

Your New Puppy

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Introduction

A quick critical information list:

- * Never hit a young puppy
- * Praise exuberantly.
- * Be consistent with your dog, rather than harsh
- * Don't allow biting, but only correct after 14 weeks (yelp and replace hand with toy before that)
- * Never correct a dog after the fact.
- * Dogs need new experiences with other people, dogs and places, when very young to get socialized.
- * Praise exuberantly
- * Dogs need successes and less correction before full maturity so they can develop confidence.
- * Train your dog in order to establish communication and give it purpose, and make it tolerable
- * Dogs need to be in a dominance hierarchy with everyone; if you are not above your dog, you will be below it.
- * Praise exuberantly.
- * Dominance over a dog is achieved with leadership, never harshness

Some books that may help:

Benjamin, Carol Lea. *Mother Knows Best: The Natural Way To Train Your Dog*. Howell Book House, New York. 1985 ISBN 0-87605-666-4. \$15.95
hardcover.

She uses praise, contact, play and toys to motivate puppies, but she does not recommend food training a young puppy. She does recommend crate training and she also recommends sleeping in the same room with the puppy. She provides methods to teach no, OK, good dog, bad dog, sit stay heel, come, down, stand, go, enough, over, out, cookie, speak, take it, wait and off to puppies. She talks about canine language and talks some about mental games you can play with your dog such as mirror games, and copying your dog and having him copy you, chase games and even playing rough with your puppy. Most training methods rely on the foundational relationship between an owner and his dog, and this book provides some ideas on establishing that relationship while the puppy is still young.

Brahms, Ann and Paul. *Puppy Ed.* Ballantine Books. 1981.
ISBN:0-345-33512-0 (paperback).

Describes how to start teaching your puppy commands. This is a thoughtful book that discusses in practical detail what you can and cannot expect to do with your puppy in training it. They stress that by expecting and improving good behavior from the start, later, more formal training goes much easier.

Monks of New Skete, The. *The Art of Raising a Puppy*. Little, Brown and Company (1991). ISBN: 0-316-57839-8 (hardback).

The monks of New Skete have put together an excellent book that discusses puppy development and the things that should be done at the appropriate stages and why. First they follow a newborn litter through its various stages of development and at each stage they discuss what is happening. They discuss testing puppies' temperaments and what you want to look for, under which circumstances. They discuss briefly dog breeds, and how to find reputable breeders. They then launch into a series of useful chapters: housebreaking, preliminary obedience, laying the foundations of training, understanding (reading) your dog, how to become the pack leader, basic training, discipline, and general care. A good bibliography is provided at the back.

Randolph, Elizabeth. *How to Help Your Puppy Grow Up to be a Wonderful Dog*. ISBN 0-449-21503-2.

The April 1993 edition of *Dog Fancy* is a "puppy primer" and it contains articles on how to choose a breeder, name your puppy, make housetraining easy, introduce grooming and solve basic puppy problems. It works well in conjunction with the Monk and Benjamin books.

Age to Separate from Litter

Puppies should not be separated from their mother and littermates before 8 weeks of age. Many recommend 10 weeks minimum. This is related to physical considerations such as weaning and psychological considerations such as the puppy's readiness to leave the litter.

Many breeders believe it is best to NOT have two puppies together. They tend to bond to each other and not to you and that can cause serious problems when it comes time to train them. Having two puppies needing housetraining at the same time can make that process go on for much longer. This implies that you would not introduce a second dog before the other six months old and properly trained.

There are always exceptions, of course, and there are many happy dogs that were littermates or otherwise puppies together out there

Puppy-Proofing Your Home

You should consider that a puppy has an absolute right to chew whatever they can get at in your absence. You must put the puppy where either it cannot do any damage, or you do not care about the possible damage. Puppies can eat kitchen cabinets, destroy furniture, chew on carpet, and damage a wide variety of other things. Besides the destruction, the puppy may well injure itself, even seriously.

