



PUPPY BEHAVIOUR

A NEW HOME

Your puppy's first day and night in its new home can be overwhelming. The pup has been separated from its mother, brothers and sisters and is in a new place full of strange smells and sounds.

- Try to avoid frightening the puppy by too much play and handling on its first day. Give it time to explore quietly and get used to the new place. Wait a few days for the pup to settle in before having lots of visitors coming to look at the puppy.
- Introduce the pup carefully to any pets which you already have. Your pets may not accept the newcomer and it is best not to leave them alone together unsupervised. You may need to seek advice if you are having problems introducing the new pup.
- When introducing a cat to a new pup, make sure that the cat can get away easily if the pup frightens it. You may put the pup in a crate or playpen, or on a leash and allow the cat to come forward when it is ready.
- From the very first day, decide on the rules which you want to set for the puppy. Where is it going to sleep and eat? Is it going to be allowed on the couch? Is it going to be allowed in the bedrooms? Keep to these rules consistently.

ENCOURAGING INDEPENDENCE

Dogs are often left at home on their own for several hours at a time, particularly when the owners go out to work. Dogs can get used to this routine and will generally spend the day sleeping and playing. However, some dogs become anxious about being left alone and this can lead to problems of barking, destructive chewing, escaping and so on. You can encourage your puppy to develop some independence, so that it is less likely to be distressed when left alone.

- Leave the puppy alone for short periods of time to start with and gradually increase the length of time spent alone. Avoid having the pup with you constantly when you are at home, or taking the pup with you wherever you go. Encourage the pup to spend time outside on its own, or leave it in another room. Put the pup in a playpen or behind a child barrier placed in a doorway, which the pup can see through.
- If you get a pup when you are not going to work or are on holidays, make sure that you go out and leave the pup at home at times, so that it will not be a sudden change to the pup when you go back to work.
- Avoid making a big fuss of the pup just before you leave, or when you get home. Let the pup settle down before you pay attention to it.
- Leave the pup with plenty of toys, water, and a comfortable bed. Feed 15 – 20 minutes before you leave.

* Two dogs living together can keep each other occupied during times when you are not at home. However, many dogs are more strongly attached to their owner than another dog and having two dogs does not always prevent or cure anxiety caused by the owner leaving.

CRYING AT NIGHT

Most pups cry during the first few nights in a new home. This can develop into a habit if not handled correctly.

- Decide where the pup is going to sleep. This could be in a bathroom or laundry, in a crate or outside in a shed or kennel. It is best to decide where you want the pup to sleep when it is an adult dog and start the pup sleeping there from the beginning. This is easier than trying to change the dog's habits later. If the pup is to sleep outside, place its kennel in a sheltered area. It will probably prefer to have its kennel close to the house. Don't put the kennel next to your neighbour's bedroom window.
- Set the pup's sleeping area with warm bedding, shelter from weather, food, water, toys and a litter tray if you wish. Put the pup to bed and leave it there. The pup will probably cry at some stage. If you get up and go to the pup when it cries, you will be starting a bad habit of crying or barking for attention, which could go on for the rest of the dog's life. If the pup realises that crying does not work, it will eventually settle down.
- Some hints to help settle the pup in its sleeping area include:
 - 1) Feed and play with the pup in the sleeping area. Avoid playing with the pup and getting it excited just before putting it to bed.
 - 2) Put a ticking clock or radio playing softly near the pup.
 - 3) Put a luke warm hot water bottle near the pup.
 - 4) Put some of your old clothes which have your scent on them in the pup's bed.
 - 5) Put an old towel or blanket which smells of the pup's mother or littermates in the bed. When you pick up your new pup to bring it home, you could take an old towel to rub on the pup's mother.
- Occasionally pups cry excessively in their first few nights and sometimes they get into a pattern of sleeping during the day and crying at night. You may need to seek veterinary advice if you have a serious problem, but most pups settle down eventually if they do not get attention when they cry.

TOILET TRAINING

A puppy has no idea that there is anything wrong with going to the toilet on your floor. You need to teach the puppy that this is not acceptable, but you need to do more than just correct the pup for doing the wrong thing. You need to teach it the RIGHT behaviour.

