



## Housebreaking Your Puppy and Other Basic Training

The happy experiences your puppy experiences during his first few days in his new home will have a lasting effect on his personality. Let the "three P's" - patience, persistence and a positive approach to training - guide you as you help your newcomer become a well-behaved family member.

Successful training of your new puppy requires understanding, correction and praise. Puppies have a desire to please and respond to praise. It is also important for all family members to cooperate in training the new puppy, otherwise the puppy may become confused.

As you welcome your puppy into his new home, remember that before dogs were domesticated, they lived and hunted in packs. Each pack had a leader. Although your puppy is domesticated, he still instinctively follows his pack heritage. Consequently, a puppy will try to test family members as he attempts to establish dominance as leader of the pack. His pack instinct must be tempered to help him interact appropriately with people and with other animals. If your puppy learns to recognize you as leader of the pack, he will be easier to train, more obedient and a happier, more content dog.

A code of conduct for your puppy should be established and enforced by all family members. To help him understand that he must obey this code of conduct, be consistent in reprimanding him. Eye contact and a firm "no" usually deter an undesirable activity.

In addition to eye contact, tone of voice is important. Do not laugh at a misdeed as you say "no" or add with an amused tone of voice comments like "such a naughty boy." The puppy will sense a friendly, rather than firm tone of voice and probably ignore the "no" command.

As the puppy is trained to follow the code of conduct you establish for him, he will learn to recognize you as pack leader and settle into the routine you establish for him.

### Choosing A Name

Choosing a name for the new puppy can be fun for family members. Perhaps the puppy's appearance or personality suggest a name. Or the children may choose the name of a character from a favorite story. Once a name is chosen, use it consistently and soon your puppy will understand and respond to it.

### Housebreaking the New Puppy

Establishing a housebreaking routine for your puppy should begin the day you bring the puppy home. An effective housebreaking method is the use of a crate or sleeping box. Crates are available at most pet supply stores or you can make a sleeping box at very little cost. (See illustration on following page)

The success of the crate method is based on the den-dwelling instinct of dogs. Puppies consider a crate their den and will not relieve themselves in it unless it is absolutely necessary.

The crate soon becomes the puppy's "room of his own" or retreat. He enjoys its security when he wants to nap undisturbed. It is handy for travel, to confine the puppy if he is ill, or just for general control.

An out-of-the-way spot in the kitchen is a good location for the crate. Choose an area that is free from drafts and not too close to a heat source. It is a good idea to confine your puppy to a restricted area in the house until he is trustworthy. The kitchen is usually recommended because it is the center of activity and the floor is generally tile or linoleum so it is easy to clean if there are accidents.

For bedding use a towel or a piece of blanket which can be washed. A puppy should not be fed in the crate and will only upset a bowl of water.

The puppy may cry the first night or two as he adjusts to being alone in a new environment. This is normal. However, the crying may indicate his need to eliminate. Take him outside. If he does not eliminate return him to his crate, and do not provide attention.

To establish a crate routine for your puppy, close him in the crate at regular one to two hour intervals during the day (the times he chooses to nap will guide you).

Close him in his crate whenever he must be left alone for a longer period of time. Give him a chew toy for distraction and remove collar and tags which might become caught in an opening.

Take your puppy outside before play, when he awakens from a nap, after eating or drinking, before bedtime and before visitors arrive and before any activity which is likely to excite the puppy.

During the first week, your new puppy will be unable to go all night without eliminating. For this reason, do not feed him or give him water three to four hours before his bedtime. Set the alarm to take him out during the night. When he eliminates praise him and reward him with a small amount of drinking water. Work toward a morning feeding and watering schedule. After a week or so your puppy should be able to sleep through the night and make his first trip outside early in the morning. The goal in setting the alarm and in frequent trips outside is to help the puppy avoid making a mistake in his crate or in the house.

When you take the puppy outside to relieve himself, take him to a preselected area and issue a command for that purpose, such as "business." Wait a few minutes for him to eliminate. Do not play with him or take him for a walk; there are other times for these activities. If he eliminates, praise him immediately and reward him by letting him roam freely in the house for a while.

If your puppy does not eliminate the first time, do not punish him. Simply return him to his cage. Wait 15 or 20 minutes and try again. Eventually your puppy will learn what is expected of him.

If you consistently take him out through the same door, once he is trained he will go to the designated door to "ask to go outside." Sniffing the floor, turning in circles and squatting indicate that he is about to eliminate - take him outdoors immediately.

