

Puppy Rearing: The Essentials

Attention, Exercise, and Mental Stimulation

Puppies need social interaction, physical exercise, and mental stimulation – just like children do – in order to grow up to be healthy and well adjusted. When these needs are not met, many behaviour problems can develop.

Attention:

How much daily social time does a puppy need? A good rule of thumb is that a puppy should spend at least half his waking hours each day interacting with other dogs and people. Like humans, most dogs enjoy a mix of old friends and new encounters – so make sure your pup meets at least one new dog or person each day. While puppies do need to learn to spend time alone, too much isolation will make them antisocial, anxious or depressed. Allowing your puppy regular access to his familiar doggie buddies as well as the chance to meet new dogs will increase the chances of him being socially content and well adjusted.

Physical Exercise & Mental Stimulation:

Your puppy's brain and body BOTH need lots of exercise. Swimming, playing tug & fetch, and playing with other dogs are good brain AND body work-outs. Walks on leash are not always physically exerting, but they do provide a lot of mental stimulation: all the outdoor smells, sights and sounds are very interesting! Working on obedience skills requires lots of doggy concentration, and your puppy will love the mental challenge of figuring out new things. Make sure you exercise your puppy's brain AND body each day.

Safe Mouth Training

It is normal for puppies to nip like little sharks – this sometimes earns them the nickname “jaws on paws”. Yelp “Yiikes” when your puppy gives you one of his *hardest* bites, then direct him towards a chew toy to sink his teeth into. Responding properly to puppy nipping is very important. Yelping lets the puppy know that the bite hurts, and teaches him to bite more softly. This feedback, combined with similar feedback from other dogs helps your puppy to develop an “inhibited bite”. Bite inhibition allows an adult dog to bite with minimal or no damage, and is *essential* for a safe pet. When your puppy no longer bites hard, then use the same training technique for his medium, and then even for his soft bites – until he only mouths you *verrrry* gently. Some puppies get excited when they hear a yelp – instead of easing off they bite again even harder. If your puppy does this then he needs a brief time-out after you yelp. You can use his crate or a puppy proof room for a time-out. Any boring place where he is left alone for a couple of minutes will do the job of teaching him that when he bites too hard he loses his friends. Do not forget to direct him towards an attractive chew toy when his time-out is done.

Setting Rules

Every puppy needs rules. Before your puppy can learn the rules, the whole house needs to agree on what they are. Rules should apply only to behaviors that are not emotional reactions. Reactions like fear and aggression need a whole different training approach!

Sitting at the door to ask to go out, or stealing food off the table are examples of behaviors that are not emotional reactions. The two ingredients to good training for problem behaviors that are not emotional reactions are: rewarding the good behaviour, and “time-out-ing” the bad behaviour. Good behaviour brings praise, cuddles, food treats, and fun. Naughty behaviour brings a short time-out: say “Too bad” and swiftly place your pup in the “penalty box” – a bathroom, a crate, or other safe boring place. It is perfectly OK to use a crate this way – the crate itself is not the punishment, the lack of attention is what is punishing. Your dog will *not* fear his crate if you use it in this way. Using a crate to “time-out” a puppy is like sending a child to his room or grounding a teenager to the house: they do not fear the room or the house; they avoid repeating the behaviour that led to the removal of freedom. Your puppy can be released from a time-out after one full minute of being quiet. Ignore whining and barking!

If a time-out is not convenient, then you can punish naughty behaviour by removing something else that he likes – something other than his freedom. For instance, if he jumps up to get the cookie in your hand you can say “Too bad” and put the cookie back in the jar. If he tries to bolt out of the car towards the dog park without permission, you can cancel his visit to the park altogether. Consequences must be immediate, and not frightening or painful.

Housetraining

Puppies will want to pee and poop wherever they have done so before. Your job is to make sure your puppy learns to prefer the outdoors as a toilet – not your carpets!

To successfully housetrain your puppy, you need to know how long she can hold for between pees. A puppy can usually hold her urine and feces for as many hours as her age in months plus one, during the day, and 1½ times that length overnight. Take your puppy’s age in months, add one, and that is how many hours she can hold for during the day. Multiply that number by 1½ and that is how many hours she can hold for overnight.

Daytime Holding Limit = age in months + 1 hour

Example: 3 month puppy can hold for 4 hours during the day

Overnight Holding Limit = 1½ times the Daytime Holding Limit

Example: 3 month puppy can hold for 1½ x 4 = 6 hours overnight

Whenever you are unable to supervise your puppy with 100% attention, you need to place her in either a short-term or long-term confinement area.