* To teach the puppy that it is behaving incorrectly, you must **CATCH IT IN THE ACT** of “toileting” in the wrong place. If you punish the pup after it has finished and walked away, it will not understand why it is being punished. Correction must occur immediately. If you do not catch the pup “toileting”, ignore the mess and clean it up later after you have removed the puppy from the room.

- Severe punishment is unnecessary. You do not need to hit the pup with a rolled up newspaper and do NOT rub its nose in the mess. Your puppy will understand that you are unhappy with its behaviour if correct it **FIRMLY** with your voice at the time. Your puppy will respond to your voice alone and does not need a beating to respect you.
- If you do catch the puppy in the act, correct it with a firm “NO”, then take the pup to the place where you want it to go to the toilet. It may not need to go to the toilet anymore, but make the pup stay there for a moments, then praise it.
- Regularly take the pup to where you want it to go to the toilet and encourage it to go. You may start to use a word such as “Toilet” when the pup is toileting. Wait for the pup to go to the toilet and **PRAISE IT IMMEDIATELY**. Praise is extremely important. Don’t just put the pup outside on its own. It doesn’t know why you have put it out, and may just sit waiting for you to let it back in.
- Learn to recognise the signs that mean the pup needs to go to the toilet. These include restlessness, sniffing about on the floor, walking with back legs spread apart and squatting. There are times when the pup is more likely to need to the toilet. These include soon after eating and after waking up from a sleep.
- If possible, install a doggy door so that the pup can go outside when it wants to.
- When your pup is very small, or if it is going to be kept indoors without access to the garden (eg through a dog flap) you may train the pup to use a litter tray. Use a shallow plastic tray lined with paper or kitty litter and place it where the pup has easy access to it. As your puppy learns to use the litter tray, you can gradually move the tray to the back door, outside the door, then into the garden (or wherever you want the pup to go).
- Always thoroughly clean and dry any spots where “accidents” happen. If the pup can smell any urine or faeces (and remember that their sense of smell is many times better than ours) it will encourage the pup to go again on the same spot. Use a commercial pet stain remover with odour neutraliser, or bicarb soda. Avoid strongly scented cleaners and ammonia based cleaners. If you use paper towel or tissue to clean up a mess, put a small piece of dirty towel in the litter tray, or outside where you want the pup to go to the toilet. The smell will encourage the pup to use that spot in the future.
- Supervise the pup closely when it is indoors. Every time it goes to the toilet in the house without being caught, the problem is reinforced. At times when you can’t supervise the pup, put it outside, in a travel crate, or in a laundry or bathroom with a litter tray.
- If the pup is going to the toilet in a certain room, close the door or put up a barrier so that the pup can not go into that room without supervision.
- Remember that your puppy is only young, and don’t expect too much. It takes time for a pup to develop full bladder and bowel control. It is not physically possible for a young pup to hold on for long periods of time. Just be consistent with your training and your pup will learn in time.

CHEWING

Chewing is a natural behaviour of dogs. Chewing can help keep a dog’s teeth and gums in good health. Puppies chew to investigate their environment, for amusement and to relieve teething pain. However, puppies do not necessarily just “grow out” of their chewing as they get older. Destructive chewing may become a habit if the pup is not taught to chew appropriately.

- Provide the pup with a range of good quality chew toys and rawhide. Encourage the pup to chew these objects and **PRAISE** it for chewing them. Good quality toys may be expensive, but a set of toys is cheaper than replacing chewed furniture, clothing or electrical appliances. Avoid cheap toys which may be chewed into dangerous pieces.
- Pups should only be corrected for chewing if they are **CAUGHT IN THE ACT**. Do not punish the pup for chewing if you don’t catch it doing the damage. The pup may cower away when told off, but is only reacting to your anger. It doesn’t understand why it is being punished and is not feeling guilty, even if you show the pup the damage. Some pups learn to associate punishment with mess in the house or chewed objects, but this doesn’t mean that they remember doing the damage. Severe punishment or delayed punishment is only likely to confuse the pup and cause anxiety. This could make the chewing problem worse!
- If you catch your pup chewing something inappropriate, correct it with a firm “NO” and remove the chewed object. Replace it with a chew toy and **PRAISE** the pup for chewing the toy.
- Supervising the pup closely gives you more opportunity to catch the pup in the act of chewing something inappropriate. If the pup gets away with chewing inappropriate objects, then the problem will be reinforced. At times when you are unable to supervise the pup, pick up any objects which might be chewed, or leave the pup in an area where it can not cause damage.
- If the pup is chewing certain objects, such as reticulation, fence off the area or confine the pup away from it. If the pup is chewing the lounge suite for example, keep the pup out of the lounge room unless it is under supervision.
- Don’t leave valuable objects on the floor or on low shelves.
- Sometimes a pup won’t chew the toys that the owners have bought. The pup needs to be taught that the toys are for chewing. Smearing food on the toy may help to get the pup interested. Praise the pup when it sniffs, touches or picks up the toy. Provide a variety of different toys to see which ones the pup likes. Play games with the toys to get the pup’s interest.
- Regular play and training session with the pup will help to keep it stimulated and exercised. Train the pup to find and fetch its chew toy
- If your pup is pulling washing of the line, you can try