Puppies who are calm and secure are easier to housebreak. Anxiety and fear can lead to bad behavior. This is why you should never shout at the new puppy, hit him or "rub his nose in it." If you punish the puppy, housebreaking may take longer or not work.

A puppy will probably make some mistakes in the house. When you catch him having an accident, say "no" firmly and take him outside where he should have gone. After a mistake, if possible, wait until the puppy relieves himself before returning him to the house to reinforce the training procedure.

Do not scold the puppy after he has made the mistake and left the area. He will not associate your firm words with the mistake. Mop up the puddle with a rag, then use the rag as an housebreaking aid. Place the rag in the preselected outside area to help the puppy learn that this is where he should eliminate.

Wash the soiled area with soap and water followed by a deodorizing solution or, in the case of a carpet, use a carpet shampoo and deodorizer. If the area is not deodorized, the puppy may return to the same area the next time he wants to relieve himself. Many deodorizing solutions are available. Make certain the label instructions indicate that the solution is safe to use on the surface or carpet you are cleaning.

Even if housebreaking does not go smoothly at first, don't weaken. Be persistent, patient and lavish the puppy with praise when he eliminates properly.

Some people who have problems housebreaking puppies are not consistent. They may decide the weather is too inclement to take the puppy outside and provide a paper for indoor elimination. This confuses the puppy. If the weather is cold or if it is raining, the puppy will be in a hurry to relieve himself and get inside. The puppy must learn that he has to go outside in all kinds of weather.

Dry the puppy after he has gone outside in the rain or snow. This can also be a time to give him extra praise and affection for eliminating properly.

If outdoor training is impractical, it is possible to train a puppy (especially toy breeds) to relieve himself indoors on paper. However, this weakens the puppy's cleanliness instinct and establishes a habit. As a result, many dogs cannot be retrained to go outside.

### **Crate Construction**

A crate can be made at little cost. Construct a box with a door or a lid and adequate ventilation holes. The box should be large enough to allow the puppy to turn around, stretch out or stand up, but no larger.

The adult size of a purebred puppy is fairly easy to predict. Estimating the adult size of a mixed breed is usually based on identifiable breed characteristics and body type.

A crate too large for a young puppy defeats its purpose of promoting elimination control and providing security, so its space should be limited. The space of an adult-size crate can be reduced with a reversed carton or a moveable/removable partition made of wire, wood or masonite. Width can serve for length if the crate is large.

### **New Experiences for Your Puppy**

Plan ahead to introduce your puppy to his new home and to begin his socialization. Help him adjust to his surroundings, then gradually introduce him to people - one or two at a time under circumstances you control. Do not let him become overwhelmed by a crowd of people. Take him for walks in the neighborhood. Show the neighborhood children how to pet him and talk to him. Introduce him to the postal carrier, the meter reader and other service people who visit your home regularly.

If you have another pet, keep the puppy and the pet separated but within sight of each other for the first few days. Reassure the other pet to help prevent jealousy. When you feel confident that they will accept each other, you can put them in the same area and they should become friends. However, it is important to continue to give the other pet extra attention.

Introduce your puppy to riding in the car. Too many times, puppies learn to associate riding in the car with trips to the veterinarian and become, at best, reluctant travelers. Short rides (even if the ride is only around the block) soon become happy experiences for the puppy. When the veterinarian is the destination, the puppy arrives relaxed and is usually easier to manage during his examination. A puppy accustomed to riding in the car becomes a better traveling companion when it is necessary to include him in family travel plans.

For safer driving for you and your puppy, confine him in a carrier or use a restraining device.

Some puppies may experience motion sickness, but they usually outgrow it. Withholding food for at least three hours before traveling and conditioning the puppy with short drives usually minimizes this problem.

### **Correcting Bad Habits**

The best way to correct bad habits is to avoid introducing them to your new puppy. Anticipating and taking action to prevent potential problems makes life easier for you and your puppy. Here are examples of how to help prevent problems before they start.

When the puppy first comes home, do not leave him alone for long periods of time. When he is left alone, he may become frightened or lonesome which may result in destructive behavior. Help him learn to accept being left alone. Begin by leaving him alone for short periods of time in his crate or in an area where he cannot do any damage. Be certain he has a chew bone and/or a favorite toy to help prevent boredom. Gradually increase the length of separation time until he is accustomed to being left alone.

Help your puppy adjust to loud noises. During a thunderstorm, fireworks or any other noisy situation, play with him as you normally do

or hold him and in a soothing voice reassure him that "it's business as usual."

