

You will have the most fun with your puppy if you have realistic expectations for your puppy, and are prepared to give him/her the time they'll require for the first year or so of his/her life. Time spent in the first year will form the foundation of your relationship with your adult dog; a little extra effort now will pay big dividends over your puppy's life. The key is to realize that raising a puppy is very similar to rearing a child and will seem to take more time, especially for the first few months. Fortunately, if you've done your part, by the time your puppy is about 12-15 months old, he/she will have reached that happy state of 'adulthood', or at least the late 'teenhood', where less of your constant vigilance is required and they will be a wonderful companion.

You will want to keep this goal in mind as you go through your puppy's first year. Remember also, that even though he or she is near physical adulthood, they are still just one year old. Your puppy will continue to learn how to live in your family, especially if you keep teaching them, and most importantly, expecting your puppy to learn. A good way to keep some perspective on his/her intellectual development is to remember how much babies understand at 1 year old, and how much more they understand at 2, 3, 4 years, etc.

Behavior

How soon can I expect my puppy to be a well-mannered and obedient dog?

Your puppy can start to learn simple commands like 'sit' and 'stay' as early as 10-12 weeks. The more you work with your puppy, the better he/she will learn. While set-aside training time is effective, your puppy will learn the most and learn fastest if you talk to them when you're with them. As you go through your normal routine you'll have many opportunities to teach different commands from 'come with me' to 'no, don't chew on that.' The more you talk to your puppy, demonstrating what your words mean, the more he/she will learn. By the time your puppy is a year old, they should be following many commands, as well as demonstrating a general understanding of life in your family.

What type of playing should I expect from a puppy?

Stimulating play is important during the first weeks. Stalking and pouncing are important play behaviors in puppies and are necessary for proper muscular development. Your puppy will be less likely to use family members for these activities if you provide adequate puppy-safe toys. The best toys are lightweight and movable. These include wads of paper and rubber balls. Any toy that is small enough to be swallowed should be avoided. We can help you choose the safest toys for your pet.

How should I discipline my puppy?

Disciplining your puppy, in the sense of training, will be an important part of your interaction with them, especially when their behavior threatens people or property. Quiet, firm, and most importantly, consistent correction will be called for frequently. Reinforcing good behavior is as important as correcting bad behavior. By praising the behavior you want your puppy to repeat, you'll not only increase instances of that behavior, you'll build on his natural desire to please you. You should find yourself saying 'good dog' and 'that's right' at least as frequently as 'no' or 'don't do that.' If you reserve your stern 'bad dog' for very serious infractions, you'll find that command will be much more effective.

When punishment is necessary, remote punishment is preferred. Remote punishment consists of using something that appears unconnected to the punisher to stop the problem behavior. Examples include using spray bottles or throwing objects in the direction of the puppy to startle (but not hit) them. Making loud noises, such as hand clapping, shaker cans, or horns can be intimidating enough to inhibit undesirable behavior. We recommend remote punishment because the puppy will associate punishment with the undesirable act and not with you. In all cases, harsh punishment should be avoided.

Another key to effective training is use of a crate or kennel. When you or another family member aren't able to supervise your puppy, the best place for him/her will be their crate. Your puppy won't be able to get into trouble if there's nothing with which to get into trouble.

How do I insure that my puppy is well socialized?

The primary socialization period for dogs is between 4 and 12 weeks of age. During that time, the puppy is very impressionable and susceptible to social influences. If they have good experiences with men, women, children, cats, other dogs, etc., your puppy is likely to accept them throughout life. If the experiences are absent or unpleasant, your puppy may become apprehensive or adverse to any of them. Therefore, during the period of socialization, we encourage you to expose your dog to as many types of social events as possible with your FAMILY AND FRIENDS. We strongly recommend obedience classes for you and your pet, but make sure the class requires all pets to be current on all vaccinations. Don't take your puppy to places where pets with unknown health status have been such as pet stores, paw parks and public parks until after their 16 week vaccinations.

We have young children. Is there anything special we should know?