Your puppy can be placed in a short-term confinement area such as a crate if she will be there for less than her holding limit. The purpose of the crate is to keep her out of trouble while you are unable to supervise her, and to help you housetrain her. The crate should be just big enough for her to be able to lie down on her side with outstretched limbs, stand up, and turn around easily. It should not be so big

that she thinks there is enough space for a bedroom *and* for a toilet area! When you let her out of her crate you can bring her straight outdoors and reward her for doing her business in the *right* place.

For longer confinement periods a bigger area, with non-absorbent flooring, such as a bathroom, kitchen, or utility room, is needed. The long-term confinement area should have a bed or open crate at one end, and a pile of newspaper or a strip of sod at the opposite end. Your puppy will naturally want to eliminate as far as possible from her bed. If the space you use for long-term confinement happens to have a door that leads to the outdoors, then place the toilet area near that door. This way, your puppy's toilet area is as close as possible to where she should ultimately be heading to do her business. Fresh water and stuffed chew toys should also be plentiful, and should be placed near her bed.

Puppies will naturally have the urge to eliminate after a nap, a meal, a drink, exercise, excitement, or time spent in confinement. Give your puppy the opportunity to do her business outdoors at these times. When your puppy does her business in the right place offer her a treat, a game or a walk. This will speed up her housetraining.

Punishing a puppy for house soiling *after* it has happened is abuse, not training. If you wait more than a few seconds after your puppy has eliminated before expressing your disapproval, your puppy will not know why she is being punished. If you catch your puppy about to pee or poop in the wrong place you can clap your hands and say “Ah-ah”, and swiftly scoop her up to the outdoors to continue.

If you would like your dog to poop promptly when you take her out, then teach your puppy that a prompt poop is her ticket to a walk around the block. This will encourage her to poop as soon as you let her out – and will allow you to leave the stinky poop bag at the house, rather than having to carry it around for much of the walk. If you do the opposite by taking her for a walk only after she does not do her business in the yard, and ending her walk as soon as she does do her business, she will learn to delay pooping!

Separation Anxiety

Be sure to have your puppy spend some time alone each day, both when people are home and when the house is empty. Use her crate, baby gates, or utility rooms to restrict her access to people. Make alone time fun and relaxing by leaving her with a stuffed chew toy to keep busy with. Dogs that gradually learn to spend time alone as puppies are at much less risk of becoming anxious when left alone later on in life.

Chew toy Training

Dogs need jobs, so making them work for their food keeps their jaws exercised and their mind engaged – which helps keep them safe, happy and out of trouble. Chew toys should be safe, appealing, and virtually indestructible. Many chew toys can be stuffed with dog food or healthy treats to increase their appeal. It's also great to feed your pup out of food toys.

Check out the following toys (by no means a complete list!):

Toy Name	Description	Manufacturer	Website
Bustercube	Hard plastic cubes with inner maze. Slowly dispense kibble when rolled	Kruuse	www.bustercube.com
Chewber	Durable rubber Frisbees designed for chewing, tossing and tugging	Chewber	www.chewber.com
Classic Kong Goodie Ship Treat Ball	Rubber toys with various hollow areas that can be stuffed with food	Kong Company	www.kongcompany.com
Nylabone	Synthetic and edible bone shaped chew toys	Nylabone	www.nylabone.com
Orka Ball Orka Jack	Pliable synthetic hollow toys that can be stuffed with treats	Petstages	www.petstages.com
TireBiter	Durable nylon tire-shaped chew toy that can be tossed, tugged, and stuffed with spreadable food	Mammoth Pet Products	www.mammothpet.com

Resource Guarding Prevention

It is normal for dogs to guard their food, toys or bed from people – but it is not safe. Without preventive training, resource guarding from people will develop in approximately 50% of dogs by the time they are two years old. If your puppy or dog already displays guarding behaviour (stiffening, growling, snarling) you will need close training guidance from a qualified dog trainer or animal behaviorist.

Preventing a guarding problem is much easier, and much safer than fixing one. You can only prevent resource guarding in early puppyhood (until about 18 weeks of age) – so get started *now!*

- When your puppy is eating dinner, add a special bonus treat to the bowl. After you have done this for a week your puppy should be happy to see you approach his bowl. When that happens take his bowl away from him while he's eating, drop in something extra special and give it right back. This will teach the puppy that people who take something away return it with a great bonus. Imagine if someone stole your wallet, then returned it with more money in it than you had to begin with – you would want the pickpocket to strike again!
- When your puppy is eating his kibble or working on a chewie, occasionally play with the food or touch him, and sometimes add a special treat to whatever he is eating. This will teach him to like it when people approach and touch him while he is eating. Most of the time, however, puppies should be allowed to eat their food in peace (this especially applies to children).
- When your puppy is playing with a favorite bone or toy, take it away, give him a special bonus treat that's of higher value than the bone, and then return the item to him. This will teach the puppy to like it when people take away his favorite things.
- When your puppy is lying awake on his favorite resting place (dog bed, crate, sofa) gently pick him up and move him to another location, then go and get him a favorite toy or treat. This will teach him to like being approached and handled when he is on his favorite resting spots.

