

Welcome to Puppy Class!

Disclaimer: These training suggestions are for dogs that are in good health. If a dog suffers from an illness or injury, you should always discuss with your dog's capabilities with your veterinarian.



“Walk your dog on a leash...”

The dog's need to please may be instinctual. Dog evolution is so closely related to humans that dogs can read our faces better than any other species on earth. Dogs are second only to human infants in their ability to read people. A dog can detect dilating pupils, blood sugar levels, the flare of a nostril or the upturned corner of a human eye in the instant that a human is having the thought that causes their face to subconsciously distort and just as instantly the dog will react accordingly. Dogs watch humans very closely at all times because they're genetically programmed to do so. Dogs associate facial expressions with our behavior toward them. Their human smiles, they get a bone. Their human frowns, they get yelled at or have their nose is rubbed in the carpet.

- **Here is the first part of your most important lesson: your dogs' behavior is instinctually driven.** Chewing, chasing, protecting territory, vying for dominance, begging, dancing for you...name it, good or bad and the behavior always comes down to its instinct to survive.
- **Now, here is the second part of your most important lesson: dogs learn through association.** Dogs associate a stimulus with an outcome. When the dog is behaving well we don't think about what is going on in their brains because we're happy, right? Analyzing good behavior though will help you understand and prevent or stop bad behavior.

Ex: A dog politely steps aside when their owner says, “excuse me.” How did this begin and how can you encourage it to continue? The dog constantly followed the owner around the house and the owner subconsciously began gently pushing the dog out of the way while simultaneously saying, “excuse me” and then followed up with a pat on the head or a smile. The dog began to associate these little pleasantries with “excuse me” and it motivated him to step aside. Before the owner even recognized what was happening, they had conditioned their dog to understand a simple command.

- **And that is the third most important lesson you will take away from Puppy Class: you can use the dog's associative skills to condition his behavior.** Begin conditioning your puppy now and it *will be* your best friend.

Here is a mental exercise for you: think about these questions and develop your own ideas and solutions about instinctual behavior and association, then consider how you can use conditioning to motivate behavioral change. The dog barks at strangers or visitors. The dog growls or chases cats, cars, rabbits, mail carriers, children, other dogs...The dog digs in the trash. The dog rolls in gross stuff. The dog humps your leg. The dog begs for your food. The dog chews your furniture, shoes, eyeglasses, ink pens or anything wood, metal or plastic—the dog chews everything. The dog pees on the carpet, behind the couch, on your bed...Now think about the problems you are having with your dog and step-by-step develop a plan to modify your dog's behavior.

- **Spaying or neutering has so many health benefits that it is impossible to make a case against it.** Reproductive maturity is frequently the cause of behavioral problems such as territorial aggression and running away. The sooner your dog is fixed, the less likely it will develop bad habits, such as marking territory inside your home.
- **Your dog should be on a heartworm preventative**, many of these medicines also help prevent flea infestations.
- **Socialization will keep your puppy on the right path.** The first year is key to socialization. Think of the process as a window of opportunity to introduce your dog to the world. The first year should be a happy adventure for both owner and pup. You should take your dog with you everywhere and even create learning opportunities when they are not readily available, such as visiting public parks.
- **Socializing to children and people. The biggest problem an adult dog faces is whether or**

not it can accept new people—especially children. Begin making introductions now.

Scruff correction: Gently pick up the puppy by the loose skin on the back of the neck (this area is called the scruff of the neck) and give a little shake (don't shake his brains out!). The whole time you are scruffing you should be simultaneously, sternly, yet calmly saying, 'No, no.' The key is to correlate the word 'No' with the physical correction so that your dog associates 'No' with the correction. Soon, you will simply be able to say 'No' and get the desired response. Do not overuse the scruff correction.

Sometimes it is easier to alter the environment as opposed to modifying your dog's behavior. Digging in the kitchen trashcan when you are gone may simply be too tempting. You can try mouse-traps but seriously, getting a trashcan with a lid is the quickest, easiest solution.