Growing up with a puppy can be a wonderful experience for children, but, as you might guess, there will be challenges. These can be managed if you remember that you now have one more 'toddler' than you have children. You'll need to teach both the children and the puppy to respect and play appropriately with each other. Depending on the ages of the puppy and your children, you may need to protect them from each other. Puppies can see the erratic actions of young children as an indication that they want to 'play,' or worse, that they are 'prey.' Serious injuries to your child can result from this and must be guarded against. Along the same lines, young children can have a hard time understanding how vulnerable a young puppy can be, and can easily injure the puppy or provoke defensive snapping with rough play and harsh handling. This will require vigilance and good judgment to decide at what point you can safely leave puppy and children 'alone' together. Until you are absolutely certain that it's safe, the best advice is to supervise all interaction with your children and your new puppy.

The most effective way to explain the situation to your children is to compare the puppy to a baby and explain that 'we must be very gentle with the new puppy, just like you would be with a new brother or sister.' By the same token, you must teach the puppy that your children are, like you, leaders of the pack and superior. One way this can be taught

is by helping your children teach the puppy commands then rewarding the puppy with treats only after successfully executing the command.

How do I housebreak my new puppy?

Housebreaking should begin as soon as your puppy enters his/her new home. How long the training takes depends on both the puppy and you. Some pups learn sooner than others. Your dog wants to please you. But a puppy's memory is short, so your patience is important. A home with a poorly trained puppy is not a happy home for you or the puppy.

Many dog owners become frustrated by the task of teaching their puppies proper elimination habits. A crate can provide a solution to most house training problems. Crate training employs a pup's natural instinct not to soil their den or bed. By utilizing that instinct you can teach the puppy to hold their bladder or bowels instead of relieving themselves immediately. The pup learns that elimination opportunities occur on a schedule. The puppy's crate should be slightly larger than the puppy. If the crate is too large, the puppy may defecate or urinate on one side and lie on the other rather than go outside. Make sure the crate isn't too small and the puppy has enough room to stand up, turn around, and lie down. Enclose the crate in a small area such as a laundry room. Cover this area with newspapers for use at night or when your pup is left unsupervised.

A common housebreaking technique is creating a "scent post". A scent post is created when your puppy has an "accident." The problem becomes one of locating the scent post in the place you want it.

To create a scent post, leave a smear of stool from the last "accident" or wet paper on the clean paper in the place you want it, and coax or scoot the puppy to that area. The same is true of an outside scent post, but without the paper, in an out-of-the-way place in the yard. This will solve the "mine-field" problem.

The first thing in the morning, the puppy should be scooted to the scent post. This is so your puppy can learn the way to the door and the scent post. Let them sniff about. The moment he/she has relieved themselves IMMEDIATELY pat them on the head or reward with a treat and immediately bring him/her into the house. Do not let them play about. The toilet period and play period should be definitely separate in the puppy's routine.

The puppy should then be fed. In a short while the puppy will become uneasy and walk in circles sniffing at the floor. The puppy should then be scooted and coaxed to the scent post as quickly as possible.

This routine should be repeated every hour or two throughout the day, especially after meals and naps.

When the puppy is taken out to play, it is wise to leave the house by another door and avoid taking him near his scent post. Never play with your pup until after he/she has been taken out and has eliminated.

There will of course be some "accidents" in the house. If possible, never let one of these slip by unnoticed, but punishment one minute after the offense is too late. Scold (not whip) the puppy and rush them to the scent post. Then scrub the area of mishap thoroughly until all odor is gone. Sprinkle the area with red pepper or vinegar.

Positive reinforcement of proper urine and bowel habits is just as important as properly applied discipline. When your puppy urinates or defecates in the correct place, spend several minutes stroking and praising him. Be careful not to give positive reinforcement for bad behavior like whining, barking, or howling.

My puppy seems to be constantly chewing. Why?

Chewing is normal puppy behavior. Mouthing objects is one of the primary ways your puppy will explore their world. When you remember how often human babies put objects in their mouths, you won't be surprised by your puppy's chewing. Teething is another major cause of excessive chewing. The puppy's baby teeth are present by about 4 weeks of age. They begin to fall out at 4 months of age and are replaced by the adult (permanent) teeth by about 6 months of age. Therefore, you can expect increased chewing until about 6-7 months of age.

It is important that you do what you can to direct your puppy's chewing toward acceptable objects. You should provide puppy-safe items such as nylon chew bones and other chew toys so other objects are spared. Your pup may decide that your hands are absolutely the best things to mouth in the world. This can be aggravating, and is something you will need to be firm and consistent about offering another chewable object after taking your hand away with a firm 'Don't chew on my hand!'