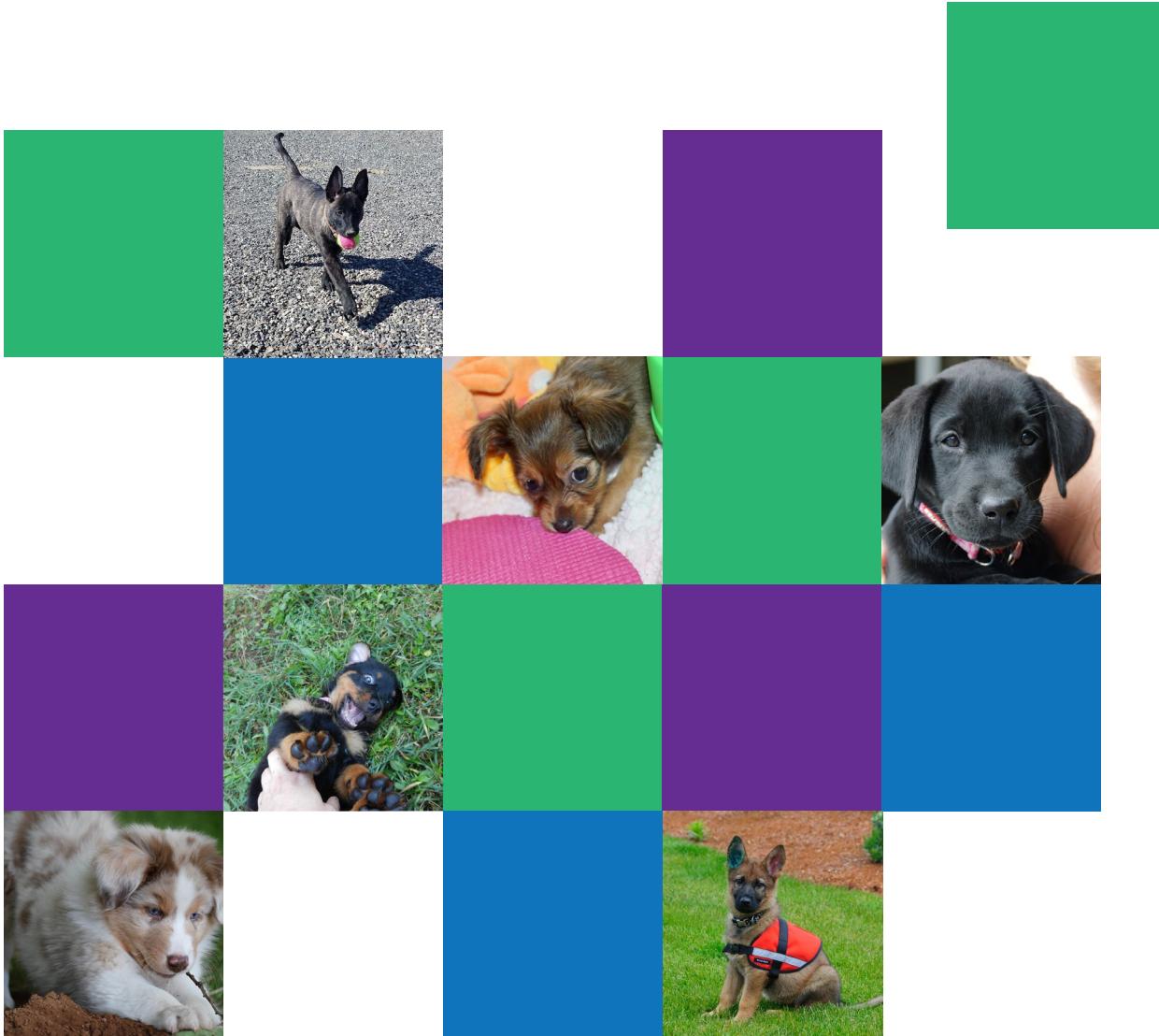


Growing Up FDSA[©]

Surviving Your Dog Sports Puppy!



A collection of “must have” articles from
the instructors of Fenzi Dog Sports Academy

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Growing Up FDSA

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Surviving Week One



To Own a Dog

Denise Fenzi | www.denisefenzi.com



Lisa Sparrow
©

Think about this for a minute. What it is to have a dog, another species, for a friend. A companion who will be there with you, day after day, asking little more than something to eat and a safe place to live.

I can take my dog's leash off and know that she'll return to me. She will chase critters, smell good smells, snack on fresh grass or play ball, but always with an eye on me. When she is done with her most current adventure, we'll go home together.

I can ask her to come to me and remain by my side, and she will choose to respond because it's our habit to cooperate with each other, even though she has freedom to choose otherwise. Yes, I trained these things but she does not follow my requests out of obedience. She follows because it works for both of us, to live in harmony together.

My friendship with this dog affects other people as well. Walkers, cyclists, and equestrians all smile as we pass by. My dog's joyful leaping and running infects other people with her happiness; a reminder of the pleasure of being curious and free. I am gratified to realize the power I have to make another living creature so joyful as she bounces and runs on our way out. Alone, it's just a walk, but with my dog it's our shared adventure.

And then I see people smile when we return. Now my dog walks quietly at my side, keeping me company. Everyone is happy to see our companionship. Things feel right in the world when a person is out with their dog, together with friendship.

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There is no comparison between a person walking alone and a person walking with a dog. I have all of the benefits of solitude; time to think and breathe, but none of the disadvantages of being alone. I am not alone.

Not all dogs are so beautifully balanced, but a lot of dogs are, or have the potential to be. How amazing this is, a species that is not considered rare or valuable – just a dog that we take for granted, willingly staying in our homes and by our side. Dogs are widely available; many people can have one, which means that you can go out and adopt or buy a friend. Think about that. You can adopt or buy a friend. Doesn't even matter if you're a nice person – you can still have a friend.

I put in some time to get to friendship, but that wasn't work. As with all relationships, part of the pleasure was finding ways to have both of our needs met. I enjoyed her youthful silliness as well as the training time that gently helped mold her maturity. And now, as my dog approaches her twelfth birthday, I marvel at the connection we've built with little more than the natural capacity of our species to fall in love with each other.

I can pet her soft fur, share a snack, or we can walk. I can work on my computer and she'll be found asleep under my desk. And when I go to bed for the night, I know she'll sleep nearby. She is always there, waiting for me, for the price of her name.

In exchange for a few meals, the occasional walk, and a hand on her head when she asks for attention, I have a friend. Day after day, that's all it takes for my dog, a different species, to choose me. An animal living contentedly in my home and giving back to me in ways too numerous to count. A bit of a miracle, really.

If everyone had a dog for a friend – not because they thought they should get a dog, or to do dog sports, or to guard the house, or because families have dogs – if people got a dog for a friend, and then learned to treat that dog as a friend, the world would be a very different place. A kinder, warmer and better place.

What follows in this book is a compilation of articles to help you find friendship with your new puppy - a gift from Fenzi Dog Sports Academy (FDSA) and all of the participating instructors. You may share this book as you wish with others who may benefit; we ask only that you retain the author's name for any article that you choose to share, and that you identify the source of the article or materials as the "Growing Up FDSA" e-book, published by Fenzi Dog Sports Academy Publishing.

Read through the articles and ask yourself...does this make sense for your situation? How might you integrate what you read here with what you already know or believe to be true?

What you do next; that is up to you. There is no single "right" way to raise a puppy. Even within FDSA and our staff you will find lively discussion about what is "best" - not all of the instructors will agree with each other and that's okay! Indeed, our belief at FDSA is that our diversity within common parameters is a benefit which allows us to grow as trainers and dog lovers.

If you find yourself uncomfortable with new information, don't throw it away! Give yourself a little time to consider...might it be worth re-examining long held beliefs? Find a path, a route, that allows you to reach the level of friendship and communication with your dog that works best for your team. Find your way.

We hope this book helps you to do just that.

And on a personal note, I'd like to thank each of the contributing authors. I feel privileged to spend my time working with such bright, compassionate and ultimately human individuals.

Bringing a Puppy Home to Your Multi-Dog Household

Loretta Mueller | www.fulltiltagility.com



© Leigh Smith

When you have other dogs, it can be tough knowing just what to do when you bring home a new puppy. Some older dogs LOVE puppies, but many think they are annoying and emotionally draining. I am going to discuss the things I learned to do, after much trial and error, to help integrate a new puppy in with your older dogs.

First, let's talk about goals with puppy introductions. Your goal should be to make it easy on your older dogs, while still giving your puppy the education and enrichment they need. Remember, your older dogs didn't sign up for the puppy, you did. So my main goal is to keep the disruptions that a puppy brings into the household to the least amount of chaos possible.

With that goal in mind, you next need to consider what kinds of dogs are in your current household:



© Loretta Mueller



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Puppy Lover:

No personal space issues, loves the puppies, shares all the things, YAY PUPPIES!

Indifferent:

(aka not sure they want to admit that the puppy exists): I don't really see you. Go Away.



Your dog could be somewhere in between all these. It can also depend on the circumstance: outside vs. inside the house, toys vs. no toys, around food vs. no food. Depending on the situation, any of these photos could happen, even with dogs that LOVE puppies in other situations most of the time. But like most dogs, your dog will have tendencies towards either liking or not liking puppies. Taking those into account before you bring puppy home is an important step toward reducing chaos.

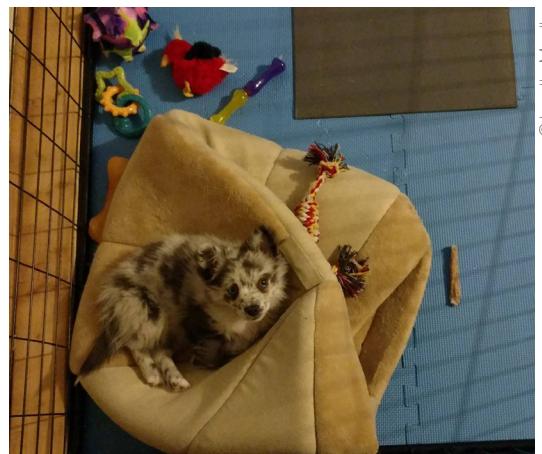
Puppy Hater:

Don't come within 3 feet of me, you are evil, I hate you.

In order to keep the dogs in my household from the added stress of the new puppy, I utilize an exercise pen (x-pen for short). When I am not actively working or pottying the puppy, I have them in the x-pen.

The x-pen is filled with toys that the puppy cannot destroy. This serves several purposes:

- Keeps puppy contained, even if they don't want to be
- Keeps the adult dogs in your household from being harassed by the puppy.
- Teaches the puppy to self-entertain and not require your constant attention.



It is very important for your adult dogs to have the freedom of choice to interact with your new puppy or not. The x-pen allows the other dogs in the household to get used to the puppy's presence without the pressure of HAVING to socialize. If I do have the puppy out, I will attach them to me using a leash. This way, my adult dogs can either choose to interact with the puppy OR they can keep their distance. This is an easy way to let your adult dogs choose what they wish to do.



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Puppy good = dogs around

Puppy not good = dogs not around

As the puppy is accepted more and more, you will notice that the dog or dogs in your household will start to relax. It is then that you can start introducing them in a controlled way. I normally do this on walks and/or with chewies (where the puppy is on leash if it attempts to steal things from the other dogs).

During all these interactions, always supervise the puppy and intervene whenever there is conflict. It is normal for older dogs to correct a younger dog on occasion. But if the puppy is not respecting the older dog, or the older dog is being a bully to the puppy, it is your job to remove the puppy from the situation. Many behaviors can be prevented by just removing the puppy from a bad situation before it becomes a habit. As puppies get older, they naturally will mature, and most of the time, the older dogs will accept them.

Behaviors I do not allow from the puppy:

- Bullying the adult dogs (biting, chasing, jumping on or barking at—unless they are truly playing)
- Stealing toys
- Stealing food/bones
- Excessively rough playing

Behaviors I do not allow from the adult dogs:

- Bullying the puppy (knocking them over, attacking, chasing)
- Playing excessively rough.
- Guarding the owner (many times this can happen when a new puppy comes in).
- If a multi dog household, ganging up on the puppy.

By planning, giving your older dogs freedom of choice with the use of tools like x-pens and leashes, and careful monitoring and supervision during the first several months after you bring your puppy home, you can ensure that your entire household is introduced with as little fuss as possible.

Start Them Right

Andrea Harrison | www.andrea-agilityaddict.blogspot.ca



© Andrea Harrison

“Start them right.”
“Make sure you do your foundation work.”
“Build those blocks.”

Those are the types of things you can expect to hear when you get a new puppy, and they can cause you to worry! Are you doing it right? What will happen if you do it wrong? Can your puppy live up to your expectations? Can you raise your puppy to meet the expectations of your friends, coaches and trainers? Will the breeder appreciate your hard work or be disappointed in you?

