

TRAINING YOUR PUPPY

Puppies come with a set of pre-installed behaviours: urinating and defecating when they feel the urge, chewing anything they can put in their mouths, whining, crying and barking if they find themselves alone, eating any food they encounter (not to mention many NON-food items!), greeting by excitedly jumping up and play-biting all living things. These are all normal behaviours for any puppy or untrained adult dog. In order to have a dog that chews only his own toys, eliminates outside, can relax alone quietly, greets without jumping up and plays without being mouthy, the responsibility is on us to mould the dog's behaviour.

If your puppy is to get along with people and other dogs when he is an adult, early socialisation is a must. A dog's biting tendencies and his feelings toward people are largely the result of **socialisation** (or the lack of it) during puppy-hood, which is the most important time in a dog's life.

The modern trend in dog training, which is backed up by scientific studies of how dogs learn is increasingly conditioning with positive reinforcement. The best news of all is that training with positive reinforcement is ideally suited to puppies. There is virtually no limit to what puppies can learn **if the method is right!**

- Puppy training begins instilling obedience and good manners before bad habits and unruliness become entrenched.
- Puppy training makes use of the critical socialisation period to habituate dogs to all kinds of people, other dogs, novel environments and being handled.
- Starting training early creates a "learning to learn" effect, stimulates the puppy's brain and paves the way for later training.
- Puppy training allows for timely troubleshooting of common puppy problems such as play biting, alone training, house-training and chew training.

Puppies have poorly developed brain-bladder and brain-bowel connections, so they don't hold on as well as adults. If you adhere to a strict schedule, taking them out many times a day, most puppies can be house-trained by 12 weeks of age. Here's how:

- Reward the puppy immediately every time he eliminates outside with both verbal praise and a food treat.
- Supervise him all the time indoors so there is no way he can make an error without being caught. Confine him to one room to make this easier on you. When you see him *starting* to eliminate indoors, interrupt him with a sharp sound and take him outside. Praise if he finishes there.
- Never punish for accidents you do not catch mid-act. Late punishments, even a few seconds late, are not associated with previous behaviour and are merely abusive.

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