Don't send mixed signals. Puppies are easily confused when their owners aren't clear about what they want. Ex: **Puppy Biting**, everyone complains about a puppy's sharp little teeth but we inadvertently send mixed signals by wrestling with the puppy. Solution: When the puppy starts to chew on you, **1.** use the scruff correction and **2.** remove the stimulus (don't offer her your hand), **3.** then distract your puppy with a toy that it is allowed to chew. **4.** Praise her calmly when she doesn't chew and soon she will associate the comfort of praise and petting with not chewing.

Remember that your dog can read you like a book? You can use this wonderful attribute to your advantage. When your puppy bites and nips at your hands jerk your hand away very quickly, like you've just touched fire and cry out 'Ouch!'. It may sound silly to ham it up like this for a dog but their reaction can be fascinating. Most dogs, especially mature ones, will immediately stop biting. Some dogs will sniff, lick and inspect the hand with concern. It's true that it isn't natural for a dog to "bite the hand that feeds it". It does however want play and has to be taught what kind of play is acceptable. Speaking of which, your dog should take food from your hand gently. If he bites you while taking a treat, pull your hand back and cry 'Ouch!'. He will learn to be more gentle.

Puppies bite and nip and wrestle with their littermates all day long. Roughhousing is a game for puppies but it is also how they learn not to injure each other. If a puppy bites another puppy too hard, the injured pup will yelp. That loud yelp informs the aggressor that it must adjust the strength of its bite. When you yell out 'Ouch!', you are pretending to be the injured puppy and teaching your dog not to bite so hard. This is actually a step in 'soft mouth retrieval', the method for teaching hunting dogs to not bite into the dead animals they are retrieving.

Since we are talking conditioning, we should talk about using your puppy's normal actions in order to train. One of our favorite commands is 'Hup-up' meaning 'jump up so that we don't have to pick you up and put you on the sofa'. We realized that the puppies will put their feet up on high surfaces, sofa, chairs, stairs, beds. If this is acceptable, then when the feet go up, we say, 'Hup-up' and praise the dog. Sometimes we pat the surface and say 'Hup-up' and then either put the dogs' feet on the sofa or pat the sofa encouragingly until the puppies actually do put their feet up or jump on onto the sofa so they can sit on our laps while we watch television. This command can be very helpful if the dog is big and needs to go for a ride in the truck or be placed on the vet's table. And it all started with the puppy's normal actions.

Walk you dog on a leash from now until forever. Whether he does it 'correctly' or not, you'd be amazed at how difficult it is to get an older dog to simply walk while on a leash. Besides, leashes are required in most towns, it's polite and responsible and it ensures safety of both people and animals. This is a crazy simple fix to lots of problems yet lots of folks resist using leashes because they expect their dog to walk with them everywhere they go and to automatically respect the boundaries of the yard. Sure lots of dogs develop this ability but one of the easiest ways to condition a dog to walk with you closely is to condition it to stick with you on walks by training the dog to heel on leash. If your dog is dragging you while on leash it means he hasn't learned to respect the boundary of the



“Roughhousing is a game for puppies...”

leash and he isn't prepared to walk with you off-leash. Keep in mind that the best trained dogs in the world, military, police, search and rescue, service dogs, etc., spend a great deal of time on-leash.

Crate Training: Crate training is the first step to easy housetraining. Crate training is well worth the effort—even though the process might drive you crazy for a few days. Start your dog out in an appropriately sized crate. We see used crates at flea markets all the time. If you purchase a used crate wash it thoroughly with bleach to kill viruses/bacteria, then rinse well. We prefer the closed-wall crate as opposed to the type with open bars. The closed-wall crate (with ventilation holes) more closely simulate a dog's natural den, comfy and safe without distractions.