A good solution to this is a crate. A crate is any container, made of wire mesh or plastic, that will hold the puppy comfortably, with enough room to stand and curl up and sleep, but not too much that it can eliminate in one corner. See the section on housetraining below. Other solutions include fencing off part of the house, say the kitchen or garage or building an outside run. Be sure the area is puppy-proofed.

Please put your pup in an environment it can't destroy. Puppies are too immature to handle temptations. Depending on the breed, most dogs begin to gain the maturity to handle short stints with mild temptations when they're about 6 months old. Consider the analogy with a baby, where you keep it in a crib, stroller, or pen if you are not holding it.

It is essential to puppy-proof your home. You should think of it in the same way as child-proofing your house but be more thorough about it. Puppies are smaller and more active than babies and have sharp teeth and claws. Things of especial concern are electric wires. If you can get through the puppy stages without having your pup get a shock from chewing a wire you are doing a great job! When puppy proofing your home, get down on your hands and knees (or lower if possible) and consider things from this angle. What looks enticing, what is breakable, what is sharp, etc. The most important things are watching the puppy and, of course, crating it or otherwise restraining it when you can't watch it.

Another step in puppy proofing is house proofing the puppy. Teach it what is and isn't chewable. The single most effective way to do this is by having a ready supply of chewable items on hand. When the puppy starts to chew on an unacceptable item (be it a chair, rug, or human hand), remove the item from the puppy's mouth with a stern, "NO!" and replace it with a chew toy and praise the puppy for playing with the toy. If you are consistent about this, the puppy will get the idea that only the things you give it are to be chewed on! Don't stint on the praise, and keep the "No!" to a single calm, sharp noise -- don't yell or scream the word.

There are some products that can help make items unpalatable and thus aid in your training. Bitter Apple and Bitter Orange (available at most pet stores) impart a bitter taste to many things without staining, etc. You should not depend on these products to keep your puppy safe, but use them as a training aid.

A short checklist:

- * Breakables up out of reach
 - * All wiring and cords put out of reach behind furniture, or encased in hard plastic flexible tubing (available at hardware stores, can be cut to size) to slow puppy down
 - * Anything small enough to be swallowed (pennies, bounce balls, shoelaces, bits of paper, socks, nuts, bolts, wire) removed from the floor
 - * Block access behind furniture wherever possible
 - * Put children's toys and stuffed animals away
-

Puppies and Small Children

Keep puppies and very small children apart or under close supervision. Small children do not understand the need for keeping fingers out of puppies' eyes or refraining from pulling painfully on their tails, among other problems. So keep children 6 years or so and younger away from the puppy until it is grown, for the safety of the puppy.

Teach your children how to approach a puppy or dog, to prevent being jumped on. They should understand that they should put out their hands below the pup's chin, to keep it from jumping at a hand above its head. They should not scream or run away, as the puppy will then chase the child.

There are several books dealing with children and dogs. Try Jack and Colleen McDaniel's *Pooches and Small Fry*, published by Doral Publishing, 800-633-5385. This book is full of good suggestions for teaching both children and dogs how to behave with one another.

Acclimatization and Socialization

Accustom your puppy to many things at a young age. Baths, brushing, clipping nails, cleaning ears, having teeth examined, and so on. Taking the time to make these things matter of fact and pleasant for your puppy will save you a world of time and trouble later in its life.

For example, every evening before the dog eats (but after you have put its bowl down), check its ears by peeking in the ear and touching it with your fingers. Do this every evening until the dog stops fussing about it. Continue to do it and you'll always know if your dog's ears are okay.

Brushing is important, especially for double coated or long-haired dogs when they begin to shed. A little effort now to get your puppy to enjoy brushing will save you a lot of trouble later when it begins to shed and shed and shed...

During your puppy's first year, it is very important that it be exposed to a variety of social situations. After the puppy has had all its shots, carefully expose it to the outside world. Take it to different places: parks, shopping centers, schools, different neighborhoods, dog shows, obedience classes--just about anywhere you can think of that would be different for a little puppy. If the puppy seems afraid, then let it explore by itself. Encourage the puppy, but be firm, not coaxing. If you want to take the pup in an elevator, let it try it on its own, but firmly insist that it have the experience. Your favorite dog food and supply store (unless it's a pet store) is a good place; dog shows are another. You want the pup to learn about the world so that it doesn't react fearfully to new situations when it is an adult. You also want it to learn that you will not ask it to do anything dangerous or harmful. Socializing your dog can be much fun for you and the dog!