- 1) putting up a fence to keep the pup away from the line,
- 2) putting the line up out of reach,
- 3) "booby trapping" the clothes line with a sprinkler which you can turn on without the pup seeing you, or
- 4) hanging water balloons or clothes soaked in a non-toxic bitter substance on the line.

DIGGING

Digging is natural dog behaviour. Dogs dig for several reasons including to find or bury food, to make a cool spot to lie, for enjoyment and when anxious. However, owners don’t want their dogs to dig in certain places, such as the lawn or garden beds.

- A pup must only be corrected for digging if it is caught in the act. Never punish the pup if you find a hole after it has been dug. The pup will not understand why it is being punished. If it cowers away when you yell at it, it is just reacting to your anger. It is not feeling guilty, but is frightened.
- Server correction is not necessary. **DO NOT** bury the pup in the hole it has dug, or place traps in the hole.
- Punishing the pup may result in the pup learning to dig only when you are not around to tell it off. To teach a pup where it is not allowed to dig, you should only allow it to have access to the gardens when you are around to supervise.
- Providing the pup with a digging area or sandpit allows the pup to dig without damaging your garden. Digging in a sandpit can be a good way for the pup to occupy itself when it is home alone. Encourage the pup to dig there by praising it and burying toys and treats for the pup to find. The pup will use this area where it is praised and where it sometimes finds a treat, rather than your garden where there are no treats and rewards.
- When you catch the pup digging in the garden, tell it off and take it to its digging pit. Encourage it to dig there.
- Train the pup to stay out of certain areas in the garden. Use a command such as “OFF” and praise the pup when it gets off the garden bed. You may also set up temporary barriers to help the pup understand where the boundaries are.
- Permanent barriers can be set up to protect certain areas of the yard. If the pup can’t get into the area, it can’t do any damage.
- You may fence an area for the pup to stay in when you go out, or at night. The pup should be gradually accustomed to being left in this area, and should have food, water, shelter and toys available.
- Freshly turned garden beds or new plants will attract the pup’s attention and encourage digging. Protect these areas with a barrier.
- Repellent sprays and dog droppings can be placed on garden beds or around certain plants to deter digging in those spots. Dog droppings can also be buried in the holes the dog had dug.
- Chicken mesh can be laid over garden beds or lawn to protect them from digging, or buried just below the surface. Make sure the mesh is securely fixed down and there are no sharp edges.
- If the pup is digging to make a cool spot to lie in, provide it with a cool place in the shade.

MOUTHING AND NIPPING

When puppies play together, they usually mouth and nip at each other. When puppies play with people, they often try to do the same thing. Although this might be amusing when the puppy is small, it can become a serious problem as the pup gets bigger. You should not rely on the puppy growing out of this behaviour. A bad habit which starts as puppy may continue for years.

