



Toddlers 12-16 Weeks

For most owners this will be the most frustrating period in your pet's life. Most puppies are still at least a month away from understanding the concept of routines. Owners often find themselves very frustrated because they have been good moms and dads for 4-6 weeks already and that should be enough. It's not! Typically, routine behaviors do not become dependable until 16-18 weeks. Owners need to continually protect themselves from disappointment. These adorable puppies begin to train by the end of this period. Although we are deeply serious about establishing routines, we need to understand that pups are not at our wavelength. Life has far too many distractions that demand their attention. Training should be done in quiet, controlled environments to minimize distraction. The concept of passive negative (noise, water pistol, small pillow, soft beanbags, tennis balls) followed immediately by positive correction and praise are the working models for this very long month. Food reward is useful for modeling behavior, but should only be used for training and always extinguished once the behavior is learned (gradually withdrawing the treat as praise).

Food reward - Freeze-dried liver, small chips of dog bone, or single pieces of kibble.
Teach **SIT**, establish elimination behavior, and understand discipline.

The sit is simply taught through shaping and positive reinforcing the dog's correct response. Use a food reward and quickly extinguish it replacing only with positive verbal, visual (eye) and petting responses.

Petting - petting initiated by first handling the dog's head under the chin teaches the dog to keep his/her head high—it looks better and makes it easier to make eye contact. Always demand at least a sit before you give a reward such as petting.

Elimination - tough subject- Many people has preconceived ideas about this. First you must decide where you want your dog to eliminate. There is a lifestyle as well as size of animal's issues in making the decision. There are broad ranges of learning curves based upon breed, physical area where dogs live and owner understanding of the principles of behavior. The timeline varies according to breed, size, and individual.



Key points to understand are:

1. Only consistency and praise will effectively teach this behavior.
2. Avoid confusing the pet. Keep routines short and simple.
3. Establish a routine with a high expectancy for reward.
4. The idea that “the dog knows when he is wrong” is a trained response to an owner’s annoyance, not a realistic view of the situation.
5. Crating is useful, but is not the cure-all for elimination behavior. Exercise Pens are often more useful either in conjunction with a crate or alone. It is a true playpen and softens owner guilt about confinement. These pens should be used on cleanable surfaces.
6. Eating scheduling and designated elimination areas outside are very helpful.
7. Multiple 5-minute walks with little distraction, rather than 30-minute walks works best for “potty-training”.
8. Again, establish reward with food is desired, extinguish and replace the verbal approval.
9. Remember dogs are not intelligent by human standards, they are only trainable. By trying to teach that elimination is good outside and bad inside will only confuse them. Dogs will understand praise, treats, and other positive reinforcement for going “potty” outside or in a special place. Since dogs seek our approval and praise, they will consider this their duty, and a way to make you happy. When you get angry with them for eliminating inside they only understand you are upset with their action of elimination, they do not associate your anger with it being inside. This confusing will make them nervous, since they assume you are unpredictable and lead to them being a “phantom pooper”. To dogs simple behaviors can only be good or bad not both. Masking the scent from accidents in your house is important (Elimin-odor, Bitter apple, Simple green, etc)
10. Use of keywords is useful while establishing the routine (Out, Potty, PP, and ECT.)
Eye contact with praise is very important in all reward situations. It all goes back to infant bonding.



Discipline

There is little or no discipline for you to enforce for animals less than 12 weeks. Rarely are there dogs that don't require some form of discipline between 12-16 weeks. If approached correctly puppies should only need to be disciplined once for a certain undesirable action. The only way to prevent these behaviors from becoming routine it is very important to catch these problems early, and to only discipline the dog when you catch him in the act. Some of the bad behavioral problems we accidentally teach them ourselves (feeding from the table).

Quick response to any suggestion is essential to permanently stopping it. It is better to have a plan for aggression discipline than just a spur of the moment response. If you have but not so much as to scream, it may even urinate or defecate. Maintain eye contact while being strong. The episode will only last a couple seconds, though it may seem longer. Once the tantrum is controlled, talk to the dog in a soothing soft voice, and lovingly pet him. You have to maintain control and eye contact. If the pet starts acting up again, restart this process.

Simple Behavioral Modeling

This concept is the basis of all training or correction. If a dog's behavior gets an unpleasant response, it will most likely not continue to do it. For example: If a dog that usually chases bicycles has on a choker collar with a long leash, and while he is chasing a bike his owner pulls the leash, causing an abrupt stop, is an unpleasant response. If repeated 2-3 times it is likely that we will slow or stop before he reaches the end of the leash in future chases. Also, if the owner notices this behavior from afar, it is good to give him a command like sit or stay (this is where it is important for your dog to learn these simple commands). Dogs love to work for their owners. Corrections are always based on a passive no, given silently from a distance. This way the pet does not know you are doing it, he just assumes that is the effect of that particular action.

Gentle Leader

This is a handling device that is gradually replacing all other restraints. It is very humane and gives excellent control. It does require some instruction, and our staff is happy to show you how to use them.