Do not commit the classic mistake made by many owners when their dogs exhibit fear or aggression on meeting strangers. DO NOT "soothe" them, or say things like "easy, boy/girl," "it's OK..." This serves as REINFORCEMENT and ENCOURAGES the fear or growling! Instead, say "no!" sharply and praise it WHEN IT STOPS. Praise it even more when it allows its head to be petted. If it starts growling or backing up again, say "no!" Be a little more gentle with the "no" if the dog exhibits fear, but do be firm. With a growling dog, be much more emphatic and stern with your "no!"

If you are planning to attend a puppy class (and you should, they are not expensive) ask the instructor about her/his views before you sign up. If socialization is not part of the class, look elsewhere.

The Art of Raising a Puppy has many valuable tips and interesting points on the subject of socializing puppies.

Don't Be Surprised When .

Your puppy doesn't seem to pick up the idea of whining at or going to the door to tell you it needs to go to the bathroom. Many puppies do not begin this behavior until they are four or five months old.

Your puppy does not seem to pick its name up quickly. Sometimes it takes several weeks before you consistently get a reaction when you say its name. (Be careful not to use its name in a negative sense! Clap or shout instead.)

Your puppy does not seem to be particularly happy with verbal praise. You need to pair verbal praise with physical praise for a few months before your puppy understands and appreciates verbal praise.

Your puppy falls asleep in the middle of some other activity. Puppies need lots of sleep but since they are easily distracted, they sometimes forget to go to sleep and so will fall asleep at bizarre times: while eating, chewing, or even running.

Your puppy twitches while sleeping. This indicates healthy neural development. Twitching will be most pronounced for the first few months of the puppy's life, and slowly diminish thereafter. There are many adult dogs that continue some twitching. Expect muffled woofs and snuffling noises, too.

Your puppy hiccups. Many puppies hiccup. The only thing to do is wait for them to pass. Don't worry about it, they will outgrow it.

Puppy Biting

Courtesy of Joel Walton, jwalton@access.digex.net:

If you watch a litter of puppies playing, you will notice that they spend much of their time biting and grabbing each other with their mouths. This is normal puppy behavior. When you take a puppy from the litter and into your home, the puppy will play bite and mouth you. This is normal behavior, but needs to be modified so you and the puppy will be happy.

The first thing to teach your new puppy is that human flesh is much more sensitive than other puppies and that it really hurts us when they bite. This is called bite inhibition. A puppy has very sharp teeth and a weak jaw. This means that the puppy can cause you to be uncomfortable when mouthing or puppy biting you, but can not cause severe damage. An adult dog has duller teeth and a powerful jaw. This means that an adult dog can cause significant damage when biting. **ANY DOG WILL BITE GIVEN THE RIGHT OR WRONG CIRCUMSTANCES!** If a small child falls on your adult dog and sticks a finger in the dog's eye, you should not be surprised if the dog bites. If you do a good job teaching your puppy bite inhibition, you should get a grab and release without damage. If you don't, you may get a hard bite with significant damage.

It is simple to teach a puppy bite inhibition. Every time the puppy touches you with its teeth, say "OUCH!" in a harsh tone of voice. This will probably not stop the puppy from mouthing, but over time should result in softer and gentler puppy biting.

The commands necessary to teach a puppy NOT to mouth, are easy and fun. Hold a small handful of the puppy's dry food, say "take it" in a sweet tone of voice, and give the puppy one piece of food. Then close the rest of the food in your hand and say "off" in that same sweet tone of voice. When the puppy has not touched your hand for 3 to 5 seconds, say "take it" and give the puppy one piece of food. We are teaching the puppy that "off" means not to touch. You should do this with the puppy before every meal for at least 5 minutes.