- It is easier for pups to understand a **CONSISTENT** rule. If the pup is allowed or encouraged to bite sometimes, it will not understand why it is not allowed to bite at other times. Everyone in the household must be consistent and not allow the pup to mouth or nip.
- If your puppy is mouthing, nipping or growling, correct it with **ONE** firm command such as “NO”. Stop moving your hands and in particular avoid snatching your hands away from the pup. If necessary, use one hand on the pup’s collar to restrain it and place your other hand firmly on top of the pup’s muzzle as you say “NO”. Do not try to hold its mouth closed. Praise and slowly stroke the pup when it stops mouthing or nipping.
- Sudden movements, flapping hands, running, squealing and screaming all excite the pup and encourage it to nip more. Children in particular need to learn to stand still and keep their hands close to their body if the pup starts nipping. Pups should be stroked gently and with slow hand movements.
- Do not smack the pup on the nose, hit or threaten it with newspaper, or point at it with your finger when it nips. This tends to encourage the pup to nip at your hands, or else make the pup “head shy”. In other words, it may expect to be hit every time that someone tries to touch its head.
- Since mouthing and nipping often occur during play, it is important for pups to learn to play appropriately with people. If the puppy is mouthing your hands, feet or clothing you should give **ONE FIRM COMMAND** to stop. Praise the puppy when it stops. If the puppy does not stop nipping, then you must end the game. Walk away for a few minutes if necessary, or if you are holding the puppy, put it down on the floor. If the puppy is overexcited, it is less likely to listen to you, so you may need to let it settle down for a while by putting it outside or in another room.
- Start training the pup to play more appropriate games such as “fetch”. Provide some good quality chew toys and encourage the pup to chew and mouth its toys instead of your hands.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly or tease a puppy. If a pup is frightened or hurt by children, it may learn to bite in defence. Other children may then be bitten if the pup is expecting the same rough treatment.
- Seek professional advice for any serious or persistent aggression or biting. Early treatment of these problems is essential.

JUMPING UP ON PEOPLE

Dogs jump on people to play, to greet them, to seek attention and to assert their dominance. Jumping up may be fun while playing and may be cute when the puppy is still small, but can be very annoying and even dangerous as the pup gets bigger.

- A common problem with a pup, which jumps on people, is that it is not consistently reprimanded. The pup may be allowed or even encouraged to jump up at some times, but expected not to jump up at other times. Different people in the family may also treat the pup differently. It is easier for the pup to understand a **CONSISTENT** rule.
- You will need to teach your pup some basic commands such as “Sit” and “Down” in order to control its behaviour. Obedience training classes will help you to do this.
- Since the pup may be jumping up for attention, it is important to teach the pup a more appropriate way to get your attention. Remember that for a pup, which craves attention, even being told off is better than being ignored, and the pup will continue to jump up despite being reprimanded. Teach the pup to greet people by sitting at their feet, instead of jumping. When you call the pup or if the pup runs up to you, give the command “Sit” and wait until the pup sits before you pat it. If the pup is jumping on visitors or children, put the pup on a leash and make sure that it sits before the visitors or children pat the pup.
- If the pup is jumping up on you, you can use a firm command such as “OFF” once only. However, if the pup does not understand the command you may try one of the following techniques, until you have developed better control of the pup and it will respond to your command.

- 1) GENTLY put the pup into a sit or stand position. Since the pup is often jumping up for attention, it is important that you make as little fuss as possible. DO NOT speak to the pup until it is sitting, THEN praise it. You may use one hand on the pup's collar to prevent it jumping up again.
 - 2) If the pup has its paws on you. QUIETLY step back until the pup's front paws are on the ground. Immediately give the command to "sit" and praise. DON'T JUMP BACK or the pup will think you are playing.
- DO NOT use techniques such as stepping on the pup's feet, kneeing it in the chest, hitting the pup or squeezing its paws.
 - Learn to recognise when the pup is preparing to jump up and give the command 'OFF' BEFORE it jumps. Follow it up immediately with the "Sit" command and praise.
 - If the pup gets overexcited when playing, stop the game until it settles down again. Walk away if necessary or give the pup "time out" for a few minutes.
 - A small puppy may be less likely to jump up if you turn side on as it approaches and kneel down to greet it. However, you should still work on training the pup to sit at your feet when it greets you or wants attention.
 - Regular exercise and training sessions are important to keep the pup stimulated and use up excess energy.

EXCITABILITY

Some puppies are over excitable. They have a very short attention span and have trouble sitting for very long. While this problem may improve a little as the pup gets older, it is very important to teach the pup to behave more appropriately, or the pup may grow up to be very difficult to control.

