Puppy Training

Puppies are extremely impressionable. How you manage your new pet will have a dramatic and long lasting effect on him or her. You can make your puppy a better pet and prevent behavior problems by taking a few precautionary steps.

* Crate Training:
  + The goal of crate (kennel) training is that a dog will willingly go into the crate or any other enclosure (e.g. kennel at vet or boarding facility) for any reasonable period of time. A properly kennel trained dog will perceive the crate as it’s “den” or “bedroom”, and will often spend time inside when bored. The crate should be just large enough for the dog to stand, turn around and lie down, as an adult. If too large at first, place a box in the back. If he messes in the crate, don’t punish, just clean it up and re-evaluate the feeding and confinement schedule. Consider removing food and water earlier in the evening, and take out later before bed.
* Housebreaking:
  + The main goal is to establish a routine. Keep the puppy’s meals regularly scheduled to encourage more predictable elimination patterns. Take your puppy outside hourly the first day, then every three to four hours when you are home. Select one toilet area. Go with your puppy to the toilet area; use a leash at first to keep him in the toilet area. After successful elimination, allow freedom for gradually increasing periods of time. When your puppy relieves himself in the appropriate spot, immediately reward him with a food treat and verbal praise.
  + Don’t physically punish accidents, since you will want the dog to eliminate in your presence in the future. Verbal scolding is OK. Accidents indicate more confinement and that the owner needs to pay more attention to this process. Don’t let the dog watch you clean up any indoor accident. Some say if the pet sees you paying attention to their contribution, they may want to do it for you again. Do let your dog see you cleaning up the defined toilet area, since this increases the likelihood of eliminating there. Some dogs just take longer than others, since they are all individuals.
* Socialization:
  + Dogs are like pack hunters. Dogs relate to people as pack members. It is up to your family to become “pack leaders” by performing simple exercises and stopping aggressive play. Failure to do this may predispose your puppy to problems.
  + Introduce your puppy to a variety of positive experiences. Try to visit new places and enroll in puppy classes. Take your puppy on regular car rides (use a carrier to ensure safe driving). Brush your puppy daily. At the same time handle the feet and ears and open the mouth for inspection. If the puppy fusses, say “no” firmly, when he quiets down, talk in a soft, pleasant voice and continue handling. Take care he has a good experience.
* Prevent Bad Habits
  + Provide appropriate objects for chewing (nylabones, rawhides USA Made) and praise the puppy for chewing on these objects. It is best to rotate inappropriate chewing (clap hands, shout) while directing the puppy to appropriate objects. Put your pup in its crate when you’re not around to supervise.
  + Don’t allow aggressive behavior: mouthing hands, tug-of-war, jumping up, growling, guarding food and nipping. Competition between dog and owner should never be developed, even when it is playful. To handle aggressive play, stand perfectly still, cross your arms and close your eyes to tell the puppy you are not interested in playing “rough”. When the puppy gives up, go and get an appropriate toy and praise your puppy for playing with it.
  + Don’t allow jumping up. Never pet or talk sweetly to a dog that had only two paws on the ground. Turn away and ignore them! Kneeing, hitting the dog under the chin and squeezing the dog’s paws may actually lead to increased jumping. Make definite decisions about manners. Will the new dog be allowed on the furniture? Are any of the rooms off-limits? When you tell your dog “no”, you must be prepared to enforce your decision immediately.
* Nothing is free
  + The “nothing is free” technique helps you establish Leadership. The concept is to teach your dog “nothing in life is free.” Your pup must obey a command before he or she gets anything he or she likes. No food rewards are used. The reward is what the dog wants in the particular situation, be it love, praise, pats, going out, etc. Don’t allow your pup to be demanding in obnoxious ways. The only way your dog should get what he or she wants is by behaving.
* Additional Training
  + The preceding ideas will help you lay a good foundation. In addition, your dog should learn to: sit and stay on command, come when called and walk on a leash. Eight weeks of age is a good time to begin teaching the sit-stay commands.

**Pet Veterinarian** February 1991

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