After a couple of weeks of the above training, here is how you are going to handle puppy biting or mouthing:

Unexpected mouthing (you don't know the puppy is going to mouth, until you feel the puppy's teeth):
"OUCH!"

Expected mouthing (you see the puppy getting ready to mouth you):
You say "OFF" before the puppy can mouth you.

The puppy is mouthing you because of a desire to play.

You have to answer the question, "Do I have time to play with the puppy now?" If you do, then do "sit", "down", "stand" or other positive 'lure and reward' training. If the answer is "No, I don't have time for the puppy, right now." then you need to do a time out (crate, or otherwise confine the puppy, so the puppy can't continue to mouth you and get in trouble.

The above training methods have been modified from information that I learned from Dr Ian Dunbar in his puppy training seminars and from his excellent video 'Sirius Puppy Training' which is available by calling 510-658-8588.

Reinforcing Good Behavior

Puppies want attention. They will do a lot to get that attention -- even if it is negative! Thus, if you scold your puppy for doing things you don't want it to do, and ignore it when it is being good, you are reinforcing the wrong things. Ignore the bad things (or stop it without yelling or scolding) and enthusiastically praise it when it's doing what you want, even if it's as simple as sitting and looking at you, or quietly chewing one of its toys. This can be difficult to do, as it is essentially reversing all your normal reactions. But it is very important: you will wind up with a puppy that pays attention to you and is happy to do what you want, if it understands you.

Crying at Night

Your puppy wants to be with the rest of the "pack" at bedtime. This behavior is highly adaptive from the standpoint of dog behavior. When a puppy becomes separated from its pack it will whine, thereby allowing it to be found and returned to the rest of the group. This is why so many books on puppies and dog behavior strongly recommend that you allow your puppy/dog to sleep with you in your room to reduce the likelihood of crying at night.

Try moving the crate into your bedroom. If your puppy whines, first make sure it doesn't have to go outside to eliminate. This means getting up and taking it outside. If it whines again, or doesn't need to go outside, bang your hand on the crate door and say something like "NO, SLEEP" or "NO, QUIET". If the puppy continues to whine, try giving it a toy or chew toy and then simply ignore any continued whining. If you don't reinforce the whining by comforting it (other than to take it outside -- which is OK), it will eventually learn to settle down. Also, be sure to have a vigorous play session JUST BEFORE you are going to go to bed. This should poop it out and it will sleep much more soundly.

Alternatively, you can designate a spot for your puppy on the bedroom floor. Keep the door closed or put a leash on it to keep it close to the bed. When it whines or moves about, take it out to eliminate. Otherwise, as above, say "NO, SLEEP."

Puppies that cannot sleep in the bedroom for whatever reason may be comforted by a ticking clock nearby, and a t-shirt of yours from the laundry.

Health: Vaccinations and Worms

Newborn puppies receive immunization against diseases from colostrums contained in their mothers milk while nursing (assuming the bitch was properly vaccinated shortly before the breeding took place). Initially, during their first 24 hours of life, maternal antigens (passive immunity) are absorbed through the pups intestines which are very, very thin during those first few hours (this is why it is so important that puppies nurse from the mother during that critical time). After the colostrum ceases (a day or so later), the maternal antigens decline steadily

During this time, puppies cannot build up their own natural immunity because the passive immunity gets in the way. As the passive immunity gradually declines, the pup's immune system takes over. At this time, the pups should be given their first immunization shots so they can build up their own antibodies against them. However, there is no way to tell when passive immunity is gone. This is why pups should be given a shot every few weeks (2 - 3 weeks apart and a series of at LEAST three shots).

Picture a plot of antibody level versus time. Maternal antibody is steadily declining. You just don't know the rate. At some level, say X , protection from parvo is sufficient. Below X , protection may be less than effective against an infection. In general, vaccine antigen cannot stimulate the puppy's own immune system until the maternal antibody level is below X . Let's say it is $7X$. Here's the rub. The antibody level spends some time dropping from X to $.7X$. During this time, even if you vaccinated every day, you would (in this theoretical discussion) not be able to stimulate immunity. Yet you are below that level of maternal protection at which infection can be effectively fought off.