Should you put a towel in the bottom of the crate? Some people do so for added comfort but the towel may stimulate the dog to urinate or defecate. See what works best for you. Always clean up any messes as quickly as possible, just like the momma dog would.

Placing the crate may depend on the dog's reaction. Some dogs are raised in crates and look forward to seeing their little den. Other dogs have never seen a crate and will balk at being put inside one. These dogs may protest loudly. If you have a loud dog, put the crate in room that is far away from your bedroom. Be sure the space is safe, well-ventilated and is a comfortable temperature. We usually start out in the garage. The dog may bark and cry itself to sleep each night but by the end of the week, you should have more positive reaction from your crated dog. Once the dog becomes peaceful inside his crate, then you can move the crate to any room you choose.

"You leave your dog in its crate how long?!" Yes, you would be shocked at how long some people will leave their dog in its crate. Overnight is recommended and if you must you can leave him crated while you are at work. But after work, don't stop off and have dinner, you should go home immediately and let the dog out. We won't give you a specific time limit but it is cruel to force your dog to spend his life inside a crate.

- **Housetraining and crate training begins as soon as you get your puppy.** Consistency, is key in housetraining; you must stick to the schedule. Wake up at the same time and at night put puppy in crate at the same time, develop this routine. When you wake up, do what you want for 5-10 minutes and then take the puppy out of her crate, put on her collar and leash (even if you are going to carry her outside), all the time you're moving outside say a key word like, 'Outside, outside, outside', repeatedly until the puppy has reached the outside spot where she will do her business. Then praise the dog for being outside. When your puppy does its business, praise it for that too. You should watch over your puppy while outside during the housetraining process—this will make the dog relaxed enough to potty while in front of you. You will be able to praise it for good behavior, it will associate pottying with praise and it will prevent the puppy from hiding behind the couch to potty. If you punish a puppy for accidents, it will associate the punishment with pottying and it will avoid pottying in front of you—it will hide when it has to potty.
- Maintain a daily log, record the times of day that you take your dog outside and what it did. Keep track of the times that your dog urinated or defecated. After about three days, review the journal, noting the times that the dog actually did his business—these are the times that you need to take your dog outside.

The Magic Moment—Eureka! The door!

There is a time when your dog is ready to actually grasp the housetraining process. BUT you can't wait until that time and then introduce the process; you must begin the process of housetraining as soon as you get your puppy. It is a combination of 1. physical maturity, 2. mental maturity and 3. all the work you've put into training that will lead to the breakthrough moment. Each dog is different and that moment comes at different times. On one hand, you can think of it as a switch being flipped but on the other hand, your dog will still have accidents and will continue to test your pa-



"...housetraining is also a natural and happy process."

tience. The difference is that these 'accidents' will truly be accidents or mistakes. We want you to understand that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

A young puppy doesn't have the cognitive ability to define space. It will happily wander around a room until one day, it realizes where the door is at. When your puppy is physically mature enough to walk to the door, then you know it is old enough to be housetrained. It is about this time that you will also notice that your dog will have more control over urination, the dog's bladder is growing too. Remember, the mother of a young litter will allow the puppies to potty in the den but as soon as the puppies are physically mature, the mother then moves the puppy outside of the den to potty. We're not telling you to accept a puppy pottying in your home, we're saying that until about three to five months of age, accidents are going to happen because the pup isn't mature enough yet to figure out the process. So clean up the accident calmly and quickly.

If you follow your schedule, there will come a day between **four to six months** when you say 'outside' and the dog will start going to the door. This is when you know your dog is physically capable of housetraining. Actually, nothing should change in your routine at this point, we just don't want you to set your expectations too high for a dog that is too young. High expectations can cause stress and anger—two things that can derail the housetraining process. You must always remain calm. Yelling at and punishing your puppy only has negative consequences.



"...comfy and safe..."

