

PUPPY TRAINING AND BEHAVIOR TIPS



"Puppyhood is a critical time in a dog's life for establishing a healthy and happy future as an adult. We are here not only to provide your puppy's medical needs but also to be a part of a support system in developing a behaviorally sound companion. As you go through this fun and challenging time, always keep in mind that your cute, fuzzy puppy is going to quickly grow into an adult dog, maybe even weighing over 100 pounds! It is important to establish appropriate guidelines for puppies that will help them develop into well-behaved adults. It is always easier to teach good behaviors now than have to correct the bad ones later!

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Over the years, we have learned that one of the most effective methods of training puppies is through positive reinforcement. The principle is that every time the puppy responds in the appropriate manner, he is given a stimulus that will increase the likelihood of the same response being repeated. For example, each time your puppy urinates outside in the yard, you immediately praise him and give a food reward. Over time the puppy starts to learn that urinating in the yard= yummy+ praise! Positive stimulus can include anything from food rewards to praise and petting to special toys.

AVOID THE NEGATIVE

Puppies do not respond well to physical violence or loud yelling. In fact, this can make your puppy fearful and more prone to aggressive behavior. Most of the time, puppies do not understand why they are being punished and never learn what they are not supposed to be doing. Stick with positive reinforcement and you will have success before you know it!

SOCIALIZATION

Puppies go through what is called the "socialization period" from ages 3 to 14 weeks. If properly exposed to a variety of people, children, other pets, sounds, smells, objects, and activities, puppies can have healthy social development and learn to be confident in unfamiliar situations. This is important in trying to prevent puppies from becoming fearful, which can sometimes lead to problems such as anxiety and aggression. During introductions to new people or stimuli, always give praise and treats so that your puppy experiences a positive interaction. Although we want our puppies to have as many introductions as possible, we must keep in mind that during this period puppies are also at high risk of infectious disease. Before introducing to other dogs or areas where other dogs commonly visit (dog park, pet store, etc) please make sure that your puppy has had at least two series (3 weeks apart) of vaccinations.



EXERCISE

Exercise is extremely important for the well-being of your puppy. By giving your puppy an appropriate outlet for his energy, you will help to decrease his drive for destructive behavior. Remember ... a tired puppy is a good puppy!

CHILDREN AND PUPPIES

The relationship between puppies and children in the household can be a tricky but ultimately rewarding experience. The No. 1 rule that must be remembered is supervise, supervise, supervise! Young children and babies should never be left alone with puppies or even the best-behaved adult dog. Dogs and humans (especially our little ones) communicate in very different ways and unfortunately, a miscommunication can lead to a painful encounter between the two.

Children should be taught that puppies are not toys and need to be treated with love, kindness, and respect. Although many dogs tolerate hugging and head petting, these behaviors can be considered as threats to others. Also, puppies tend to use their teeth to communicate with each other, which can be very hurtful to young human skin. Adults should supervise any interactions between children and puppies to avoid inappropriate behaviors.

It is important that puppies are trained to see all humans as leaders and not littermates. Involve your children in the training process by having them perform age-appropriate commands and cues for the puppy. For example, have your child tell the puppy to "sit" before he is fed each meal. During these sessions, it is important that an adult remains in the room and reinforces the child's cues so that your dog learns to respond correctly to even the most pint-sized leader! Although we encourage children to play a role in the training process, it is never appropriate for a child to have the sole responsibility for a living, breathing animal and adults should remain involved.

Finally, remember that the hustle and bustle that comes with a houseful of children can sometimes become overwhelming to even the most outgoing puppy. Make sure your puppy can escape to a crate or "safe place" when the activity level becomes too much for him. Remind any children in the household, including guests, that when the puppy is in his "safe place," he should be left alone and not disturbed.