Thus the importance of giving several vaccinations at 2-4 week intervals until around 16-18 weeks. One maximizes the chance of catching the puppy's immune system as soon as it is ready to respond, minimizing the amount of time the puppy may be susceptible to infection.

IMPORTANT: The last shot should be given AFTER 16 weeks of age (4 months) to be SURE that dam's antibodies have not gotten in the way of the pup building up its own immunity (read the label of the vaccine!).

Up until 8 weeks or so, the shots should consist of Distemper, Measles, and CPI. After that, it should be DHLPP (Distemper, Hepatitis, Leptospirosis, Parainfluenza and Parvovirus). This is at minimum: you may need to add other vaccinations appropriate to your area, such as Lyme, Heartworm (actually a preventive medicine), Rabies (most places), and so on.

You should keep your puppy away from all strange dogs. If you know that a particular dog is current on its shots and not carrying disease, then go ahead and let your puppy socialize. The same holds true for people. Ask them to wash their hands before they play with your puppy. It can't hurt and it could save you a great deal of grief. As your puppy gets its shots, you can slowly add more and more exposure to its life. But keep in mind this is an infant and needs gentle care!

Worms can present a serious problem to puppy health. There is no good way to prevent puppies from having worms, for a variety of reasons. You should take your puppy in regularly for worm-testing. Worms can interfere with the puppy's growth if left unchecked. Since it is very common for puppies (even from the best breeder) to have worms from the dam's dormant worms, you must take care to have your puppy checked regularly when young.

Teething

Around 4 to 5 months of age, puppies will start to get their permanent teeth. There are several things you can do, both to ease the pain and control the chewing.

- * Make some chicken soup (low sodium variety or make it yourself) ice cubes and give them to the puppy
- * Soak a clean rag in water, wring it out and then freeze it (rolling it up helps) and give it to your puppy to chew on.
- * Soften the kibble a bit with water.
- * Discourage biting on your arm or hand for comfort

Puppies lose their teeth in a distinct pattern: first the small front teeth come out. Then the premolars just behind the canines. Then the molars in the back come out (and you'll see adult molars behind those erupting as well). Finally the canine teeth come out. Sometimes the adult canines erupt before the baby canines have come all the way out.

During this time, some discomfort, including bleeding gums is to be expected. Your puppy will want to chew more during this period of time, but it may also be too painful to do so (hence the suggestions above). You will probably find few if any of the teeth your puppy loses, as puppies typically swallow them.

Feeding Your Puppy

Premium pet food tends to have higher nutritional value. In particular, foods such as Science Diet, Eukanuba, Nature's Recipe. This means you can generally feed your dog a smaller amount of food. Also, they tend to be highly digestible which means that there is less waste to clean up in the yard. For these two reasons, many people feed their pets premium foods over grocery store foods. But the decision is yours and many healthy, happy dogs have been raised on plain Purina Dog Chow.

Feeding schedules

There are two methods you can use to feed your puppy: free feeding and scheduled feeding. Free feeding is when dry food is left out all day and the dog eats as it wishes. Scheduled feeding gives the dog food at set times of the day, and then takes it away after a period of time, such as a half hour. In most cases, you are best off feeding your puppy on a schedule. This better controls elimination when trying to housetrain. In addition, many dogs will overeat and become overweight on a free-feed schedule. But for other dogs, such as dogs with gastric problems or older dogs, frequent small meals may be better for them. If you are unsure, you may want to discuss your particular situation with your vet.

Dog food formulations

Read your labels, know your dog food products. There are different kinds of dog food out there. Some are formulated very precisely for different periods in a dog's life, and what is appropriate at one stage is not appropriate at another. Others are generically formulated and are supposed to be OK for any dog under any conditions. This means that they are formulated up to the growing puppy level. There is nothing wrong with either approach, unless the generically formulated dog food comes out with a "puppy food" version. These are packed even higher with extra nutrition, etc, than the puppy really needs, since the original formulation was already sufficient for the puppy.