Housetraining can be compared to a baby taking its first steps, every day the baby builds strength and develops mentally until they are rolling over and then pulling up and then, at the baby's own pace, she then takes her first steps. It is a natural and happy process. Believe it or not, housetraining is also a natural and happy process.

Here are some hints to help you along the way: Keep your dog on solid flooring. Rugs and carpeting may simulate grass and excite the dog. Despite repeated cleaning, carpeting retains odors which stimulate the dog and may cause him to have accidents. Re-

member the dog has a much stronger olfactory center than humans. Never use ammonia products to clean up accidents.

Block off part of the house with a puppy gate, confine your dog to the room you are in or to just one or two rooms. We actually built a puppy gate blocking off the back part of our home. The gate has a hinge so we can easily go in and out and we are no longer constantly stepping over the annoying baby gate. The gate is a permanent fixture because honestly, even an adult dog never needs unsupervised access to the whole house.

Umbilical Cording: This is an 'old school' method for quick housetraining but it isn't for everyone. Using a rope or a thin leash, tie the dog to your belt loop. This way the dog is always within sight and you'll be keenly aware of its' movements. You will know when the dog needs to potty. At night you may choose a slightly longer leash that you can tie to the bedpost. The leash should be long enough that the dog can sleep comfortably but when it needs to potty, it will tug and pull enough trying to position itself to defecate that the movements will wake you. Remember, if your dog is pottying at night, you need to adjust the feeding/watering schedule.

Have we told you yet to never punish a dog for having an accident, it will cause them to hide from you when they potty. We cannot repeat this enough—don't punish your dog for pottying.

Dogs tend to defecate soon after eating. Feed your dog on a schedule and be prepared to walk your dog afterwards. Don't leave the food bowl out all day. Treats and human food can irritate the dog's bowel.

Once your puppy is walking to the door when you say 'outside', what happens next? Well, you can now raise your expectation level but you need to closely evaluate your behavior and

schedule. Do not leave the dog unattended. Most accidents happen while you are not paying attention. Believe it or not, your dog will send out strong signals when it needs to potty. They will start to scurry around, sniffing the ground and hunching or squatting. When you see these signs, say 'outside outside' and take your dog outside. What happens if you catch your dog in the act of potty-ing inside the house? Remain calm! Don't yell. You must act quickly by saying 'outside' and scooting your dog out-of-doors. Praise your dog when it is outside, even if it actually finished potty-ing inside.

Sometimes when your puppy has accidents, it is because you aren't paying attention to it. Granted you can't spend every moment watching the puppy but remember that all the energy that you put into a dog during its first year will be repaid to you twofold—we can't emphasize this point enough.

The reason your dog learns to go to the door is because they have associated the great out-doors with all the adventure that it entails, like chasing bugs, playing, romping in the grass, exercise—good times! Your dog wants to go outside. He will begin telling you when he wants to go outside. Some dogs silently sit next to the door, some dogs stand at the door, some dogs scratch, some dogs bark. Whatever way your dog uses to tell you that she wants to go outside, you must encourage it. Praise your dog for going to the door and then praise your dog when once it is outside. Never say 'no' to your dog when it tells you that it wants to go outside. Yes, there are exceptions to this rule too but during the first year, while you are housetraining, you need to instill the act of being outside and going outside with positive reinforcement.

Yes, once your dog potties outside you may give it a small treat, small enough that it won't stimulate the bowel. Make it very special that they don't get all the time, like cut up chicken or hot dog but be sure your dog has done a good job before you reward it!

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every dog should have a good home and every home should have a good dog

During the first year: take your dog on car rides, just around the block is fine. Clip his nails. Teach him tricks to help build his focus and concentration. Visit the groomer. Visit a park. Visit lots of parks.

Visit Grandma.

Go places, do things and have fun!

If you have a tip that worked exceptionally well for you, please let us know so that we can pass it along to everyone. Remember this is free advice that we pass out to new puppy owners—your tip could be the key to a puppy having a very successful life in the human world!