- It is important not to encourage excitable behaviour by giving the pup attention for being silly. If the pup gets excited let it calm down before giving it any more attention. You may need to put the pup outside or walk away and leave it for a few minutes. Children should be taught not to tease and excite the pup.
- Remember to reward the pup for good behaviour. If the pup is being quiet and well behaved, praise it.
- Adequate exercise is important
- Obedience training will be very helpful when the pup is old enough to start training. Obedience training teaches you how to control the dog's behaviour, and provide the dog with mental stimulation.
- If your pup is very excitable, short periods of play are best. Have sessions of play, then training, so that the pup learns to stop and start play.

EXERCISE

Providing your dog with enough exercise and play is an important responsibility for dog owners. It is also part of the fun of owning a dog. Exercise is good for your dog's health and can help prevent some behaviour problems.

- Growing pups should not be over exercised. Over exercise can cause growth problems. Allow plenty of rest breaks and don't let the pup get too tired. Avoid heavy exercise such as jogging with young pups.
- At least 15-20 minutes should be set aside for walking, obedience training and play with your pup, every day, rather than just one long walk at the weekend. You might break your daily exercise time into 10 minutes before and after work.
- The exercise routine should be varied, eg, a walk, some obedience training, a run, a fetch game with a ball and time off the leash in approved dog exercise areas. Vary the time of day when you exercise your dog.
- Parents should not let children walk a dog on their own, unless they are confident that the child can control the dog in any situation that might occur.
- Riding a bicycle with the dog running alongside is dangerous. Too often another dog distracts a dog and pulls its owner off the bicycle and into traffic, or the dog gets injured itself in the moving wheels.
- Throwing a stick for the dog to fetch is not advisable. Many dogs suffer serious mouth and throat injuries from running with sticks in their mouths.

DOMINANCE

Dogs are a pack animal, that is, they live in groups. Within the group they have a dominance hierarchy or pecking order. It is very important that when a dog lives with people, the dog must accept ALL members of the household as being dominant, including children. A dog, which considers itself to be higher in the pecking order than any person in the house, will be, at best, disobedient and difficult to control and at worse, dangerously aggressive.

- You can begin to establish your dominance over your dog when it is still a puppy. In fact this is the best time to do it, as the pup is still small enough to dominate easily. Dominating a dog DOES NOT mean physically beating the dog or being aggressive to it. Dominating a dog is about setting clear and consistent rules for its behaviour. If you have to use violence to discipline your dog, then you are not in control.
- Make the pup earn its treats, by telling it to "sit" or "down" before it gets a pat, a game, a snack or a walk. You may need to take the pup to obedience classes so that it understands the commands.
- Get the pup used to being handled all over its body. Touch its ears, eyes, nose, paws and tail. Be gentle and praise the pup for tolerating the inspection. Do not allow it to nip or mouth your hands.
- Avoid tug-of-war and wrestling games, which encourage the pup to growl and snap at you. Teach the pup to give you and objects, which it has in its mouth. Your dog should not have possessions, which it will not allow you to take.
- Teach the pup to sit and wait for its dinner. Stroke the pup while it is eating and put your hands in its dinner bowl. Put food in and take food out of its bowl. Pick the bowl up and put it down. It is very important for dogs to learn not to be protective of their food.
- Everyone in the household needs to be involved, including children. Small children can be help by their parents, while the adults give commands and handle the dog. As the children get older, they can become more involved.

- When there is more than one dog in the household, the dogs must be allowed to form their own pecking order. It is important not to try to treat the dogs equally, or you may cause fights between the dogs. Seek professional advice if your dogs are fighting.
- You are less likely to have fighting due to dominance conflicts between your dogs if you have dogs of different sexes.

SOCIALISATION

The period of a puppy's life between approximately 3 weeks and 12-14 weeks of age are known as the "socialisation" period. This is a critical period in the behavioural development of a puppy. The development, which occurs during this period, has a lasting effect on the behaviour of the animal in later life.

