Neurological Stimulation](#). An extensive discussion can be found in the book written by the Monks of New Skete titled "The Art of Raising A Puppy".

Praise and Discipline

As leader, use a happy, enthusiastic tone when praising your pup for good behavior. Generous amounts of praise for good behavior will pay off. From the dog's point of view a reward means you like the behavior and want more of it. Never reward fearful behavior by "soothing" it with a soft voice or stroking. This only reinforces the bad behavior. Praise and discipline should not be confusing. Use a stern and loud tone when correcting bad behavior. Your tone becomes the signal and provides the feedback pups understand.

Vocabulary

One syllable words work best. Pups and dogs respond easily to one syllable words. Remember they do not understand the meaning of words or sentences. However they do recognize sounds and associate them with specific behaviors. We suggest the following words as your basic commands: NO, come, down, sit, stay and OK. Tone is important. "NO" is for bad behavior or to stop something and it should be said in a voice tone that is loud and angry. "COME" should be a happy upbeat sound.

Dogs can learn a lot if the commands are simple and consistent. Remember this rule. "Learning is not portable". If a command is learned in the house, take the pup outside, to the park and shopping center and repeat the same command. It will not be long before the pup/dog learns what the command means regardless of the location.

House Training

Dogs are den animals. A crate provides a secure place to prevent the pup from undesirable behavior. Since no dog likes to soil his den, house training will be simplified by using a crate. It can be located in your bedroom or some quite place.

As a rule, all pups will have to "go" upon waking, after eating and after drinking. Watch for behavior that looks like busy circling and sniffing. It is a signal that forecasts elimination.

Food remains in the intestinal tract for up to 10 hours. Therefore, a regular feeding schedule will equate to a regular washroom schedule. Dogs allowed to free feed tend to munch all day. What goes in all day comes out all day. For example, a feeding at 6:00 a.m.

will produce elimination by noon and a 6:00 p.m. feeding will produce elimination before midnight. Adjust your feeding schedule to the time you can exercise the dog.

Those who work *part-time* can simply crate train the pup while the owner is away. Those who *stay at home all day* can carefully observe the pup behavior as they go about their chores, monitoring to see when the pups indicates he needs to "go". People who *work full-time* should not expect a young pup to be in his crate for 6-8 hours at a stretch.

After elimination reward the pup with a brief play-time. Tossing a ball works well. Here are some do's and don'ts that are useful with a new pup.

Remember, very young puppy's need a lot of rest, crate training takes advantage of this need. As soon as the pup awakens take it outside. Walk him on leash until he goes, then praise him happily. Encourage him with an expression, "Do your business," "Go pee,". Both are popular commands. Be consistent with your reward.

Do:

- Expect a few noisy nights when the pup first comes home.
- Adhere to a rigid walk-play-feed-walk schedule.
- Feed on a regular schedule.
- Allow quite time in the crate.

Do Not:

- Expect the pup to spend more than four hours in the crate.
- Allow children to tease the pup at any time.
- Take the pup out of his crate if he is barking or crying.
- Place rugs, pillows, etc. in the crate. Use newspapers.

Biting

All pups use their teeth. They nipped at their littermates as a way to establish the pecking order. Their mother never permitted them to nip her and she punished them swiftly when they attempted it. Her consistent behavior taught them about corrections and bad behavior.

Nipping precedes biting and it often begins as a way to set limits. A nip that is not corrected will escalate as the pup begins to think of himself as the leader of the pack. Corrections must be done instantly.

Never pet or soothe a pup when he is aggressively threatening anyone. A full-blown case of dangerous aggression can result. Correct this behavior with a stern "NO" and make it sound like you mean it.

Do not plead for obedience. Discipline does not have to be harsh physical punishment.

Use "NO" for actions that are not appropriate. "NO" is an authoritative sound that should result in an immediate reaction. Do not use the word "NO" combined with your pup's name.

"OK" is a happy-sounding, positive word. It gives permission and your approval./p>

If a normal correction does not work use a firm, upward open-handed tap under the chin, followed by a firm "NO". Use a 4-6 inch "grab" lead if necessary so the pup cannot escape when you apply the correction. The "grab" lead is also useful when training other new commands.

Treats

Food as a treat to train is recommended by many trainers. But the treat should be very small. A tiny piece of a treat, such as a small piece of hot dog or chicken is sufficient. The smaller the better. A pup will work hard for a small reward.

Eye contact is an important part of training. A new pup should be trained to bring their eyes up to yours. Pups should be comfortable looking at you and others eye to eye. The tendency is for the pup to glance and look away. Your goal is to have them look you in the eye and be comfortable with it. Verbal praise and petting should be part of this learning activity.

Get the pup's attention then, take a small treat and slowly move it up to your nose. This will cause the pup to follow the treat and be looking at you. When the pup is looking you in the eye move the treat from your nose to the pup's mouth while saying "GOOD".

Chewing - Digging

Pups that are not allowed to continue destructive chewing do not develop into problem chewers. Pups left to their own devices, especially while the owners are away, will vent their loneliness, boredom and frustration on whatever object catches their fancy. A pup who is crated during his owners'; absence cannot indulge in destructive activities. Freedom to explore is important but it should be supervised in your home. Remember, your pup will have to hear the word "NO" many times before he learns that household objects are forbidden. Clap your hands loud and stamp on the floor to attract his attention followed with a loud "NO". When he releases the object offer a substitute "chewy" and lots of verbal praise when he takes it.

Begging

Begging usually begins with an indulgent owner offering food from his plate or the kitchen counter. This easily leads to whining, barking, climbing on the table, etc. Never offer the pup food from your plate, table or kitchen counter. This is a bad habit and leads to begging problems.

Growling Over Food

Pups should not be allowed to growl over food, especially if there are children in the household.

Sit on the floor, hold the food dish, and call the pup to you. Verbally praise him for coming. As the pup eats, talk to him and pet him. Have each member of the family take turns at different meal times.

If the pup should growl or indicate any defensiveness, he must be told "NO", then grabbed by his middle, and pulled backward away from the dish. Roll the pup onto his back and scold him. When he subsides, release him, and allow him to resume eating. Repeat if he growls again. This works well with most young pups.

For older pups the owner should stand near the dish with the pup on a "grab" lead. Should the older pup growl, say "NO" firmly, and pull the pup/dog back away from the dish by the lead as you correct him. In a day or two, you may hold the dish on your lap while the dog is eating.

An older dog that has developed this behavior should not be treated as above but should be referred to a professional trainer/behaviorist.

Jumping on People

Start immediately to teach your pup to keep all four feet on the ground. Start this immediately when the new pup comes home. With the young pup, do not encourage him to stretch up to greet you, instead, crouch down to his level, assist him in sitting, and then greet him. Most pups enjoy this annoying habit of jumping on people to greet them. Whenever the pup jumps on you, simply grasp both front paws securely, holding them up long enough for it to become uncomfortable in the standing position. Then put the pup down gently. When the pup experiences this response consistently, he will avoid jumping up to greet you.

Greeting

All pups should be taught to "sit" and to "stay". When visitors arrive, your pup should be on lead and told to "sit"- "stay" near the door. As each guest enters, tell them to ignore the pup. When they have been seated the pup should be brought on lead to meet them. The pup should sit in front of each guest so the guest can pet the pup. It is important that the sit-stay be mastered before trying this with strangers. Practice this exercise several times using family members before doing this with your guests. Your practice sessions should include distractions. A distraction could be a tennis ball that is dropped or rolled on the floor a few feet from where the pup is sitting. The pup should remain in the sit-stay position while it is petted.