

Puppy Training

- Puppy training is an important step toward a lifetime of good behavior.
- Puppies respond better to positive reinforcement than punishment.
- Puppies should always be supervised or should be kenneled when you are away.
- Training should be consistent and involve everyone in the family.
- It's important for puppies to be socialized around other people and other pets, but consult your veterinarian before exposing your puppy to other dogs.
- Puppy kindergarten is a good way to socialize your puppy while having access to a training expert for guidance.

Why Is Puppy Training Important?

Like children, puppies need to learn the appropriate behavior for living in a household and interacting with others. Puppies also seek positive reinforcement and are willing and able to learn.

Unfortunately, many puppies grow into dogs that are eventually surrendered to shelters because of behavior problems. In most cases, it's not the dog's fault. It's simply because he or she did not receive proper training.

Proper puppy training early on will help you avoid bumps in the road and lead to a better relationship with your dog in the years ahead.

What Should I Know About Puppy Training?

There are several basic rules of puppy training that will lead to a more rewarding experience for everyone involved:

- **Avoid punishment.** You should never spank or yell at a puppy, yank at a puppy's collar, or rub a puppy's nose in urine or feces. Punishment may not only weaken a puppy's trust in people, but also lead to aggression, fear biting, and submissive urination. If the puppy has an accident, simply say, "no" in a firm voice, and take him or her
- **Reward good behavior.** Puppies respond best to positive reinforcement. Reward good behavior with a piece of kibble, a pat on the head, or praise.
- **Be consistent.** When you are training the puppy, make sure a consistent command or hand signal is used by everyone in the family. If, for example, one family member says "here" and another says "come," the inconsistency will confuse the puppy. Consistency will make it easier for the puppy to understand what you are asking for.
- **Puppies should always be supervised.** Until your puppy is trained, he or she should be supervised at all times or placed in a kennel or crate when you are away. This will reduce accidents in the house and keep your puppy from chewing on or swallowing items that could be dangerous.
- **Nothing is free.** Make your puppy work for what he or she wants. Before feeding, or giving a toy, ask your puppy to respond to a command, such as "sit." Once you receive an appropriate response, praise the puppy and give him or her the food or toy.
- **Keep training sessions short.** Like children, puppies have short attention spans. Training sessions at home should only last for about 10 or 15 minutes. A short daily training session is more effective than a long weekly one.
- **Make sure your puppy is comfortable being handled.** Whenever possible, you should handle your puppy's paws, ears, mouth, and body. When your puppy is tolerant of being handled, it will

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be easier for you to trim nails, brush teeth, clean ears, and give medications. It will also make for less stressful trips to the groomer and veterinary clinic.

- **Expose your puppy to other people and pets.** The earlier your puppy is introduced to other people, the more comfortable he or she will feel around them, and the less likely he or she will be to exhibit shy behavior. Exposure to other pets is important, too, but be careful not to take your puppy to a dog park or to visit neighborhood dogs until he or she has been vaccinated. Consult your veterinarian to find out when your puppy is ready to be around other dogs.
- **Provide your puppy with appropriate chew toys.** When your puppy starts teething, he or she may want to chew on furniture, clothing, hands, and other inappropriate items. Simply say “no,” without yelling or shouting, and give the puppy something more appropriate to chew on. Avoid giving your puppy a sock or other article of clothing to chew. These items may be inadvertently swallowed, and may also give the puppy the message that it’s okay to chew on clothing. Consult your veterinarian about which chew toys are safest.

Why Should I Consider Attending Puppy Kindergarten?

Attending a puppy training class led by a training specialist has a number of advantages. First, you will have an expert to provide guidance and answer questions or concerns that you may have. Second, it will give your puppy an opportunity for socialization, both with other puppies and with other children and adults.

Puppy kindergarten classes are offered by many veterinary clinics, dog training facilities, and pet supply stores. It’s important to find a course that emphasizes positive reinforcement rather than punishment. Ask your veterinarian for recommendations on the best training courses in your area. Among other things, these classes should cover:

- Basic commands such as sit, down, stay, and come
- Crate training and housebreaking tips
- Leash walking

Reputable training facilities will require your puppy to be vaccinated before attending the course to ensure that puppies aren’t exposed to diseases while their immune systems are still developing. Some vaccinations need to be given at least 10 to 14 days before the class begins in order to protect your puppy. Consult your veterinarian about when your puppy will be ready to attend class.