Worry can be about your puppy, your training or yourself. Is your puppy progressing fast enough? You may fall prey to the “All His Siblings Can” head game. Or perhaps you’ll worry about soundness, or a health concern. Maybe you’ll wonder if you are capable of raising this puppy. (Spoiler: you are!!) But – and this is really important – it’s a totally human, natural and expected response. No matter if your puppy fell into your lap from the neighbour around the corner or was flown over an ocean to you after years of careful looking, worry is likely to walk beside you some days. You want to do WELL. You want to do ALL THE THINGS. You want to protect your puppy from all harm and risk

How can you head these concerns off?

Slow down. Think. Plan. Then Do.



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Develop both process goals and outcome goals for your journey together. That lovely MACH, or podium placement that you have always wanted – those would be outcome goals – and having them can provide good end goals. But between puppy's arrival and those goals lies a whole lot of learning, exploring and laying foundations piece by piece – the process goals!

Process goals need regular attention – are they still realistic? How are they progressing? How can you measure your success with them? Record-keeping can become a very important step to seeing progression – when combined with process goal-setting they can reassure you that progress is in fact being made.

But know that all the planning and doing in the world won't protect you from worry. And that's OK. At some point a worry will probably creep into your psyche.

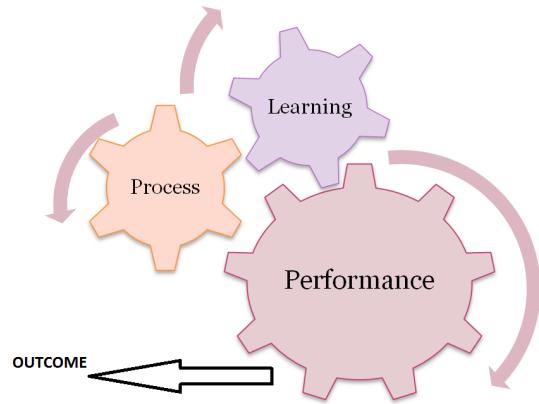
How do you relieve the concerns? Thoughtfully! Notice your worry and decide on a plan of action to test. If the first strategy doesn't work, don't fall into a pit of despair. Test a different strategy.

It is important to prevent the creation of an anxiety chain – where one concern leads to another worry, which snowballs into anxiety about something else and so on. To help you through the worry about your puppy, let me remind you of 4 key concepts that have helped me and many of my students:

Stop comparing. Love the one you live with. Other people's experiences can be guide posts, but don't let them be your measuring stick. Your experience is your own. Your relationship with your puppy is unique, special and precious. Do not be disappointed if your puppy is a little slower at times than another puppy. Celebrate it! You are becoming a better trainer and observer with every puppy you raise. Don't let comparison be a theft of your joy!

Have Fun! Your dog is only a puppy once. If going to puppy camp and spending lots of money learning stuff together makes you happy, that's awesome – do it. If instead it causes you grave stress (either financial or emotional), do a simple local puppy class (if possible) and don't sweat it. Do your socialization thing but do the bits that make you happy and are doable. You do not need to tick 300 items off a great checklist to raise a wonderful puppy – but if that degree of planning helps you, go for it!

Let it Go. Worry is not you. Worry is a thought in your head – a guest as it were – and you control your thoughts. They don't control you. You can suggest that the worry "guest" leave. Test Andrea's Rule of Five: how long will the worry concern you? Five minutes, hours, days, weeks or years from now will you still be worried? That consideration alone can be enough to move beyond the emotion of worry.



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Reframe. When your concern feels overwhelming or is creating negative feelings like frustration, think about how you could reframe them. Concerned your puppy is slow to learn something? How about being grateful you are learning alternative training techniques? When your breeder asks you too many questions and you feel judged, consider what a compliment it is that they entrusted you with someone so precious to them, or be grateful that they care enough to ask.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly:

Your puppy is your puppy – your baby canine, an infant! Focus yourself on the things that truly matter. Celebrate the zoomie fits and occasional mistakes. Plan some time to just enjoy your new friend. Build your memory bank for that day – far off, we all hope – when all the memories become precious to us.

Puppy Socialization:

What happens in the brain?

Jessica Hekman, DVM, PhD | www.dogzombie.com



© Alla Podkopaeva/NPorsche

The first few months of your puppy's life are an incredibly important time for helping her grow into a friendly, confident dog. This socialization period is a time when experiences have much greater and longer lasting effects than at any other time in a dog's life. Socialization is essential at this time to teach your puppy that strange people, dogs, and places are not scary, so that she will be able to function at her best in the bustling competition environment. But why? What is going on in your puppy's brain to make these weeks so important?

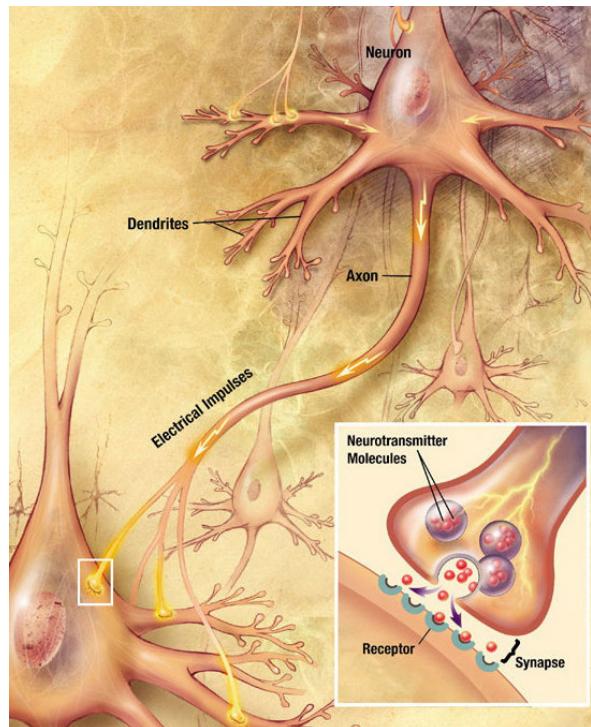
All animals need to tune their brains to respond appropriately to the environment that they find themselves in. A dog living on the street needs to be fearful, prepared for lots of dangers. To this dog, a strange person might legitimately be dangerous. A sport dog, on the other hand, needs to recognize that strange people, dogs and places don't represent danger, but a stimulating environment for performance. It is normal for animals to adjust to their environments early in life, and in fact there's evidence that they start to do this in the uterus. As adults, however, they have to stop making these adjustments. They can't be re-evaluating their world all the time; instead, it's time to make some assumptions based on their past experiences. So the socialization period eventually closes, and the flexible puppy brain becomes the experienced adult dog brain.

This process suggests that the puppy brain is qualitatively different from the adult dog brain. Indeed, it is, and the difference lies in connections between neurons, the cells that (among other types) make up the brain. One neuron does nothing interesting on its own; neurons work together to pass information around the brain and process it. The connection between two neurons is called a synapse, and in our dogs' brains, each neuron has thousands of synapses with other neurons. In this simplified image, one neuron has extended arms called axons to connect to a neighboring neuron. The connections of these arms to the second neuron are the

synapses, where neurotransmitter molecules are passed from one neuron to the next as a means of passing information.

This complex network of neurons, connected by synapses, is essential to the brain's ability to take in information and make decisions based on it, and the network changes based on experiences. When a dog learns something new, synapses between many neurons become stronger, connecting these neurons more tightly so that information, in the form of neurotransmitters, flows between them more readily. When the dog unlearns something during the process of extinction, the opposite occurs, and synapses become weaker, so that information is less likely to flow between them.

During the socialization period, the baby brain is making lots of extra synapses. There are millions of new connections springing up between all those neurons. Everybody is talking to everybody! Connections are everywhere! This is chaos, to have everybody trying to connect to everybody else, and ultimately can't be sustained in an adult brain. Therefore, as the socialization period begins to close, synapses that are used infrequently are removed, while those that are used frequently are kept, through a process called pruning. This is the "use it or lose it" philosophy of brain development. One neuron might be connected to thousands of other neurons, and then lose some of the connections and only be connected to a few hundred. This process has been well detailed experimentally in the development of vision, which is a bit easier to study than socialization. Scientists believe the same process is going on in the parts of the brain involved in the stress response, although this is difficult to study – it's hard to get at the contents of those puppy brains without hurting puppies!



In this way, synapses relating to useless bits of information are lost. For example, synapses relating to the lesson "people in funny hats are scary" – hopefully something the puppy didn't have much chance to practice during socialization – might be pruned. Meanwhile, synapses relating to useful bits of information are retained, such as "people in funny hats are likely to be nice and deliver many tasty treats" – hopefully something that happened frequently during socialization. As a result, the puppy brain that had to evaluate people in funny hats afresh every time gives way to the adult dog brain that makes assumptions about people in funny hats. Whether those assumptions are good or bad is up to the person who did the socializing. If they did a good job, they will have a dog whose brain is packed with good associations appropriate for a competition dog. If they did a bad job, they'll have a lot of trouble overcoming fears that developed early in life. Those fears can be overcome later, but as the post-socialization brain doesn't make new synapses (i.e., new learning connections) as easily as the baby brain, changing those assumptions later in life is more difficult.

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So when you are helping a puppy make good associations during his socialization period, what you are really helping him do is to prune his synapses in a way that is appropriate for the world he's going to live in. We want him to keep a lot of connections, and to have them be good ones!

Touch Matters: Handling and Touching Puppies

Lori Stevens, CPDT-KA, SAMP, CCFT, CPBC | www.seattletouch.com



© Rebeccah Aube

You just brought your new puppy home. She's so soft and cute that you automatically reach out to hold and stroke her. But keep in mind that the way you handle and touch your puppy sets the stage for her expectations around touch and handling for life. So creating a positive experience for your puppy around touch is crucial. Touch can even be reinforcing to your dog depending on your dog's experience and history. Here are some of the things I think are important to keep in mind as you begin your relationship around touch with your new puppy.

Pressure: When you touch your puppy you want to make sure you aren't tickling her. A super light touch is tickly and will likely cause your puppy to move away. Too much pressure can also be unpleasant, e.g., you might knock your puppy off balance with your touch. Experiment with pressure and watch your puppy for signs of discomfort. Make sure you aren't throwing her off balance with your touch.

Speed: Stroking slowly will be most calming to your puppy. This is usually what we want when we are touching and handling our puppies versus when we are playing with them. If you stroke quickly, you wake up the nervous systems and arouse your puppy.

Approach: How we approach touching a puppy is similar to how we'd approach touching an adult dog. We want to approach gently and by "asking permission" with our hands. Start with your puppy's feet on the ground rather than on your lap. Then use the back of your curled-fingers to stroke your puppy's shoulder or side while placing the other hand gently on her chest. As you do this, observe your puppy to see if she is welcoming of your touch or giving you signals that this is a bit much by moving away. Other signs that your puppy may be uncomfortable include growling, licking, biting, yawning, and squirming. If your puppy does any of these

simply remove your hands to give your puppy a break. Then try again.

Touch sensitivities: Puppies have varying sensitivities to touch. We need to determine what touch the puppy is comfortable with and what touch she isn't. We can respect her preferences and start with touch that she is comfortable with and enjoys. Then we can start slowly building comfort and positive associations with touch of more sensitive areas. We create the positive association by pairing a treat or something to chew with approach and touch of a sensitive area.

Asking permission: Another way to ask your puppy if your touch continues to be welcome is by removing your hands to see what your puppy does. If she stays near you or moves into your hands, then it's safe to assume your touch is welcome. If she moves away, then stop for a bit and approach her again after a break. I teach a nose-to-hand touch as one of the initial behaviors a puppy learns. After the break, we can ask the puppy for a nose-to-hand touch to encourage her closer to us for reinforcement before starting any touch again.

We want to start a dialogue with our puppies around handling as early as possible. The first few days you have your new puppy are crucial for establishing dialogue around touch and helping your puppy feel safe when your hands approach. Part of helping your puppy feel safe is giving her the choice to move away.

We want there to be a positive association to your hands approaching your puppy and to any touch. One way to establish this association is responding to any signals that show you that your handling is too much by removing your hands. In addition we can establish a positive association between hands approaching by pairing the approach or touch with something reinforcing, e.g. treats or something to chew on.

It's especially important as we establish this dialogue that we include areas of the body that will be involved in husbandry procedures such as teeth brushing, nail trimming, and veterinary exams.

Handling ears, mouth, paws, and tail: Gently stroking your puppy's ears should feel good to you both. This is also preparation for starting to examine inside the ears. So gently moving the ears and looking inside them helps get your puppy used to the idea that this is normal. This will also help your puppy get used to hands approaching the top of her head.