All puppies tend to chew, especially when they are teething (between 14 and 30 weeks of age). Help your puppy learn that his toys are for chewing. If he chews on anything else, grab him by the scruff of the neck, gently shake him and say "no" in a firm voice. Give him a chew toy, and as he starts chewing it, praise him to let him know this is acceptable behavior. Never give a puppy an old shoe or any other household item to chew. He will think that all shoes or other items are "fair game" for chewing.

Avoid playing tug-of-war with your puppy unless you want an adult dog who bites, pulls and tugs.

Biting can be encouraged by allowing a puppy to bite you during play time. Never wiggle your fingers or hand in a teasing way at a puppy to encourage him to attack you. Avoid letting him attack your arm or leg. Such "attack games" may seem cute when the puppy is little, but the end result is usually an adult dog who bites.

Puppies frequently get into wastebaskets and enjoy scattering and tearing up paper. Coming into the room after the puppy has had his fun with the wastebasket and scolding him is futile. You may feel better because you expressed your anger, but the puppy does not associate the scolding with the act. Until the puppy outgrows his wastebasket curiosity, it's easier to keep wastebaskets out of his reach.

At mealtime, a puppy can look very appealing and family members are sometimes tempted to give him food from the table as a treat. This may be the start of two bad habits: the making of a finicky eater who refuses to eat his regular diet and the begging dog who disrupts mealtime and may even try to take food from the table. Choose a good quality nutritionally complete food for your puppy such as Purina® Puppy Chow® brand puppy food or Purina® Pro Plan® Growth Formula and always have fresh drinking water in a clean bowl available.

When a puppy jumps on visitors or climbs all over people, this behavior is often dismissed as "cute" or "friendly as a puppy." However, it does not remain cute or friendly as the puppy matures. Teach the dog to sit when someone enters the house. When the puppy sits, reward him with lots of praise.

Establish a command for each behavior problem such as "off" when the puppy jumps on furniture. Repeat this same command each time and you will soon break him of this bad habit.

If your puppy barks excessively while you are at home, he is probably not getting enough attention. Play with him, take him for walks and praise him for good behavior. Your love and attention will bring out the best in your puppy.

### **Begin Grooming Early**

Early in life a puppy should learn that grooming can be a pleasant experience. Begin with short grooming sessions. If the puppy fusses, say "no" firmly. Reassure the puppy and praise him lavishly for good behavior. As you repeat the procedure daily, accustom your puppy to opening his mouth for inspection and to having his ears and paws handled.

Later on, when his teeth and ears need cleaning and his nails clipped, he won't resist this care and he will probably be more at ease when he is examined or treated by a veterinarian.

The grooming routine you establish will depend upon how much time your puppy spends outdoors, whether he is a longhaired or shorthaired breed and local weather conditions.

How often a puppy should be bathed depends upon his breed, coat type, living conditions and climate. Never let a wet puppy go outside or expose him to drafts. Use only a shampoo formulated for dogs.

Pet shops can advise you as to the appropriate grooming tools to effectively groom your puppy.

### **Being A Good Neighbor**

While puppies enjoy exploring the great outdoors, certain pre-cautions must be taken to protect them and to help make them welcome neighbors.

If you leave your puppy outdoors unattended, make sure he stays in his own yard. A fenced-in yard is ideal. However, to ensure safety after the puppy matures, make certain the fence is tall enough to prevent the dog from climbing or jumping over the top. The fence should fit tight to the ground or even be buried a few inches underneath it to prevent crawling or digging out under it. Also be certain the spaces between the posts and gates do not allow room for the puppy to squeeze through.

If you do not have a fence, try a swivel stake or a tree-to-tree wire with a pulley for your pup's leash. Remember not to leave him outside too long on very cold or very warm days.

If you walk your dog, it is your responsibility to clean up after him. Check with your police department or city hall about local pet ordinances.

### **Obedience School**

Most experts agree that after a puppy is at least six months of age, attending obedience classes is a good idea. Even if your puppy is well-behaved, good behavior can be reinforced and expanded through obedience classes. If you are having training problems, professional trainers can help you gain greater control of your puppy as the first step toward solving these problems.

Most schools will take your puppy through the following training exercises: heel, sit-stay, down, down-stay, "come" or recall, and stand-for-exam which is very useful for home grooming and veterinary check-ups.

Obedience classes are offered by many organizations, such as the YMCA, humane societies, kennel clubs and community colleges. You can also ask your veterinarian to recommend an obedience school.

The classes are usually for a 10 to 12 week period, meeting once a week for no more than one hour. However, you should work with your puppy between classes. This "homework" reinforces what he has learned in the previous class. Remember that the training you and your puppy receive does not end when the class ends but should be continued and reinforced at home.