- Social bonds are formed during this period. Socialisation with humans, and other animals, which the pup may live with, will help to develop a bond to people, cats, birds etc.
- Dogs social behaviour is learnt during this period. A puppy learns how to communicate with other dogs. A lack of socialisation with other dogs during the socialisation period, can lead to an adult dog which is not able to get along very well with other dogs. A poorly socialised pup may grow into a dog which is either very frightened of other dogs, or is aggressive to them.
- Strong positive and negative associations are formed during the socialisation period. If a puppy has a frightening experience, it may lead to a fear or phobia later in life. Equally, a pleasant experience can have a lasting effect on the pup's behaviour. For example, a puppy should have a few happy visits to the vet during the socialisation period to help prevent it being frightened of the vet when it gets older.
- A lack of stimulation and exposure to new and interesting environments during the socialisation period, can lead to a dog which is withdrawn or timid and has trouble dealing with unfamiliar environments or situations. For this reason, it is important to expose the pup as many novel situations as possible, but remember that these must be positive experiences for the pup. If your puppy is nervous it is important NOT to reinforce its fear by picking the pup up and trying to comfort it. Instead try to act relaxed and happy yourself, and allow the pup to take its time to investigate new things.

We know that socialisation is important, so how do we do it?

- Pups must be vaccinated as recommended by your veterinarian.
- Since the socialisation period covers the ages of 3 weeks to 12-14 weeks, it is necessary to make some compromise between isolation of the pup to prevent infection, and socialisation to prevent behaviour problems. Pups must not be socialised with unvaccinated dogs and avoid taking them to public places such as parks, footpaths, shopping centres etc, where the ground may be contaminated with infectious diseases until fully vaccinated. Before socialising your puppy consult your veterinarian.
- Once veterinarian approval has been given puppies need to socialise with other dogs outside of their immediate family. They need to meet lots of UNFAMILIAR dogs, not just their own littermates of the dogs that they live with. Puppy socialisation classes at vet clinics are an excellent opportunity for socialisation with other pups.
- Pups may be socialised on private property with dogs belonging to friends or relatives, as long as they are friendly, well behaved dogs and are up to date with their vaccinations.
- Socialisation with people and other animals, is also important. Pups should be socialised with different types of people, including babies, children, elderly people, men, women, people with walking sticks etc..
- Socialisation must CONTINUE throughout the dog's life.

OBEDIENCE TRAINING

Taking your dog to obedience classes has many advantages and can be fun for both you and your dog. It is recommended for pups to begin formal obedience classes at about 4 months of age.

- Teaching the dog to follow your commands helps to reinforce your control over it.
- The dog will learn a set of commands, which you can use to help control the dog in difficult situations. For example, you can use "sit" and "stay" when waiting to cross the street, when the dog is jumping on visitors, when you are answering the front door, etc.
- If you go to obedience classes, your dog will be able to socialise with other dogs and people in a controlled situation. This can help if your dog is timid or aggressive. Small group classes provide the best opportunity for learning and socialisation.
- Training in a group will also teach the dog to follow command despite distraction. Otherwise you may find that your dog ignores your commands as soon as it sees another dog, even if it has had individual obedience lessons.
- Choose an experienced instructor when starting obedience training with your pup. It is preferable to keep the same instructor to ensure that you receive consistent advice.
- Puppies are social animals, and respond well to mild corrections and lots of praise. Harsh training methods are unnecessary. Food rewards can sometimes be useful to help motivate a pup, but should not be used excessively or exclusively.
- Before 4 months of age you can begin some basic training at home. If your pup is coming towards you, use the command "come" and the puppy's name. Praise it when it gets to you (NEVER punish the pup when it comes to you, no matter how long it takes). If the pup is about to sit down use the command "sit", the praise it when it sits. If the pup is following you, use the command "heel". After a while the pup will start to understand what the words mean.
- The pup should get used to wearing a collar. Put the collar on for a little while and play with the pup to distract. When the pup is used to the collar, you can start to train it to walk on a leash. Attach the leash to the collar and let the pup drag the lead around under supervision. Practice calling the pup towards you, and when it is used to the lead, try picking up the end of the lead and calling the pup as you walk along. Avoid pulling hard on the lead, instead pat your leg and call the pup to get it to follow you.
- Choke or check chain collars should not be used on pups less than approx 16 weeks old. They should only be used under the supervision of an experienced instructor to ensure they are used correctly.

****This Puppy Behaviour leaflet has been re-produced from the "Puppy Behaviour" booklet by Dr Heather Barrett (Bsc, B.V.M.S., M.A.C.V.S.) and Garth Jennens (M.Soc Sci).