If you are using the latter type of puppy food, many veterinarians and breeders (particularly of larger breeds) recommend that you NOT feed it for the first year as is recommended on the bags of food. They recommend that you feed puppy food ONLY for the first two months that you have the puppy at home and then switch to adult food. A good "rule of thumb" is to switch to adult food when the puppy has attained 90% of its growth (exactly when this is reached varies by breed and size). The nutritional formulation (especially the extra protein and calcium) can actually cause problems in puppy development. The problem tends to be with growth of bones vs. growth of endons, ligaments, and muscle. The growth rates are not the same and so the connections are strained and if the dog jumps wrong or is playing too hard, the connections can be torn.

This typically happens in the front shoulder and requires surgery and several months of confinement to repair. The added calcium in puppy food may deposit on puppies' bones causing limping. This is not a problem with the more closely formulated foods that have adult foods that are specifically labeled as unsuitable for puppies or lactating bitches.

Housetraining

If the dog makes a mess in the house - slap YOURSELF. You didn't do your job, and that's in no way the dog's fault. You let him down. If you can't keep supervise him without help, tether him to you. That way he can't "wander off"

--Mary Healy

The idea is to take advantage of a rule of dog behavior: a dog will not generally eliminate where it sleeps. Exceptions to this rule are:

- * Dogs that are in crates that are too large (so the dog can eliminate at one end and sleep at the other end).
- * Dogs that have lived in small cages in pet stores during critical phases of development and have had to learn to eliminate in the cage.
- * Dogs that have blankets or other soft, absorbent items in the crate with them
- * Dogs that are left for too long in the crate and cannot hold it any longer.

If the crate is too big (because you got an adult size one), you can partition the crate off with pegboard wired to the sides to make the crate the correct size, and move it back as your puppy grows. RC Steele also sells crate dividers.

To house train a dog using a crate, establish a schedule where the dog is either outside or in its crate when it feels the need to eliminate.

Using a mild correction (saying "No" in a firm, even tone) when the dog eliminates inside and exuberant, wild praise when the dog eliminates outside will eventually teach the dog that it is better to go outside than in. Some owners correct more severely inside, but this is extremely detrimental to the character of puppies. To make the dog notice the difference between eliminating inside and outside, you must praise more outside rather than correcting more inside.

The crate is crucial because the dog will "hold it" while in the crate, so it is likely to have to eliminate when it is taken out. Since you know when your dog has to eliminate, you take it out and it eliminates immediately, and is praised immediately. Doing this consistently is ideal reinforcement for the behavior of going out to eliminate. In addition, the dog is always supervised in the house, so the dog is always corrected for eliminating indoors. This strengthens the inhibition against eliminating inside.

In general, consistency is MUCH more important than severe corrections when training a dog. Before a dog understands what you want, severe corrections are not useful and can be quite DETRIMENTAL. Crating allows the owner to have total control over the dog in order to achieve consistency. Hopefully, this will prevent the need (and the desire) to use more severe corrections.

Housetraining is relatively simple with puppies. The most important thing to understand is that it takes time. Young puppies cannot wait to go to the bathroom. When they have to go, they have to go NOW.

Therefore, until they are about four or five months old, you can only encourage good behavior and try to prevent bad behavior. This is accomplished by the following regime:

- * First rule of housetraining: puppies have to go to the bathroom immediately upon waking up
- * Second rule of housetraining: puppies have to go to the bathroom immediately after eating

With these two rules goes the indisputable fact that until a puppy is housetrained, you **MUST** confine them or watch them to prevent accidents.

This means that the puppy should have a place to sleep where it cannot get out. Understand that a puppy cannot go all night without eliminating, so when it cries in the night, you must get up and take it out and wait until it goes. Then enthusiastically praise it and put it back to bed. In the morning, take it out again and let it do its stuff and praise it. After it is fed and after it wakes up at any point, take it out to eliminate.

Make it aware that this is not play time, but understand that puppies get pretty excited about things like grass and snails and leaves and forget what they came outside to do! Use the same spot each time if you can, the smell will help the puppy remember what it is to do, especially after 12 weeks of age.