It's also important to get your puppy used to your fingers near and in her mouth. You can do this by stroking the outside of your puppy's muzzle a bit at a time getting your pup familiar with your finger lifting her lips and stroking her gums.

Your puppy's paws may be sensitive, so we want to initially approach them by stroking down the leg and then stroking the top of her paw with our fingers. Practice this until the pup is comfortable, then start picking the paw up to gently massage it while holding it loosely. I use my thumb to massage each paw pad with my fingers on top of her paw. Your puppy should be able to remove her paw from your hand if she'd like to. Your puppy should get comfortable with you handling her paws before beginning nail trims. Break down the behaviors of a nail trim and get your puppy used to a Dremel or clippers by placing them near you as you visit her with calming

touch. As you get your puppy ready for nail trims, you should reinforce any paw handling and begin touching the paws with your nail trimming equipment of choice.

Approach touching your puppy's tail by stroking down your puppy's side or back and then stroking her tail or sliding her tail through your fingers. Allow your puppy to move away if she'd like to. You will get many chances to practice this and help your puppy feel comfortable with you handling her tail.

Gently stroking your puppy's body will help your puppy get used to handling and prepare her for grooming.

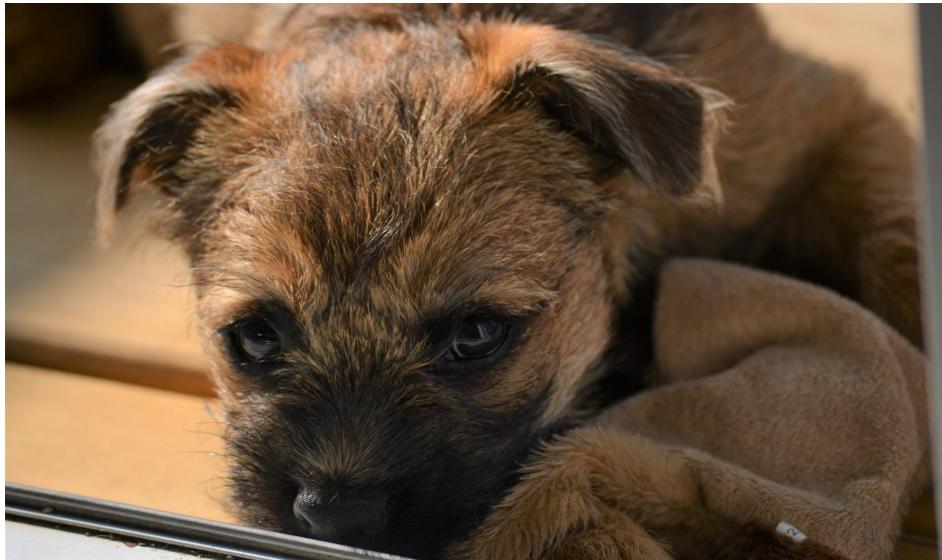
Picking up the puppy: Just because we can pick up a puppy and do whatever we want doesn't mean we should. I start by getting on the floor so the puppy isn't initially going too far off of the ground. I pick her up in a supported way and then I reinforce this by giving her a treat. Any sign that she is uncomfortable is a signal to me to place her back on the floor. I like to give a puppy a cue that will predict that I'm going to pick her up and that good things are going to happen when I do.

In summary, every time you touch your puppy you are giving her another experience with human touch. Our goal is to have human touch be reinforcing for your dog. Therefore, it's incredibly important to be mindful of all touch and handling starting early on. This way you create positive associations around handling and touch for your pup that will last a lifetime.

Video: <https://youtu.be/sQGG1GJqfoE>

Prevent Separation Anxiety

Nancy Tucker, CPDT-KA | www.nancytucker.com



© Nancy Tucker

When we bring a puppy home, we usually spend a lot of time with him, building a strong bond between us. We know it's important that we do everything we can to foster a sense of safety and security: a puppy who feels secure is more likely to grow into a confident adult dog. Because separation-related problems are far easier to prevent than they are to repair, adding some daily "alone time" exercises into your schedule will help your puppy develop important coping skills.

Before we look at how, we need to take a glance at the developmental process to understand where puppies stand on the whole "home alone" idea. Puppies are biologically predisposed to stick to safety – stay close to home, to mom and littermates, no matter what. When you think about it, "being alone is not safe" is a brilliant survival strategy. And it's innate, meaning this is not learned behaviour.

This is what you're up against in the first few months of your puppy's life. Later, in adolescence, the opposite is true: juvenile dogs are biologically predisposed to start wandering further away from the safety of home. Though they remain social animals and prefer to stay connected to others – whether people or dogs – the urge to explore becomes stronger, and they become more independent with maturity.

But for puppies, staying connected is more than a social issue, it's a security issue. Here are some steps that you can take to help your puppy handle alone time with confidence.

Mi bedroom es su bedroom

Contrary to popular belief, you're not helping your puppy become more independent by letting him "cry it out" at night, whether in a crate, in another room or sometimes on another

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floor entirely. It sounds like a paradox, but setting up your puppy's sleeping quarters in your bedroom actually plays a role in preventing separation-related issues. More security now means more confidence later. It's a wise investment!

Set up his crate or box or rubber bin in your bedroom. I'd even go so far as setting it up right next to your bed. When your puppy cries at night, first make sure his needs have been met (does he need to potty?). Sometimes just placing your hand inside the box provides the reassurance your puppy is looking for, and he'll go right back to sleep. Remember that puppies normally sleep huddled closely with their littermates. The warmth of your hand might be all he needs to let him know all is right with the world.

You do your thing, I'll do mine

While spending tons of time with our puppy during his waking hours is a great relationship-builder, it's just as important to teach him that being alone is okay and nothing to be afraid of. Unfortunately, many puppies experience an all-or-nothing contrast after adoption. Since many of us arrange to be home for at least a little while when we adopt a puppy, we're a constant presence for them all day, every day. When it's time for us to get back to our usual work or school schedule, our puppy quite suddenly finds himself alone. That can be terrifying for a young puppy. The contrast is stark, and it signals that something is wrong (and he should worry!).

To prevent this, your puppy should spend some time alone every day, whether you're home or not. Decide where his "home alone" space will be – in a crate, or a room, or an enclosed area of a larger room. Help your puppy make a very positive association with that space by feeding his meals there. Make it the spot where he works on food toys like a stuffed Kong. Make sure his "home alone" space is a normal part of his living space – in other words, don't set it up somewhere where family members don't usually hang out, like a garage, laundry room, or basement. Spend some time with him in that space. Sit nearby and read a book or work on your laptop while he chews a bone or works on a food puzzle.

Once in a while, leave him alone in that space while you do something else. Make sure his needs have been met (he's pottied, he's eaten, he's played), then go about your business and ignore him. The goal is to help him learn that this context is normal and that he has nothing to fear. Build independence gently, don't force it!

Remember that helping your puppy develop independence is less about teaching him that sometimes he must be alone – "whether he likes it or not." Instead, it's about providing him with all the security he needs while gradually showing him that being alone is perfectly safe.

Growing Up

Minimize the Incidence of Developmental Orthopedic Diseases in Your Puppy

Sue Yanoff, DVM | www.animalptcenter.com



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You have a new puppy. You have big plans for a successful career in the sport(s) of your choice. You have done your homework, made sure the parents had all their health clearances, and are ready to start foundation training. Are there things you can do to minimize the chances that your puppy will develop an orthopedic disease that might limit her career? Yes!

A developmental orthopedic disease is a condition that is caused by an abnormality in skeletal growth. It "develops" as the puppy grows. Examples include hip dysplasia, elbow dysplasia, osteochondrosis and panosteitis. All these diseases have a genetic component, meaning that the puppy's genes will play a role in whether or not the puppy will develop the disease. But there are also outside influences that may play a role in the expression of the disease. We cannot change the puppy's genetic makeup, but we can control, to various extents, her environment.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss all the possible orthopedic diseases a puppy can get. But there are a few things that you can do, based on scientific research, which can help minimize the development of some of these diseases.

1. Keep your puppy thin and grow her slowly.

Many studies have shown that overnutrition (particularly excess calories and calcium) can increase the incidence of developmental orthopedic diseases in dogs. A 1992 study in Labrador retriever puppies showed that rapid growth caused by overfeeding (excessive calories) can increase the incidence of hip dysplasia. Not only that, puppies that were overfed had more arthritis in the hips and shoulders when they were 8 years old. Also, puppies that were fed fewer calories and grew up more slowly lived longer than the pups that were overfed. Slow growing puppies will still reach the final size dictated by their genes. It will just take them a little longer to reach their adult size. Your puppy should be thin enough that the average

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person might think that you are not feeding her enough. Even some veterinarians might think your puppy is too thin. Ideally, the puppy should not be carrying any extra fat. You should be able to easily feel her ribs.

2. Feed a complete and balanced diet.

Feed a diet that is appropriate for the size and age of your puppy. Make sure any diet you feed – commercial, homemade, or raw - contains all the essential nutrients a puppy needs. You can, if necessary, consult with a board certified veterinary nutritionist to make sure the diet is nutritionally balanced. Other than calories, the most important thing to consider when feeding a puppy is the calcium level in the diet. Excessive dietary calcium can contribute to the development of orthopedic diseases. The calcium to phosphorus ratio is also important. Calcium supplementation should not be needed for growing puppies.

3. Allow appropriate exercise.

No one really knows what “appropriate” exercise for a puppy is. You can find many recommendations on line, but none are based on scientific research. A 2012 study out of Norway found that pups that walked on stairs from birth to 3 months of age had an increased risk of hip dysplasia. Pups that had off leash exercise from birth to 3 months, and that were born on a farm between April and August, had a decreased risk of hip dysplasia.

While it is impossible to develop a detailed puppy exercise program based on that paper, I think it is safe to make a few generalizations about exercise. Allow puppies to exercise on non-slippery surfaces several times a day. This can be to play with you, to play with other puppies, and to do foundation training. Activities should be low impact.

Avoid prolonged, rough play with other puppies and dogs. Be very careful about allowing your puppy to play with a larger puppy or dog. Avoid prolonged forced exercise, such as jogging with the owner, or running along with a bicycle. Long games of fetch can be considered forced exercise. The puppy should be able to self-limit the amount of exercise she wants.

Be careful with stairs. While it is fine to teach your puppy to go up and down stairs, frequent running up and down could cause a lot of stress on the bones and joints. Not only that, the puppy could fall down the stairs and hurt herself. Minimize jumping, including obedience or agility jumps, jumping into and out of cars, and jumping on and off furniture and beds. Jump bumps are probably fine, in moderation.

4. Keep your puppy fit.

Nutrition and exercise are both important components of fitness. Strong muscles are needed to support bones and joints. Teaching puppies exercises that improve their muscle strength, balance, and coordination may help minimize developmental orthopedic diseases.

When is your puppy not a puppy?

The general answer is when the growth plates close. The growth plates are the thin areas of cartilage at the end of bones, from which the bones grow. The growth plates in different bones close at different times. The last growth plates to close are at the top of the tibia (shin bone) and

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top of the humerus (upper arm bone).

The age at which all the dog's growth plates are closed varies, depending on the breed. In general, small and medium size dogs' growth plates close by 12 months of age. In large and giant breeds, all the growth plates may not be closed until they are 18-24 months of age. By the time the growth plates are closed, any orthopedic disease that your dog will develop is already there. She may not show clinical signs, but that's a discussion for another day.

There is nothing that we know of that can prevent all developmental orthopedic diseases all of the time. But by keeping the puppy fit, with appropriate nutrition and exercise, we are taking the best actions that we can to minimize the chance that your puppy will have a problem in the future.

Growing Up FDSA

Surviving Month One



Puppy Focus

Deborah Jones, PhD. | www.k9infofocus.com



© Kelsey Menhoff

One of the most important foundation concepts you can teach your puppy is that focusing on you always leads to good things happening for him. You are the most fun and you have the best stuff. You are generous with both your time and resources. Puppyhood is the best time to encode the concept that you are everything important and exciting in the world. Giving your puppy both quality AND quantity time now, while you still have a little sponge-brain puppy, will pay off in many ways throughout his lifetime.

Focus is a fluid process, not a stationary goal. Focus levels change as the environment changes. We cannot teach focus like we teach a sit or down. But we can tip the scales in our favor by establishing a strong default habit of focus on us. Though it's really a pretty simple concept, the best approach is to keep it simple, especially for a baby. Making things too difficult or complicated is destined to fail. So keep your sessions short and your expectations low. Remember that every interaction you have with your puppy is a chance to increase his desire to focus on you.

