

TRAINING AND BEHAVIOR

One of the most common questions new dog owners ask us is “How do I train my puppy?” A well-trained dog is a true joy to own, but most pet owners have little experience training animals. These pointers will help you to establish a happy, loving relationship with your new pet. We also strongly recommend that dog owners buy a copy of the book *How to Teach a New Dog Old Tricks*. This fun book contains a wealth of accurate information on how to raise a pleasant pet – you’ll be glad you read it!

YOUR PUPPY AND THE FAMILY

Even though he realizes that you are not a dog, the only way your puppy knows how to relate to other creatures is as if they were dogs. With this in mind, you must learn “dog leadership skills” to let your dog know that you are the pack leader. Any family member who doesn’t do this may be bossed around by the dog, and even bitten.

One of the best techniques for teaching your puppy his social position is a technique called “Nothing is Free.” It was developed by Victoria Voith, a well-known animal behaviorist. First train your puppy to sit, or better yet to lie down. Then teach a releasing command such as “OK” or “Free”. This means that the dog is free to do whatever he wants again. At first, the time spent sitting will be brief! Never reward a dog who gets back up on his own, but always reward him if he remains sitting until released. Say “Good dog” and give a food reward at first (small tidbits about half the size of your fingernail); later the verbal reward can be used alone.

Now ask your puppy to sit for anything he wants in your household except water. This means that he must assume a submissive body posture in order to get dinner, let out, petted or played with. In these situations, the reward is what the pup wanted in the first place, so no food reward is necessary. Soon the pup will sit on his own when he wants something. This is akin to teaching your children to say “Please” when they want something.

YOUR PUPPY AND THE WORLD

The crucial period for socialization in dogs is between 4 and 14 weeks. During this time, expose your puppy to as many different people and situations as possible. Remember that a puppy doesn’t realize that children of various ages eventually will be grown-ups. Introduce cats, other adult, well-vaccinated dogs, wheelchairs, cars, noises, etc. Be sure not to take your puppy to areas such as parks, where other dogs (especially strays) visit, because parvovirus can live for months or even years in the soil.

STOPPING THAT MOUTH

Puppies, just like children, go through teething as well as an oral exploratory phase, where everything seems to end up in their mouths. One of the easiest ways to prevent your puppy from chewing you out of house and home is to set him up for success. Give him a variety of safe chew toys such as Kongs. Tuck food treats inside to stimulate the puppy’s interest. Do not expect the puppy to differentiate between old socks or shoes and new ones, or between a rag you’re taunting him with and a fluttering curtain. Always be sure that he has several appropriate chew toys in his crate with him. While you’re monitoring him closely to get him housebroken, also watch him for inappropriate

chewing. Whenever you catch him chewing on anything that isn't one of his chew toys, say "No," and redirect his attention to a chew toy. This may require that you carry a few toys in your pockets during the training period

Chewing can be directed toward people. Always use a toy when playing with your puppy – whenever you play with just your hands, you're training him that humans care chew toys from the wrist down. If you puppy mouths you, do exactly what another puppy who didn't want to be chewed on or bitten would do – make a high-pitched shrieking sound, and leave. Your puppy will learn that people are very wimpy, and that he simply can't "play rough" with humans.

A FEW MORE DO'S AND DON'TS

- Do be firm and consistent. Puppies, like children, seek a certain degree of guidance, and will take advantage of you're wishy-washy.
- Don't allow jumping up on people. This is usually attention-getting behavior. Pushing the dog away, or squeezing his paws will probably be interpreted by the pup as return play on your part. Instead, turn and step away briskly, so that the pup has to stand down. Give the sit command and give the pup attention only if he's sitting.
- Don't ever tolerate one-upmanship from your dog. Begin now handling your puppy all over, rolling him on his back, opening his mouth, taking food away. Dogs who won't let you do these things are showing sins of dominance which could lead to nipping and biting. Also don't play tug-of-war, because this fosters competition between you and the dog.
- Any child old enough to give commands should help to train the puppy.

Now that you have a housebroken, well-socialized, polite puppy, consider obedience training. We recommend it for all dogs after their last set of vaccinations (at about 18 weeks).