To make life easier for you later on, use a key phrase just when the puppy starts to eliminate. Try "hurry up," "do it," or some similar phrase (pick one and use it). The puppy will begin to eliminate on command, and this can be especially useful later, such as making sure the dog eliminates before a car ride or a walk in the park.

Don't let the puppy loose in the house unless it has just gone outside, and/or you are watching it extremely closely for signs that it has to go. The key to housetraining is preventing accidents. If no accidents occur (ha!), then the dog never learns it has an option other than going outside. When you are at home, rather than leave the pup in the crate, you can "tether" the puppy to you -- use a six foot long leash and tie it to your belt. That way he can't get out of your site in the house and go in the wrong place.

For an idea of what this can involve, here is a hypothetical situation, assuming that you work and it takes you about 1/2 hour to get home from work:

- * 03:00 Let dog out, go to bathroom, return to crate
- * 07:00 Let dog out, go to bathroom
- * 07:15 Feed dog in crate, leave dog in crate
- * 08:00 Let dog out, go to bathroom, return to crate
- * 08:15 Owner goes to work
- * 11:30 Owner returns, lets dog out
- * 11:45 return dog to crate, owner returns to work
- * 17:00 Owner returns, lets dog out, go to bathroom, play (use tether if necessary)
- * 19:00 Feed dog in crate, leave in crate
- * 19:45 Let dog out, go to bathroom, play
- * 23:00 Let dog out, put dog in crate, go to bed

For a comprehensive discussion on housetraining dogs, see

Evans, Job Michael. *The Evan's Guide for Housetraining Your Dog*. ISBN: 0-87605-542-0

Evans was a monk at New Skete for some years. He discusses all aspects of housetraining puppies and dogs, giving many constructive solutions for all kinds of specific problems.

Benjamin's Mother Knows Best discusses paper training in more detail than is covered here

Preliminary Training

It is essential for every dog, no matter how big, or small, or whether you want to show, or work, or just play with, to have basic obedience training. If you want to go beyond the basics, that's great. But at least do the basics. One way to think of it is that without basic obedience, you and the dog don't speak the same language so how can you communicate? But with basic obedience, you can tell the dog what you want it to do and it will understand you and do it. Another way to think of it is getting your dog to be a Good Citizen: it doesn't jump on people, or run off, or indulge in other obnoxious behaviors -- because it knows what you expect of it.

Obedience classes

Find a good class and attend it. Many places have puppy kindergarten classes; this also helps socialize your puppy. Do 10 minute training sessions every day. And if you like it, keep going. You'd be amazed at all the activities you can do with your dog once you and the dog learn the basics! Training is fun and simple if approached that way. Enjoy it!

Around the house

Puppies can be started far earlier than many people believe. In fact, waiting until your pup is 6 months old to start training it is VERY late, and will be the cause of a LOT of problems. Start right away with basic behavior: use simple, sharp "no's" to discourage chewing hands or fingers, jumping on people, and many other behaviors that are cute in puppies but annoying when full grown. Don't be severe about it, and praise the puppy *immediately* when it stops. Tie the puppy down in sight of people eating dinner to prevent begging and nosing for food (if you put it in another room, it will feel ostracized and begin to cry). If your puppy bites and scratches you when playing, give it a toy instead. Give a good, loud *yelp* or *ouch* when the puppy bites you. This is how the other puppies in the litter let each other know when they have crossed the line, and it is a good way to get the puppy's attention and let it know that biting is not acceptable.

The other side of the coin is immediate praise when your puppy stops after a "no". You may feel like this is engaging in wild mood swings (and you may well get odd looks from other people); that's all right. You're making your wishes crystal clear to the puppy. It also needs positive as well as negative reinforcement: how would you respond if people only ever yelled at you when you did something wrong?

Introduce things in a fun way without "corrections" just to lay a foundation for formal training later on. Formal training, demanding or exact, is not appropriate at this stage. Instead, concentrate on general behavior, getting its attention, introducing things that will be important later in a fun way, and some other preliminary things, such as discouraging it from lagging or forging on the leash (but not making it heel!). In sum, lay a good foundation for its future development and behavior

Your New Puppy FAQ
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