Where should you begin your “formal” focus training? We start with an exercise we call rapid fire treats (RFTs). Your job is to mark and treat your puppy 10 times as fast as you can. Your puppy doesn’t have to do anything except take the food. At this point we are laying the groundwork for focus. Your puppy doesn’t have to do anything to earn those 10 cookies yet. That part will come later.

Here’s an example of RFTs using a verbal marker “yes” and a lick of meat flavored baby food. This one is great for tiny puppies:

<https://youtu.be/4h0lwMSsT5s>

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And here's an example using a clicker and tiny pieces of kibble:

<https://youtu.be/cAuDNORL4YY>

In both of the above videos, Tigger is learning that Judy has good stuff and that she is willing to be incredibly generous with it. He's making a strong emotional connection between Judy and the food, and he's learning that she is an important part of the process. This is the foundation for future training with him.

While we definitely 'pay' for focus with food in the early stages, puppyhood is also the ideal time to introduce the idea that focus can also lead to play, praise, and petting. In general, I try to use these non-food reinforcers more than 50% of the time. Food works really well for most puppies, so the tendency is to go with that almost exclusively because it's so easy. However, it's really smart to keep the value of interacting with us, even when we aren't offering food, as high as possible. Ultimately, you will want your grown-up dog to enjoy working with you even when no food is in the environment. Keeping that goal in mind as you start interacting with your baby puppy is a very wise idea.

In this video Judy is playing with Tigger without any toys (personal play). Tigger is learning that interacting with her is fun. You can see that Judy is using her voice and her movement (mainly with her hands). She is using a lot of touch at a variety of intensity levels. Most importantly, throughout this process she is closely monitoring his responses and then changing her own. This level of play is perfect for Tigger, but it might be too overwhelming for some puppies and not compelling enough for others. In puppyhood we are learning about our pups as much as we are teaching them.

<https://youtu.be/qSbnM7txWR4>

In addition to these focus exercises, we also introduce our pups to a variety of focus games. In this game Judy is playing peekaboo with Helo. Again, she's monitoring his responses carefully and altering her behavior accordingly. If he seemed upset or frightened or simply uninterested then she would change her approach.

<https://youtu.be/p6weq3rYOX4>

What should you do if your puppy is having trouble maintaining focus and interest during a play or training session? The inability to maintain focus could mean that there is a distraction in the environment, your interaction is not enjoyable for your pup, your pup may be tired or overwhelmed, or the location you are working in is too challenging. The first step to fixing any of these possible issues is to end the session in a pleasant manner. Scattering a few cookies on the ground for your pup is a pretty good option here. Then consider what needs to change before you begin your next session.

Trying to continue a session when you don't have 100% of your pup's focus is always a poor choice. If your puppy's behavior shows you he isn't 'all in' during a play or training session, continuing on only teaches him to give you partial rather than full focus. As the trainer it's our

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job to figure out what needs to change so that our pups can be fully engaged and connected with us during our sessions. If you get in the habit of only working with a fully focused dog when they are babies, you'll be amazed at how easy all your other work together becomes. Focus becomes the underlying default to all your interactions, which is our ultimate goal.

My best advice is to enjoy your puppy, take lots of pictures and videos, and lay a good focus foundation early.

Touch Me Please!

Husbandry Care to begin with your puppy

[Heather Lawson](#) | [www.dogwise.ca](#)



©Rebeccah Aube

WHY & WHAT IS IT?

Our dogs generally need daily care and feeding; this care is called “husbandry.” Most of the time, we don’t think very much about the daily care process – until we go to do it and guess what? Our puppies aren’t having any of this “touchy stuff.”

What are we to do then? To prevent these unwanted responses, we need to teach our puppies early on that having their bodies touched or manipulated is a GOOD THING. When we begin the process of teaching them this, our goal is to make it as positive as possible.

Touch Me Please! should encompass all the things you will eventually need to do at some point in your dog’s life. It can include simple things such as brushing their coat, wiping them down with a towel after a hike on the trails, or giving a bath. It should also include more difficult things such as nail clipping and administering medications. If we don’t do some “prep work” ahead of time, these types of everyday care behaviours can end up being a very frustrating futile struggle of wills, even resulting in growls and bites. Waiting until you actually need to administer medication, get that tangled mass out of your pup’s coat or even just do a wipe down isn’t a wise idea. Not only may your dog not like to be touched, he may also be in pain and therefore learn to associate your touch to that pain, especially when it comes to medications.

The Touch Me Please! process not only helps with your everyday husbandry duties, it also sets the stage for positive interactions with other humans such as groomers and veterinarians. And it helps to decrease the inevitable puppy mouthing or nipping that many owners experience when reaching a hand towards the pup’s face or other parts of their bodies. So I start very early

with all of my puppies with what we call “handling”—getting the puppy comfortable with being touched all over. It ensures later down the road when I need to do something that may not be pleasant for me or my dog, they will at least have built up a trust in my touch and forgive me when it may not be as pleasant as they expected.

I encourage you to do the same. Taking a few moments on a regular daily (yes, daily!) basis will have a huge payback later down the road. Here is an example of the process and a small snippet of what is called “cooperative care” and how I approached a few situations with my puppy Piper.

FINAL GOAL BEHAVIOUR:

- Your puppy lies quietly on his side, sits or stands without struggling while you check feet, tail, ears, teeth, eyes, body AND maybe even do a couple of brush strokes.
- Your pup will also allow another person – your friend, groomer or your Veterinarian – to examine him with just as much ease and quiet confidence. (Exercise required for CGN, CGC test)

TOOLS:

- You will need a clicker
- Variety of treats in a bowl or treat pouch
- A nicely tired out or sleepy dog

I am comfortable using the clicker and treating with either hand; if you’re not, I suggest that you use whichever hand that works for you. You can even opt to use a verbal marker if you need to. One hand will work the clicker and treats and that will be the only job it has. The other hand will be the touching hand and eventually brush hand when we add a brush.

SESSIONS: Always keep your sessions short. This allows you to make progress without getting your puppy past their tolerance level in the beginning stages.

Level 1 - The Beginning Touch

1. Puppy can be in whichever position he is comfortable (sit, down or stand). Touch the dog’s side for one second, click while your hand is still touching the dog, then treat using your other hand to give the treat. Continue to touch your puppy on every part of his body for a count of 1 second. Work your way to the back legs, tail (length of tail), then along the back, ears and paws. Pay attention to make sure your dog is comfortable during the session. Be aware of any part of the body that may cause him concern when you touch as you may have to do extra work in this area to help him feel more comfortable. Repeat this procedure on a daily basis. Yes, I did say daily basis! It’s important for your puppy to have lots of calm physical contact from you so that they can develop trust in your touch. REMAIN at Step 1 for a few days or even a week or two until you can touch every part of your dog’s

body. It doesn't have to be long - just a second or 2 will do in the beginning.

2. Next, touch each part of the dog's body, this time asserting a tiny bit more pressure in your touch and holding it for about two seconds before clicking and treating. Always remember you want to click while your hand is STILL in physical contact with the dog. As soon as you click, you can remove your hand and give a treat to the dog.
3. Vary each touch from 1-5 seconds, clicking and treating the dog for quiet, relaxed behaviour – i.e. not struggling, wiggling, or moving away from you. You're looking for a relaxed body even lying down.

Level 2 - Change of Location & Adding People

Change locations and repeat Level 1 - Steps 1-3. Changing locations might mean working on the floor, or a surface that is different from the norm, even a raised surface like a counter or grooming table. Ensure that you're use high value treats for this change in criteria.

1. If your dog is comfortable, you can now have several people the dog knows well and is comfortable with do the touching steps from Level 1 while you click and treat your dog's calm behaviour.
2. Next, move onto someone the dog doesn't know quite as well while you click and treat their calm behaviour.

ADVANCED - Take It On The Road

Take your dog to your veterinarian's office to get treats from the staff in the waiting area, even from your Veterinarian if they're available. During the visit, try having your dog:

1. Get clicked and treated for stepping and sitting on the scale
2. Get clicked and treated going into and out of an exam room with no one in the room
3. Get clicked and treated in the exam room when the staff enter the exam room (or if possible even have your Veterinarian enter the room)
4. Repeat this type of Vet visit many times before your puppy actually needs to have a procedure done; even their first shots. This will help your dog feel that your veterinarian's office is cookie heaven instead of doggy hell.

I will often book a paid vet visit to practice with my new puppy. It is well worth it in the long run to go through this process. My veterinarian is very willing to participate because she understands that I'm trying to make her job as easy as possible. It's always easier to work with a dog who is comfortable being examined than with one who is stressed, fearful and therefore more likely to bite.

ADDING GROOMING TOOLS - Brush or Toweling

Once you have basic acceptance of touch in place you can begin to add your grooming tools as part of your daily care. A brush is often used as part of the of a regular grooming regime, so that's what I usually start with. The same "rules" apply for introduction of any other piece of equipment.

When introducing a new tool, I allow my dog to sniff it and I click and treat them for doing so. Sometimes it's just one sniff; other times they require a more in-depth sniffing and investigation. Checking things out is okay, it helps to alleviate any concerns they may have of the object.

GETTING READY: Collect your equipment – clicker, treats and brush – prior to getting your dog. When you're set and ready to work, go get your dog. Your dog can again be in any position when you start. Again, working with a calm, tired dog will be to your advantage.

Ideally, your sequence of events will be to present your brush first, followed by any food treat, so that your dog learns that brushes predict good things. If we present the food treat first it can become the predictor of brushing and make things worse, especially if your dog is already not a fan of brushing. You can present the food and brush simultaneously - but it needs to be done at exactly the same time.

PROCESS:

1. Present the brush, let the dog check it out. (C/T any interaction)
2. One small, very light brush stroke - C/T
3. Continue with full stroke - one C/T
4. Gradually add multiple - 2 to 3 brush strokes before you C/T
5. Continue until you can do a full brushing.

Piper's first full brushing session at 3 mos. All previous conditioning touch work was done prior to this session. I opted to use a food dispensing tool stuck to the fridge and filled with soft, canned food. You can set up a similar situation by applying a big smear of creamed cheese or peanut butter on the fridge door. During the process Piper had a choice to end the session. I'd rather pick up brushing later than give her a negative experience.

<https://youtu.be/jovVBiPdDcc>

NOTE: Don't progress to a full brushing all in one session. Progress slowly - stay at the same step for a couple of sessions if need be. Only progress when your puppy is comfortable at the current level. Spread your sessions throughout the day—it's better to have short, positive sessions. Your puppy or dog should always have the choice to pause or end the session. If they aren't "in the mood" then, that's okay, try again later. Never force the issue. You are much better to opt for calm compliance than to make it a struggle.

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TAKING “TOUCH ME PLEASE” FURTHER: Think about all the other tasks or procedures you will need to accomplish with your dog beyond basic brushing and bathing. How about being professionally groomed, or medicines like eye or ear drops being required on a regular basis? What sports will you do with your puppy – agility where they may need to be measured, conformation or obedience where they will need to be examined by a judge? Using treats, a clicker and a little creativity, you can make all these things so much easier for your dog.

Here is an example of Piper getting eye drops. With prior muzzle conditioning, she was comfortable with hands around her face. She allowed me to hold her in position. She checked out the eye drop bottle and I was able to quickly and easily apply her eye drops. No Fuss, No Muss, that's what Touch Me Please! is all about.

<https://youtu.be/ZTUjKurPtaU>

Puppy Play Retrieve

Mariah Hinds | www.mariahhinds.com



© Naomi Shaw

Retrieving is a useful skill for a variety of dog sports, but most puppies don't come home with a natural retrieve. We have to teach them that sharing can be fun. Instead, we often accidentally reinforce the idea that keeping their items is in their best interest. When they discover a sock and put it in their mouths, we approach them and take it away. When they discover yummy sticks, we take it away. Why would they decide to bring items to us if we take the objects away often?

Since our goal is to teach the puppy that bringing items to us is an excellent idea, being less confrontational when the puppy is chewing on items will help them be less worried that you are going to take them away. So early management is the first step that will positively impact our ability to teach the retrieve. For example, I like to have at least 2 dozen toys spread out across the living area and around the house in a 1400 square foot home. Really young puppies aren't likely to go far to get to a chew item, and by having plenty of appropriate toys easily available, we make it easy for them to make good choices. On walks, we can tie a dog toy to the leash to redirect the puppy to that toy instead of chewing inappropriate found items. When you do need to take an inappropriate item away, we want to trade the puppy for it by offering a suitable toy.