Once you and other adults have done these exercises, supervise children doing the same. This can only be done safely while your puppy still has his baby teeth! Do these exercises once a day until he is one year old, then once a week throughout his lifetime.

Note: these guarding exercises are aimed at preventing guarding from people, and have nothing to do with guarding from other dogs or pets. Guarding from people and guarding from other animals are unrelated. Guarding from other dogs or pets only requires intervention if it causes constant fighting, severe fear, or physical damage. In order to curb guarding from other animals you would need to consult a qualified dog trainer or animal behaviorist for guidance.

Handling and Socializing

We want our pet dogs to be comfortable around dogs and people, and to be relaxed about handling and grooming, so that these things are not scary or unpleasant. Scared dogs bite, and scared dogs live a very stressful life, so please do not let your puppy grow up to be a scared dog!

The time to get your puppy used to all of these things is now – after he is 3 months old it will be much harder to get him to relax about things he might find scary. Do the handling activities listed below, making sure that he is introduced to new experiences gradually, and that he gets lots of praise and treats.

- Gently clean inside his ears with ear cleaner and gauze, tissue or cotton balls.
- Brush his coat – at first just a few strokes at a time. If he tries to chew the brush then keep his mouth busy with a stuffed chew toy while you brush him.
- Get him used to tooth-brushing, first by rubbing his gums with just your finger dipped in salt water (dogs like the taste), then using a finger toothbrush, and finally with a real toothbrush and doggie toothpaste.
- Get him used to having his mouth opened and examined by you, and pretend you are giving him a pill by touching the back of his tongue with your finger.

- Fiddle with his paws and nails, and then gradually introduce him to nail trims – at first clipping just one or two nails at a time. Make sure you know how to avoid cutting his nails too short – it will hurt him quite a bit if you cut the vein!
- Get him used to baths by putting him in the tub for treats: first with no water at all, then with a little puddle to play in. Eventually get him used to running water, being wet, and finally being shampooed and rinsed.
- Have lots of strangers pet and handle your puppy while you give him treats. Keep it a positive experience for your pup. If he is tired, or feeling shy, limit the amount of petting but keep giving him awesome treats while in the presence of the strangers. When he is happy to see someone, allow more handling.
- Make sure your puppy meets men and women of all ages, children, and people of various appearances & ethnicities. Ask people to stare at your puppy close up, give him tight cuddles, gently tug his tail, fiddle with his paws, play with his toes, grab him by the collar, lean over him and pick him up, and act goofy around him so he even gets used to weird and whacky human behaviour. **Always make sure your pup is comfortable, and that he gets lots of praise and treats with each of these experiences.**
- Expose your pup to whatever you want him to be comfortable with as an adult: car rides, busy sidewalks, noisy schoolyards, rowdy crowds, parties, other animals, sport games, traffic, elevator rides, stairwells, noisy appliances, etc.

You can use the following socialization checklist to keep track of your puppy's exposure to other people, pets, places, and experiences.

Exposure Checklist for Socialization

Age in weeks

Exposure to:	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Babies, toddlers, children									
Teenagers, adults, elderly people									
People with wheelchairs, crutches									
In-line skaters, bikers									
Drunks, people with odd gaits									
People in uniform									
Repair people, delivery people									
People with umbrellas									
People in helmets, masks									
People with hats, beards, glasses									
People with parcels, capes, sacks									
People with strollers, wagons									
People of various ethnicities									
School grounds									
Crowds, clapping, cheering									
People yelling, loud speakers									
People dancing, singing									
Livestock, waterfowl									
Other puppies, friendly adult dogs									
Other pets									
Traffic, busses, trains, motorcycles									
Boats, seadoos, skidoos									
Manhole covers, grates									
Shiny floors, tiles, icy streets									
Gravel, cement, mud									
Revolving signs, swinging bridges									
Walks after dark, in bad weather									
Hot air balloons & airplanes									
Lawn mowers,									
Elevators, automatic doors									
Balconies, stairs									
Drive-thrus, car washes, tunnels									
Electrical appliances, washers									
Vacuum cleaners, hair dryers									
Construction and machinery noises									
Wind, rain, thunder, snow									
Fireworks, sporting events, fairs									