In addition to these management steps, before we begin working on our retrieve, it's important to have an idea of which toys and objects are more valuable to your puppy. All objects are not considered equal. If the puppy is bored, we may need to entice them with a more valuable object. If the puppy

Order of Typical Preferences for Dog Toys and Other Items

- Rubber, plastic or latex toys
- Plush toys or tug toys
- Furry toys
- Squeaky dog toys
- Low-value bones (deer antlers)
- Low-value forbidden item (sock)
- Medium-value bone (bully stick)
- Balls and tiny items
- Medium-value forbidden item
- Food-filled dog toys
- High-value bones

Low-value
High-value

only wants to keep the retrieve item, then we want to play with a lower value toy that they are more willing to give back. Knowing which toys are most or least exciting will help us choose the best items for building a nice success rate in our pups.

Now, we want to teach the puppy that possessing toys isn't the only fun thing that can be done with them: toys are also a fun way to interact with you! To start this, I like to use tug. We want to build value for playing and tugging with you. It's important when we start to let the puppy feel powerful when tugging. When the puppy tugs a tiny bit, let the puppy pull the toy towards themselves. Let the puppy win the toy occasionally. Keep sessions less than 3 minutes in length and often shorter than that. If the puppy wanders off, try a shorter session the next time. We want the session to end with the puppy wanting more.

We also want to avoid doing things that cause the puppy to drop the toy. If the puppy accidentally drops the toy, don't keep it – engage the puppy in play again. Drag the toy around like a snake. Let the toy take tiny hops off the ground like a rabbit bounding across the floor. Let the toy hide momentarily behind your back like the squirrel who hides on the other side of the tree trunk. Puppies oftentimes get overwhelmed when they are pushed and that can cause them to drop the toy. Our goal is that the only time the puppy drops the toy is accidentally.

I prefer to use tug toys that are kept out of reach of the puppy when not in use; I can use a larger variety of exciting toys (furry toys, whippy toys) if I don't have to worry about the puppy destroying them. When it is time to end a tugging play session, grab another toy that the puppy can keep and play the two-toy game so that the puppy switches toys. Wiggle that second toy around until the puppy drops the first toy. Play with that toy for a few seconds and then say all done and leave the puppy with the second toy.

If you are finding it difficult to get your puppy to focus on your tug games, take a look at the environment. It's easiest to start when there are very few distractions and very little distance. Later on, we will add numerous distractions and there could be a lot of distance. By manipulating the environment to help the puppy be successful, we can build our behavior much more quickly, efficiently and without frustration.

The next element that we want to add to teaching our retrieve is capturing the puppy walking in our direction with a toy. Let's say that you are on the computer in the living room and the puppy grabs a toy on the other side of the room. As the puppy takes a few steps towards the couch where you are, verbally praise the puppy while they are moving towards you. My expectation is that the puppy is going to take a step and then do what they had planned on doing with the toy. My expectation isn't that the puppy is going to bring the toy to me. I just want to take advantage of those moments when the puppy is walking in my direction with an object in their mouth. I like to do this every time I see it for a few days.

Difficulty Level of Environments for a Retrieve

-
- Small environment with very little running room (bathroom or closet)
 - Narrow hallway
 - Regular sized room without a sleeping spot
 - Regular sized room with sleeping spots
 - Living room with lots of places where the puppy likes to lie down and chew
 - Outside short distance retrieves
 - Long distance retrieves outside

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We now have all of our pieces in place so that we can get to the actual retrieve:

We have our management tools to prevent the dog from being confronted with objects in their mouths and us needing to take away those items for safety.

We have built some value for tugging.

We have captured a few moments of the puppy approaching us while they have a toy.

We know what toys are more exciting for the puppy and we know what environments are easiest for the puppy.

We also want to choose a time of day when the puppy wants to be in motion instead of stationary. We can practice after the puppy wakes up from a nap (after their potty break). We can practice first thing in the morning or we can practice when you get home from work.

To begin teaching the actual retrieve, I like to start in a very small space, where there are no distractions and almost no distance – in my house, the bathroom is an ideal first location. In your chosen small space, start by warming the puppy up with some tugging.

Once the puppy accidentally drops the toy, throw the toy a little distance away. I like to throw it into the tiny space that is between the toilet and the wall. That pretty much guarantees that when the puppy picks up the toy and turns around, he will be facing me with the toy in his mouth. We can then play a little bit of tug again. When the puppy accidentally drops the toy the next time, I will again toss it and again tug when the puppy turns around.

If the puppy wants to lie down and chew on the toy, I will end the session and I'll revisit my list of toy options, distance, distractions, and the time of day that we play the game. Remember to end the game before the puppy gets bored or tired. Two minutes of play is a long time for a really young puppy.

As the puppy learns that it is fun to bring the toy to you to continue the game, we can add more distance between where the toy lands and where you are. We can also start throwing it to different locations in the first small space. When they are 80% reliable with retrieving in that area, we can expand to a slightly larger area—for example, you can open the bathroom door and sit in the doorway and play the game. Then we can play in a hallway and then a bedroom and then the living room. And finally, outside and in new locations.

By following these steps, we will build a fun game to play with our puppies—and useful skills for the more formal retrieves that we may want later for our chosen sports.

Getting started on our retrieve: <https://youtu.be/os5RIEJzyO0>

Adding more distance to our retrieve game: https://youtu.be/j5dVpxUt1_M

Adding new locations to our game: <https://youtu.be/N-8vObeELzA>

When we set our puppies up to succeed with toy play and when we avoid confrontation with our puppies when they have items in their mouths, we can easily capture and shape a true joy for interacting with you with objects and with retrieving. Have fun playing with your puppy!

The Power of Eye Contact

Shade Whitesel | www.shadesdogtraining.net



© Amanda LaBorde

The first or second day I get a pup home, before I even teach the pup his name, recall, or anything else, the very first thing I teach is focus on me – eye contact. In particular, I want the pup to look AWAY from something he wants and focus on me instead. That “want” can be a treat, to greet another person or dog, a toy, access to outside, or anything else in the moment. In the future, I will work on how behaviors, reinforcement and what I’ve termed a “reset” fit together. But teaching the dog that focus on me is the gateway to getting what he wants is the very first thing I concentrate on.

Why eye contact?

- Calm
- Easy criteria for us to mark, the dog is either looking at us or he is not
- Impulse control away from toy or treat, no grabbing
- Dog learns to offer / choose default focus to get what he wants

Eye Contact Step 1:

To begin, with ONE hand, hold the treat out to the side at arm’s length away from your face and wait for your dog to look up at your eyes. Common things the dog will try are jumping, barking, and mouthing your hand. Make sure you brace that elbow on your side and don’t move the hand! I like to hold it high enough at first so that the dog can’t reach my hand by standing on his hind legs. Use your verbal marker word, or a click, when the dog makes eye contact, pause and then give the treat from the hand holding the treat.

Once the dog can do it from one hand held out to the side, practice in mini sessions throughout the week, holding the treat in different locations (all the faces of the clock) and expecting the dog to look at you. The hardest skill for the dog is when you are holding the treat right in front of their faces. If the dog jumps, barks, bites your hand, anything, say nothing and keep your hand still. Wait for the dog to settle down and offer eye contact. No obedience cues, no Leave it, no words, no movements. The dog figures out that those behaviors don't work to get what he wants by the absence of the marker signal.

Here is Ones as an adorable baby puppy learning this skill:

<https://youtu.be/O7ObCVrCpEo>

Eye Contact Step 2:

"Freeing" the dog up in between reps. Do the same thing as step 1, but now be aware of and make sure that your dog moves out of position as you hand him the food after the marker. Sometimes dogs put themselves into a sit and find it easier to control themselves from lunging at the food but still can't control themselves if they don't "think" they are in a stay.

Here is Bayles demonstrating:

<https://youtu.be/WoBwvveurWU>

Eye Contact Step 3:

Remote Reward. Have the treats in a bowl in a chair, on a table, etc. If your dog won't leave the treat bowl alone with or without a leave it cue, then put the bowl up high so that he can't reach it. (Self-control around the bowl isn't the point of this exercise, but is awesome to have.) Stand next to the treat bowl with hands by your side, wait for offered eye contact, mark and then reach into the bowl for the treat. Gradually stand farther away.

Here is Bayles demonstrating:

<https://youtu.be/VJwpwH53d68>

Eye Contact Step 4:

Start practicing offered eye contact with other motivators the dog likes. For instance, if you have a dog who likes to play ball, start holding the ball in place of the food, marking and tossing the ball as reward. Also adapt the concept of eye contact to the dog's life. She looks at you to go outside, to eat, to gain access to a person or a treat, etc. Start putting eye contact into your obedience cues as well. For instance, if the dog knows a sit, you can praise the act of sitting but mark and treat the sitting plus eye contact.

Here is Bayles learning eye contact for the marker word to bite the ball. This is an important step to achieving obedience or agility behaviors around high arousal toys. Notice how I give her some free throws in the middle and her dropping the ball for me still slows down. Good to know!

<https://youtu.be/xWbcW-sTxAU>

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Eventually, as the dog gains behavioral skills, the task will be to offer focus to go bite the helper, offer focus to gain access to the agility ring, choose focus on handler instead of ball or tug or environment. Focus and attention towards the handler will become a dog's default behavior, especially when he wants something.

Puppy Energy!

Tiring out your puppy with Nosework

[Stacy Barnett](#) | www.scentsabilitiesnw.com



© Amanda LaBodie

Ok, you have a puppy. You have been told time and time again that your high energy puppy can't be over-exercised because of delicate puppy joints and bones. Your puppy is driving you crazy with his antics. You don't always want to keep your puppy in a crate. So now what?

You know you need brain games. Did you know that you can use your puppy's WHOLE BRAIN? Did you know that one eighth of your puppy's brain is dedicated to olfaction? Just think of the impact on the mental wear-down! Yes, you can wear that puppy out!

What if your puppy is going to be a future Obedience Star or an Agility Star? Do you want that puppy learning to sniff? Of course! It's important to note that dogs who sniff in the ring do so because of stress, not because they have been allowed to sniff. So there's no danger in encouraging your puppy to do what comes naturally. In fact, these exercises may very well help establish capabilities to do scent articles in the future.

Playing these games will also develop skills that your puppy will need if you decide to work her in the sport of Nosework. In Nosework, the dog is trained to find a Q-tip scented with an essential oil as chosen by the sport organization - for example, AKC uses Birch, Anise, Clove and Cypress. (NOTE: If your puppy is destined for Nosework greatness, I would suggest starting her directly on Birch.)

The great part about this is that you don't need anything fancy to engage your puppy's brain – you can use what you have in your pantry. A tea bag is PERFECT for this. Just make sure that the tea is Caffeine Free.

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© Stacy Barnett

The first step is to put the tea bag in one hand and your cookies in the other. When your puppy investigates the cookie hand, just wait her out. Don't correct her or take away your hand. Soon your puppy will check the hand with the tea bag. When she does this, mark with your marker word (commonly a "Yes") and feed the cookie within an inch or so of the tea bag.

This is called "Imprinting" and is modeled after the way detection puppies are trained. Detection puppies might be trained using a series of elbow pipes with holes drilled in them for food delivery, but the process is the same, and tea bags are cheaper than expensive detection pipes!

Continue this exercise, switching hands occasionally, until your puppy has figured out that she needs to target the hand with the tea bag. This will happen very quickly!

Once your puppy understands this exercise, the next step is to put the tea bag in a small box. Gift boxes are perfect for this purpose. The opening is such that the puppy is encouraged to have what is called a "passive" indication. The added benefit of using small boxes is that your puppy will get a positive exposure and socialization experience that will build confidence!

Start with a single box. When she puts her nose in the box with the tea bag, mark "Yes" and reward as close to the tea bag as you can get. See how the box molds her indication?

Pretty soon your puppy will be climbing all over you to get to her box. Now we are going to really challenge her. Bring out two more empty boxes and let her choose which one has the tea bag. Don't forget to reward her for her hard work. At this point your puppy will really start to use her olfactory capabilities. There might be guessing early on – that's okay. She'll figure it out quickly.

At this point your puppy is not only using her olfactory capabilities, she's having to deduce which box contains the tea bag. This engages the rest of the brain.

Make sure to keep these sessions short. If your puppy seems tired, take a break and either play with your puppy with a toy, or come back to this exercise a little



Here Stacy works with 10 month old Labrador puppy, Brava, to imprint the smell of the tea bag



Brava learns to put her nose in a box with the target odor (tea bag)

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later. Puppies are sponges but it's important not to overwork them.

The final step is to start hiding the "hot" box. We call a box "hot" when it contains target odor. You might want to mark your box with a H for HOT so that you remember which box was used for odor. Important Note: Never use a previously "Hot" box (one that has contained odor) as a "Cold" box (one that's supposed to be without odor.)

When you start hiding your Hot box, keep it simple and out in the open. Very soon your puppy will be hunting down that box! Target searches for taking 15 to 20 seconds or less in order to keep the puppy's motivation up. If the search is taking too long, briefly put away your puppy and make the hide easier. We want your puppy thinking she conquered the world!

You are now ready for searches. But whether you decide to pursue Nosework or not, you have a game to engage your high-energy puppy's brain, tire her out, and keep her thinking for many years to come! Enjoy and keep it fun!

Just Walk

[Sarah Stremming | www.thecognitivecanine.com](http://www.thecognitivecanine.com)



© Rachel Stroud

We know that puppies should be out and about seeing the world. We know that they should get daily exercise, socialization, and training opportunities. Where we aren't always clear is what exactly these opportunities should look like. A walk around the block has pros and cons, as does a weeknight in puppy kindergarten. When it comes to how much exposure and training a pup should have, ten trainers usually provide ten different answers.

That's not really a bad thing; different people require different things from their dogs and so different puppy-rearing practices are warranted. But there is one thing that would benefit them all, a way to provide them with all three bullet points—exercise, socialization, and training—that dogs are begging for from a very early age.

I call it a “decompression walk.” It goes like this: no more rules than necessary, as little restriction as possible, natural surfaces and surroundings, and dog-dictated distances. The formula is simple: take the puppy out to the forest/field/beach/etc. and either attach a long line to a non-restrictive harness or unclip the leash and go.

Let's consider exactly what this is going to accomplish.

Puppy-Safe Exercise

A cruise around the neighborhood or outdoor shopping area—a restricted leash walk on concrete—might help prepare our pups for the sights and sounds of the human world, but they should not be done for long periods of time due to the pup’s growing body. Vulnerable joints want to move freely on natural surfaces, not be marched around on harsh man-made substrates. We need our puppies to sleep well and experience an appropriate amount of exercise, so we

need to get them out on the dirt, grass, and sand of the world.

To keep puppy decompression as safe as possible, don't consider it human exercise time. In fact, staying mostly stationary while your pup explores around you, or following him along as he explores his environment, is best.

Organic Socialization

The wooded trails, sandy beaches, and rocky riverbanks we might explore with our puppies will not have loud noises, crowds, or any of the other "big ones" we think about for socializing sport puppies. What they will have is an occasional social opportunity, flopping fish, squawking birds, thunder, snow, joggers, bikes, and hikers wearing big packs. These and a host of other experiences will show our pups that life happens and the incredible scents of the world remain. An organic socialization experience is what I am usually after for my puppies—not a manufactured one.

Our sport puppies will hopefully grow into sport dogs, and that means we may need to create intentional socialization experiences like attending dog shows. But we must not forget the natural socialization that occurs when we take our puppies for a romp in the woods. Too many dogs are comfortable at dog shows and not on the trail, and that is a disservice we've done them.

Body Awareness

Sport dogs require a good understanding of their bodies. Flashy heads-up heeling, powerful flawless jumping, and effortless navigation of hide areas require our dogs to know their bodies well. Watch a fox leap into the air, pouncing the precise spot a mouse is hiding beneath a snowy hillside and you will see that the simple navigation of natural terrain can teach skills an inflated peanut can't. When I watch a young dog run down a wooded trail, I see jumping skills, weaving footwork and speedy contacts developing. I see a dog getting to know her body in a way that nature intended for her to do so.

Recall Foundation

Safety is a big reason to teach a great recall, but the life of our dogs depends on this skill in more ways than one. A recall could save your dog's life if your leash fails near traffic, if a moose appears on the trail, or if a frozen lake beckons her. But perhaps more importantly, a recall allows your dog to be free. Our dogs' mental health depends on that freedom and without it their ability to function in our world suffers.

Just like any other behavior, we have to crawl well before we can run, and the best foundation for a solid recall can occur out in nature with our puppies. Most puppies are inclined to check in with their people on these outings (some more often than others!) and that very behavior can and should be reinforced. Paying for check-ins is the basic recall foundation I find the most beneficial. Yes, I place it above any manufactured recall games—games I play and enjoy—that involve chasing. What happens when we capture natural behaviors and reinforce them is double reinforcement. If a behavior is already occurring, we can assume there is a reinforcement history for it—behavior always happens as a result of reinforcement. So when we lay additional reinforcement onto those behaviors, we are literally buying an insurance policy against the extinction of those behaviors. And once a behavior is happening on a regular and predictable

basis, it is easy to add a cue that prompts them, and voila, our recall is born.

Something More . . .

The practical reasons for decompression walks are many: exercise, enrichment, socialization, body awareness, recall training and then some. But if I'm being real, none of these matters that much in comparison to the simple joy on a puppy's face as she frolics through the fields. When a puppy comes bounding back to her human, seemingly asking "isn't this the best day ever?" something happens between them. An unspoken, invisible, and powerful force exists between two beings out on a walk that they have both chosen.

People do dog sports in search of a deeper connection with dogs. That connection is easy to find; go to the woods.

Building Relationship: The Play Way!

Amy Cook, PhD | www.playwaydogs.com



© Amy Cook

Puppies are just about the most playful beings on the planet, aren't they? Baby animals of all species spend time frolicking around with each other, rehearsing all those behaviors they'll need in adulthood, and social animals like dogs really take a lot of enjoyment throughout their lives playing with their friends. If they had their way, they'd be playing all their waking hours!

When you bring home your own baby canine, you are now her best play partner! Humans aren't always natural players in adulthood, though. We often feel far more comfortable letting dogs play with each other while we become their teachers. But it doesn't have to be that way, and spending time in social play with your new pet can yield benefits you may not have imagined.

Social play

Social play is playing with your dog just for the enjoyment you take in each other. It doesn't have a specific behavioral goal like "chase the toy I've thrown" or "tug on this with me." It's just about interacting with your dog in a way that is socially fun for both of you, laughing together and being silly. Much like we play tickle games with kids, or wrestle on the couch, playing with our dogs socially is a time of bonding, being affectionate, and goofing around!

As we engage with them in this fun way, we're also building our relationship and learning about each other. The puppy is learning what level of energy is a good one for human-dog social interaction, and how to keep her mouth safe for human skin, and that you are the best and most fun partner around. You are learning what your puppy likes and doesn't like, what is too arousing for her to handle, and what is too boring to keep her interested. Best of all, you're learning to read your puppy's signs of comfort with your choices.

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Worried dogs can't play socially (though they may be able to eat, fetch and tug!) and a lack of play can let you know something is wrong. This is something that will serve you well when you are training—by learning to recognize whether they feel stressed by you in play, you can learn to make quick adjustments and get play going again. These lessons in reading your dog's signals during your play time will carry over to your training sessions. Plus, play is a great stress reliever, so when in doubt about how your pup feels, you can always play the tension away!

How do we do it?

Puppies vary a lot in what they might like from us in play—you will become the final expert in your puppy and what she likes best. Here are some common starting points that you can try and see what your puppy says about them. If your pup doesn't like some of your attempts, take heart; a "no" today might be a "yes" tomorrow!

Wolf or Mouse?

Some dogs like to pretend they're the big, bad predator in play, and if that's your dog, then they probably want you to pretend you're the small, helpless prey animal! Try seeing if your dog responds to games like you hiding your face and making little high-pitched noises, or rolling away from them as they come into you to jump on you. You can even hide under a towel or blanket so that they can "unearth" you! If your dog is uncertain about jumping on you in play, making yourself small and facing away from them (peek out at them to invite them in!) can help build that confidence.

But maybe your dog likes to be the mouse, and hopes you'll pretend to be the big (benign) predator! For those dogs, making "gotcha," claw-shaped hands so you can "get" them while they dance away or roll over and wiggle around can be great fun for them. They might even like to be chased a little, but it's best to let them do the running while you only play bow in mock chase so that you don't overwhelm them.

Many dogs like both styles. Bouncing back and forth between the two gives them a chance to practice the give and take of normal play, sometimes coming into your personal space, and sometimes retreating and inviting you into theirs. These dogs often love to play "bitey face," pretending to "bite" and "be bitten" while actually inhibiting, and you can mock bite each other if you pretend your hands are jaws. It's great fun to play!

Common Problems

It's not always easy to get social play going, and it can take an investment of time for some dogs. Your pup may take some time to trust you, or, conversely, your dog might be getting out of control too quickly! Here are some of the common problems that people face when starting to play:

Can't get your puppy to play with you

Perhaps you're facing them too much—some dogs are too intimidated by people "looming" over them. If your dog won't come into your space, spend more time facing sideways and peeking at them, enticing them rather than grabbing or reaching out.

Puppy tries to play but keeps leaving

Your energy might be too “big” and overwhelming. Make sure you match your dog’s energy. If they’re feeling quiet, you be quiet, too. Just like with human children, adults can be intimidating, and it’s up to us to moderate ourselves and build confidence in our young ones.

It’s also possible that they want a different game than the one you’re offering. It’s easy to get “stuck” in one mode of play. Try to switch it up to see if another style is more to their liking. Obey the “3 second rule” of touch, where you don’t keep doing any one style of interaction for more than (about) 3 seconds without changing it up and taking your hands off them. If you remember to cycle through your games, you’ll keep it fresh for them.

Puppy is getting too energetic and mouthy

Lots of young dogs don’t know how to use their mouths with you yet. For those, it’s often best to have your soft toys handy to take the brunt of those needle teeth! Keep their mouths busy with the toys and wiggle them just enough to make it fun to bite them, but also include the social elements above to vary that game and expand your play vocabulary. Your puppy will get less mouthy with time, and it’ll become much easier to play socially with them. Stay patient!

If your dog likes your games and is having a great time, you might hear them make snorting sounds and sneezing occasionally. This is a good sign, and akin to laughter. They’ll also have a lot of bend to their bodies and may roll around or fall into you. If your dog isn’t loving what you’re doing, they may walk away, or rollover and be still, tail tucked. They may also get really mouthy in their stress and arousal. Try to stay low key, and if you’re not sure how your puppy feels about your play sessions, keep them short. Also keep toys in the mix for them to focus on and take some pressure off. Most dogs just need time to learn to play with you, and you need the time, too! Be patient with the process.

Spending time in social play with your pup is a deeply satisfying and enjoyable experience. Most dogs can remain playful all their lives if we keep that part of our relationship alive through regular play. I highly recommend you interact with your pup this way as much as you can and develop that secret language of play between you. Playing with them makes living with them and training them a real joy!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0bAU90QqPeM&authuser=0>

My Puppy is Biting Me

in play

Denise Fenzi | www.denisefenzi.com



© Ashley Fulton

A puppy's mouth is much like our hands. Asking a puppy not to use their mouth is like asking a human to play without using their hands - it's not so simple!

I am often asked if it's okay for a puppy to put their mouth on human skin. It's a personal choice. Allowing a puppy to put his teeth on you in play does NOT make them more likely to bite "for real." When dogs play with each other, they often use their mouths. That doesn't make them more likely to get into a dog fight at another time! Keep in mind that for a dog, using their mouth is a natural extension of energy and interaction.

If you have a zero tolerance policy, it would be the same as playing with a child and saying neither of you could use your hands - ever. Yes, it is possible. No, it's not easy. Your puppy may decide not to bother playing with you at all, so that is the potential risk to this approach. If the biting is not hard and does not bother you, then you may want to ignore it. If it bothers you or the intensity increases, then address it as described below.

Biting During Personal Play

If your dog is mouthy or tends to over-arousal within personal play:

Put a toy in your dog's mouth. When you play, focus on the personal play, but play with the toy just enough that your dog keeps hold of it. This gives a focal point to his mouthiness while you learn how you can incite your dog to play at the level that feels right. If your dog drops the toy, stop all movement but stay engaged; encourage him to get the toy again! As soon as he picks it up, start up where you left off. If you're consistent, your dog will learn to play while holding an object.
In this video, note that Lyra holds a ball, but Denise plays with Lyra:

<https://youtu.be/FWoRMrpW9EA>

If your puppy refuses to hold toys, go ahead and play but have low value food on your body. As soon as your dog gets too excited, throw the cookie away from your body or simply hand it over. That will redirect their attention, and the cookie itself will further calm your puppy.

A tug toy can be used the same way as a cookie. As soon as you notice the puppy becoming too excited or over-aroused, switch to a game of tug instead.

Take a moment to note what direction you are facing when you play. Most biting happens when we face our puppies, and in general they bite much less when we are not facing them. Notice that when dogs play bitey face, they face each other; biting and facing each other seems to go together. Stop playing that way and see what happens. The biting may go down!

You may also want to change the type of personal play. For some dogs, games of chase bring out hard biting, while for other dogs it is physical wrestling that causes the mouthing to escalate. Sometimes trying out new games makes all the difference!

Have you checked the intensity of your play? The best personal play often starts very low key and looks more like “praise” than true play. That’s okay! Better to start slow and ratchet up as both of you are comfortable than to go running around whooping and hollering, which is just as likely to scare or over-arouse your dog than to be enjoyable.

Shorten the period of time you try to play. Puppies get over-aroused easily. See if you can get one or two minutes of personal play and then switch to a different activity.

Remove height. When we are above our dogs, we are not handicapping ourselves so the puppy is more likely to become highly aroused and to use teeth to even the score. Try getting down to your puppy’s level. Often when we reduce our substance, the dog doesn’t feel the need to ratchet up the intensity. Get lower and keep the puppy more on your sides rather than facing you; see if that helps!

Go soft and passive if your dog gets too aroused. Turn away and look away. Effectively, you are letting the dog know that it’s not fun to play so rough by reducing your energy and showing avoidance behavior. This reduces the dog’s energy in turn. The natural tendency when our dogs get too rough is to face them and get larger, but try the reverse! When your dog calms down, go for more gentle interaction until each of you finds the sweet spot that allows a mutually enjoyable interaction.

Be aware that very tired puppies are often over-aroused puppies that cannot make good decisions. If your puppy turns into a biting machine in the evening, the solution is to put them to bed for the night, not to play with them. Exhausted puppies who need to sleep often look a lot like bored puppies who need to play, so work to know the difference. Puppies need a lot of sleep!

The important point here with personal play....

Be patient while the puppy learns how to use their mouth appropriately, but at the same time, have coping strategies in place to keep both of you safe and happy. Watch carefully so that you can predict when your puppy is tending towards over-arousal, and make changes before the game goes out of control. It's much easier to bring energy up with a puppy in personal play than it is to bring it down, so focus on calmer play until both of you are very comfortable with the rules.

Biting during Toy Play

Biting during toy play is almost always a result of the handler's choices.

Double check the toy you are using. Soft, whippy toys that are presented vertically and flying through the air are asking for trouble since there is no target spot for your puppy!

Instead, offer the toy on the ground. The toy should be moving crazily AWAY from your puppy, so she can trap it between her teeth and the floor. Toys that are dangling vertically are very hard to grab hold of and make it likely that she will go for the horizontal surface: your hands and arms.

Double check your tension. If your tension on the toy is constant and involves movement, it will be very hard for her to re-grip onto your hands because the toy escapes if she opens her mouth. Once dogs learn that, they tend to set their bite. If you're not sure, videotape and look for slack in the toy; if there is slack you need to increase the tension.

If, on the other hand, you have so much tension and so little motion that your puppy is dangling from the toy with almost no interaction, then she'll end up letting go out of exhaustion. That leads to a frustrated puppy that bites arms and legs instead, so avoid that approach too!

If you get uncomfortable for any reason, simply abandon the toy and calm your puppy with a steady stream of food. The next time you play, see if you can keep the energy level at a point where you are more comfortable.

The important point here...

It is extremely rare that I am mouthed hard in personal play or bitten by accident when playing with toys. That is because I play with rules that the dog can understand and I am consistent about my expectations. If you get mad at your puppy for something that is really your fault, you will kill your play, so make sure you have a plan in place that will prevent the issues from escalating. On the other hand, you can't play in a manner that allows your puppy to hurt you, or you risk communicating that you don't object - when you do! Make a point of working on your mechanical skills when you play, and have a plan ready if your puppy begins to escalate mouthing or shows signs of pending over-arousal. Eventually, you will develop a style that is safe and fun for all parties!

Know When to Hold'em

Teaching your puppy the Collar Grab

[Barbara Currier | www.partyof2agility.com](http://www.partyof2agility.com)



© Rachel Stroud

My dog sport passion is agility. I guess you could say my obsession is agility. I eat, breathe, sleep agility. Whenever I bring a new puppy into my home, I am extremely hopeful that my new puppy will love agility as much as I do and we will have a beautiful team for many years.

In the current state of agility, the sport is all about faster, tighter and stronger. There also seems to be a new trend in how young we can get our dogs out in the trial scene. But I am huge believer in letting my puppies be puppies. Letting them learn how to be dogs and good members of society. I travel all over the world with my dogs and I want them to know how to act accordingly. So the first 6 months of my puppy's life is learning about relationship/life skills, and one of the games that I play the most with my puppies is The Collar Grab Game.

This is an important life skill. Whether it is for something as simple as "come to me I need you" or something more life threatening like "you are about to run into the road," I need to know that when I reach for my puppy that they are not going to try to run away. Here's how I teach it.

Step 1:

I start sitting on the floor and feeding my dog a cookie while I am grabbing their collar and holding on. Then I release and repeat this same step 4-8 times depending on how my dog feels about having their collar grabbed. If they are less comfortable with it then I repeat more times.

Step 2:

The next step is to delay the cookie a tiny bit and grab the collar first. We want the puppy to understand that letting us grab the collar is what earns them the cookie. Repeat this step as needed.

Step 3:

Now we need to change our position. We need for them to be okay with grabbing for them from a sitting position, a kneeling position, standing and in motion. I work through all the stages at the puppy's comfortable pace.

Step 4:

The next step is to start holding my hand out and teaching the dog to put their collar in my hand. At this point, if you have worked through all the stages adequately, you should see your dog offering to come into your hand to earn the cookie. This ends up becoming a cue for my dogs throughout their life: if I hold my hand out they will come and put their neck/collar into my hand.

Step 5:

The final stage of this game is getting my puppy used to me reaching down and grabbing them calmly but also abruptly, as if I am grabbing at them in fear because of a life-threatening situation. This is when I feel it is most important for my puppy to be okay with me grabbing for them.

I will continue to revisit this game on and off throughout their life to keep the value high. I think about it as money in the bank for the times in the future when I may need to spend it!

Puppy Recalls

Chrissi Schranz | www.clickforjoy.org



© Deb Ricker

One of my favorite things to do with my dogs is off-leash hiking. In order for this to be a safe activity, I need a bomb-proof recall. It's something I start working on as soon as I get a new puppy.

While it's true that any dog of any age can learn to come when called, this is one of the behaviors that is significantly easier to teach in puppyhood. Puppies know that they are vulnerable and little, and rarely will an 8 week old puppy venture far from her human protector. This makes puppyhood the ideal time to work on off-leash reliability: you'll be able to play many games off leash without your puppy wandering off, and you can start establishing freedom as something normal rather than a once-in-a-lifetime experience. The more normal it feels for your puppy to be off leash, the less likely she is to develop a habit of running away as soon as you take off the leash.

But let's cut to the chase: how do you start teaching a reliable recall to your puppy? And how do you make sure she thinks hearing you call is one of the best things in her life?

Step 1: Classically Condition Your Recall Cue

You'll start by teaching your puppy that her future recall cue predicts something tasty: her favorite food! Prepare 10 high-value treats. Have them in a pocket, treat pouch, hidden behind your back, or next to you on a table. Say your puppy's new recall cue, then feed a treat. Wait 2 seconds. Say your puppy's new recall cue, then feed a treat. Wait 2 seconds. Say your puppy's new recall cue, then feed a treat ... Do this until she has eaten all 10 treats! Over the course of the day, do 2 more 10-treat reps in different rooms in your house. Next, do 3 10-treat reps in different corners of your yard, or in another low-distraction outdoors environment. By now, your puppy should get excited as soon as she hears you say the new cue!

Classically conditioning a whistle cue: <https://youtu.be/om1Am14HTS8>

Step 2: Have Fun with Recall Games!

I play lots of recall games with puppies. Here are four of my favorite ones! Thirty seconds to a minute is a good time for a puppy play session. (Feel free to substitute a different marker any time I ask you to click, or skip the click if you're not using a marker.)

Puppy Ping-Pong

Ask one to three friends or family members to help you train your puppy. This game is fun for children, too! Everyone gets a hand full of high-value cookies they will be holding behind their backs, out of the puppy's sight. Ask your helpers to go to a different corner of the biggest room in your house, or set up in your yard, with three to five meters distance between the players.

Anyone who is NOT calling the puppy should stand upright, cross their arms, and turn their backs towards the puppy. The person whose turn it is to call says the recall cue, then squats down to welcome the puppy. She clicks as the puppy runs towards her, and feeds from her hand. Then she gets up, crosses her arms, and turns around. The next person calls, squats down, clicks as the puppy approaches, and feeds from their hands. Then, they get up, cross their arms, and turn around. Now, it's either the first person's turn again, or the third player gets to call! Turning around right before the next recall will help the puppy disengage and run to the new caller. If playing with more than two people, vary the order you call!

Ping Pong in the Yard: <https://youtu.be/ief8Jl566SI>

Hide and Seek

Ask a helper to distract your puppy, or wait until she is distracted and then sneak away. Hide behind the curtains, behind a door or piece of furniture, in the bathtub, behind a large plant, or under a table! If you're playing outside, use trees, bushes, hide around the corner of your house or behind your car in the driveway. Call your puppy once! If she looks worried or hasn't found you after 5 seconds, shuffle your feet or clear your throat to help her out. Don't call again! Click when she runs towards you and squat down, praising and rewarding her with a treat party or toy play!

Martina is hiding behind the bedroom door! <https://youtu.be/Db5pEL5SV8M>

Catch Me if You Can!

Show your puppy that you have tasty treats, then store them out of sight in a pocket or treat pouch. Leisurely stroll through your house or yard, then, all of a sudden, use your new recall cue and take off running! Your puppy should follow you as fast as she can. As soon as she has caught up with you, drop a cookie for her to eat. Call while she's swallowing, and run away again! As soon as she has caught up, drop the next cookie!

Catch me if you can: <https://youtu.be/MXGzasOlnlM>

Flying Cookie Recalls

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Call your puppy, and throw a treat in the direction she is running as she drives past you. As soon as she has finished eating and is lifting her head, call again, click as she runs past you, and throw a treat in the new direction.

In order to make it more fun for your puppy, add handler movement: call her, run away as soon as she starts moving towards you, and throw a treat ahead when she catches up with you. As soon as she has finished eating and is lifting her head, call again, turn around and run the other way, ready to throw the next cookie ahead as she drives past you.

Flying Cookie Recalls: <https://youtu.be/HYHld-IyXbU>

Step 3: Reward Auto Check-Ins

In addition to rewarding your puppy for coming when called, make sure to also reinforce her for checking in with you unprompted! If you use a clicker, mark when she stops and looks at you, and feed near your body. If you don't use a clicker, reach for a cookie when she looks back at you, and feed near your body. Creating a habit of checking in with you in puppyhood will help her keep an eye on you on hikes and other off-leash activities in the future.

Auto check-ins: https://youtu.be/oNs4OM_txA

Step 4: Have lots of off-leash fun with your puppy!

Growing Up FD&SA

Surviving Year One



Annoyingly Adolescent

Kamal Fernandez | www.kamalfernandez.blog



© Rebeccah Aube

There is a point in your dog's life when you may find them at 'best' a little mischievous, and at times down right horrid! Yes, that's right, even as an avid dog lover and owner, I go through a phase with most of my dogs where they test my last nerve and I wonder if it's too late to give up dog training and get Koi Carp!

Between the ages of 6-14 months, your dog will enter into adolescence and with it you will most definitely be facing some challenges. This tends to happen just when you want to really progress their training and start some of the 'really' fun stuff with them. However, out of nowhere, you start to see subtle changes. It may be a loss of focus or a lapse in concentration. It may be a cheeky recall where you use that second cue, assuming your little darling just didn't hear you. Or it may be something more serious like an unprovoked attack on your young dog or your young dog attacking another dog without being provoked.

So your previously sweet, endearing little darling has now turned into Cujo! And before you know it, his reputation has spread like wildfire, with people drawing their dogs away as they see you approach and picking up their children and shoving them up into trees till you pass. Any of this sounding familiar?

Adolescence is a testing time, to say the least. This is when relationships are largely made or broken. Your young dog is transitioning from a puppy to an adult. As a result, their body will be undergoing lots of changes and hormones will be running amok. Their behaviour changes aren't them being 'bad' or 'naughty,' but are physiological changes that they can't help. Male dogs will be emitting testosterone from their system, which is like a belisha beacon to other dogs that there is a young adolescent male present. Some dogs will take this as a threat in itself, and others will perceive this as threatening. This can instigate 'unprovoked' acts of aggression, which can create long-term fear, defensive behaviour, anxiety etc. Adolescence is often a time

when behaviour deemed ‘reactive’ can develop, either because of your dog’s experience or from anxiety that develops after a traumatic event at this time in your dog’s life.

With female dogs entering adolescence, they will be due to come into season, which can cause unpredictable nervousness and ‘seeing’ ghosts. This is where your previously happy-go-lucky baby starts to spook and act apprehensively without any due cause.

Adolescence can last up to approximately 3 years, depending on the breed and type of dog. This isn’t to say that this level of unpredictable behaviour will be constant throughout this period, it will very much be a rollercoaster. You may get weeks or months of your dog’s behaviour improving, then out of nowhere you’ll get a regression. To say it can be challenging and frustrating would be an understatement.

For those who wish to follow a path of reinforcement, the question is: how do I navigate this incredibly testing time, yet follow a path of reinforcement-based training?

Well firstly, let’s be clear: Positive is not permissive. Because you follow a reinforcement-based approach to training doesn’t mean that you have to be a door mat. Dogs need clear boundaries and education, especially at this time.

Here are some simple points that should help you through adolescence.

1. First, you will need to become the master of management. The less your dog can rehearse inappropriate behaviour, the better. Anticipating the situation your dog will be in and being prepared is crucial. Employ the good will of others to help you, and, where possible, set up learning experiences that you can control that mimic ‘real life’ rather than have unplanned uncontrolled interactions.
2. Don’t turn up to a gun fight armed with a knife. Reinforcement is your friend! Ensure that you control access to reinforcement and are always armed with high value reinforcement. If you don’t have the appropriate reinforcement for the situation, just avoid it!
3. Socialisation doesn’t stop at puppyhood; it should continue throughout your dog’s life. However, cherry-pick the dogs that you allow your dog to interact with. For example, I avoid other adolescent entire males with my own adolescent entire male. At this age, due to the hormone changes, there is a higher chance that your dog may be unpredictable, and this could be a catalyst for an unnecessary altercation.
4. Accept that you will have good days and bad days; it’s normal! This is not permanent. You will get through this! Be patient, breathe and go to your ‘happy’ place!
5. Don’t prioritise your dog’s ‘proper’ training at the most challenging times, as their lack of concentration and limited focus will merely frustrate you and sour the association. They can’t help it. Just stick to simple behaviours and focus on ‘focus’. Prioritise your relationship.
6. One-on-one time will be crucial. If it’s a 5 minute training session, or a one-on-one walk, take the time to relationship-build with your terrible teen. It’s this relationship that will get you through the hard times.

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7. Expect tantrums and tiaras. They may have some extreme reactions to life at this time. Stay calm, don't take it personally and remember that reinforcement is key!
8. Your Recall will probably disappear at some point during your dog's teenage years. Feeding meals via training and being mindful of pairing all things of value to your dog with you and desirable behaviours will increase your worth.
9. Don't be afraid to scream, rant and vent! Just not at the dog directly... that's what friends are for! Get it off your chest. The teen years are testing! It's ok to say that at moments your dog isn't your favourite 'person' at times!
10. There are times to manage behaviour, times to train against behaviour and times to just ignore behaviour! Don't try to climb Mt. Everest in one step. Pick your battles – some things can wait for a more appropriate time unless they really are 'that' bad. Your dog is still maturing, and some things may just resolve with age. Be patient.

Finally, remember that we have all been there. You will get through this. Relationships are made of various phases and this is just part of the journey. In years to come, you will chuckle at the testing antics and wonder what all the fuss was about!

Hand Targets for Puppies

[Julie Flanery | www.wonderdogsonline.com](http://www.wonderdogsonline.com)



©Julie Flanery

You may have heard the term “shaping,” perhaps from your puppy class instructor, or in books or online articles you’ve read in preparation for the exciting journey you are about to embark on—teaching your new puppy! Shaping is a term used to describe the process of rewarding small increments of behavior toward an end, final behavior. A “marker” such as a clicker or the word “yes” is used to identify the small bits of behavior—and the reason the dog is being rewarded. Your puppy can learn to offer these behaviors to gain reward. And who doesn’t want a puppy that offers good or desired behavior?!

Dogs and puppies can learn processes and to anticipate what comes next. Shaping allows your puppy to “learn how to learn.” Behaviors that are shaped tend to be more robust than behaviors taught through other means. In shaping, the dog is choosing the path toward reinforcement, and the resulting behavior has greater strength and longevity. The more your puppy learns through shaping, the faster he can move through the process of learning the next skill or behavior.

This brings an exciting new dimension to our training. One of teamwork, and collaboration. We are no longer just training behaviors: we are building a relationship based on clear communication and shared objectives. My training toolbox has a wide array of tools; for me, shaping is the power tool that gets the job done, so that what I’ve built is strong and not likely to fall apart!

Teaching your puppy to touch or target your hand with his nose is a fun way to introduce both pup and handler to shaping. The hand touch also has several other benefits that make it a worthwhile behavior to teach and maintain as part of your training regimen.

Benefits of shaping a hand target:

First and foremost is the instant connection it brings – your pup is physically and emotionally connected to you. With its strong history of reward, a hand touch becomes a fun activity that the puppy enjoys performing and associates with good things—technically, a secondary reinforcer that can be used itself to strengthen and reward other behaviors even when food treats aren't available. You may not be allowed to take food or toys into a sports competition ring, but you always get to take your hands! Hand touches between exercises can be an excellent way to maintain the connection with your dog.

Next, as our puppies explore their world, their mouths are a primary means of getting information and learning about their environment. Though we don't want to take that away from them, teeth on skin is often frowned upon, especially where children are concerned. Having our clothes shredded by sharp puppy teeth can turn a fun play session into a less-than-feel-good moment! While giving our teething puppy explorers appropriate toys or chewies is always a must, communicating that our hands shouldn't be viewed as chew toys can be difficult. Providing an appropriate way to interact with our hands can open up more opportunities for our puppies and young dogs to learn games and interactions where our hands can be a part of play without teeth getting involved.

Teaching a hand target also gives you a way to provide a “passive lure,” one where food is not necessary to create movement in your pup for training behaviors such as sit, down or come to my side. If you'll be pursuing a sport where heelwork is valued, you can use the hand target as part of your training to create a lift and animation in your dog's heelwork. Your hand target also makes a great informal recall cue! Adding finality to the behavior – the puppy must make contact with you in order to complete the recall – makes the criteria for reward clear for both you and your puppy.



You and your pup can also learn about adding duration to behaviors by gradually increasing the amount of time your dog needs to keep his nose to your hand before marking and releasing with a click then reward. Teaching a puppy the concept of duration, or extending behavior, is often sacrificed in favor of shaping and rewarding for movement. Duration and stillness is an important skill for puppies to learn too!

Yes, the hand target is versatile indeed! So how do we go about shaping it?

Getting Started

The way you present your hand will become a cue, so it's important to make it distinct. While many handlers choose to use an open palm as their target surface, you can also teach this using a two-finger touch, with just two fingers extended, or a fist bump with the flat part of your fist between your knuckles as the target. The two-finger option is great for small or toy breeds.

Present your hand out away from you, to your side, in the distinct way that you have decided

on. Using a quick action can draw your puppy's attention, but be sure to keep your hand still or moving away from your puppy after you present it. You might be tempted to help your puppy by moving your hand closer to him – resist this urge! A hand moving toward a puppy or dog's face can cause them to startle or show reluctance in future repetitions. Remember also to keep your hand low enough that your puppy can get to it easily—I often like to start this sitting on the floor with my puppy.

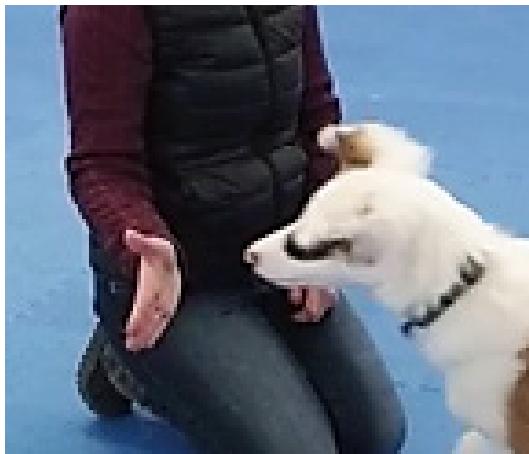
After presenting the target, mark when your pup looks at or moves toward your hand, then toss your treat a few feet away. Using a re-set toss can provide the little bit of distance needed for your pup to see and approach your hand again.

Important Note: Remember after you click to pause, about the time it takes you to take a breath, before reaching for your pocket or bait bag. You want your marker to signal that a treat is coming, not a reach for the treat, so your click should be separated from the start of your treat delivery.

Repeat for a few repetitions, gradually increasing your pup's proximity to your hand until he lightly touches it with his nose. Now, you can either place your treat in your hand where he touched, or you can use the re-set toss to start the game again.

As you continue, start to select for more pressure to your hand. Removing your hand between repetitions will add some anticipation for the puppy by making her eager for the hand to reappear and another chance to play the game. As your pup's understanding and confidence in

the behavior increases, you can begin to add the other elements to the hand targeting game—stronger touches, more duration, using the hand target as an informal recall or food-free lure for movement. The stronger your puppy's hand targeting behavior becomes, the more its versatility will unfold!



© Julie Flanery

Shaping is a process that can be used not only to teach a hand target, but every behavior you would like to add to your pup's repertoire, including behaviors in your chosen sport, husbandry and cooperative care, good manners and fun and games!

<https://youtu.be/K7CjO4LyI2o>

The Get Down Game

Restraint Manners for Puppies

[Julie Daniels](#) | www.koolkidsagility.com



© Charlotte Bick

I am not a person who trains my little one to come up and sit politely at a very young age. I err on the side of effusive greetings while the baby is very young. I want that strong positive response whenever the baby sees people – pure glee! I don't want the attraction to be dampened by responsibility yet. So my babies go barreling up to anyone and are generally a happy nuisance while they are small.

But that doesn't mean I don't work on impulse control – I certainly do! When my puppies are still very young, to help them learn a win-win game of impulse control, I start playing the "Get Down Game." This game is one of the very first politeness exercises which I enjoy teaching my puppies. A combination of self-control and cooperation, it is both very simple and extremely useful. It also is good early practice for those later "hurry up and wait" activities in all dog sports.

Babies have a tough time of it in the arms of humans. It's safe and comfy, but they have no say in what they get to touch and what they get to explore while they are being confined in our arms. After a while, a kid just wants to get free, to explore some more from ground level. How are they to tell people that they want to get away?

If you think about it, puppies only have a few ways to tell us that they want to get down. They whine and squirm, and if that doesn't work, they bite and struggle. I know people who don't allow that, but I welcome it. I feel that it is really the only way the puppy can tell me that he is ready to explore. And I want the puppy to learn to operate upon his world; that is, I want him to want to get down!

So rather than force the pup to be quiet in our arms, I say we work with it. By training restraint manners while putting the puppy down, we can be sympathetic without creating a brat. The puppy learns that his needs will be met, and the puppy learns to be polite about getting what he wants—easy lessons that are the beginning of a cooperative team effort which benefits us for life. So when it's time for a little active self-control, say 10 weeks or more, I use the "Get Down Game" to show puppies how to train me to put them on the ground when they want to get down.

The goal of the game is that the baby remains soft and relaxed while I put him down. To instill these restraint manners, I start by holding the puppy, either standing bent over or sitting in a chair. Then I start lowering him smoothly to the floor. But I do not want the puppy to scrabble his feet on the way down! If he squirms, I stop lowering him and I lift him up again.

From my bent-over position, it only takes about two seconds to lower him to the floor – only two seconds of having to control his feet. This is not difficult, but it is counterintuitive! So the first reps can take a while, and we will practice it many times a day.

As days go on, I stand more upright and take longer to lower the puppy, each time standing up again and cradling the pup again if he squirms. I want to teach the puppy this: "I will put you down because you squirm, but I will not put you down WHILE you squirm." The puppy has to control his feet on the descent. This is something that even a baby can learn to do.

This video of my Koolaid at 3 months old shows you how it turns out.

https://youtu.be/KjTFnWYUA_Q

Using the "Get Down Game," from a very young age, your puppy will learn to control his feet to get what he wants. And he can see it coming so that he can measure his success: he is controlling his feet in order to earn his freedom – a terrific lesson for a puppy. This simple game will set the stage for lots of "wait, then explode" games later in his sports life. You'll be developing his relaxation response, so he will feel safe in your arms whenever you need to pick him up. It will also help your dog trust you when you need to restrain him – a useful life skill as your dog grows up!

Enjoy your little baby! Let him be a happy nuisance in greeting people, but teach him good manners for when you need to restrain him. You will always be glad you taught the Get Down Game to your puppy.

This is Koolaid demonstrating as a three-month-old. At three months she had this game down cold, several seconds. She owns that game, even though she is a very busy puppy whose feet never stop moving.

Check out her relaxation response as she is being lowered to the ground! She makes it clear that she knows how to get what she wants. She knows how to control her feet. Her feet are relaxed and dangling, even though her brain is obviously busy. And then see her immediately spring to action when she feels her paws on the floor. I promise you that if my wild puppy can do it, your

puppy can do it too!

Update: Koolaid is now a young adult. She remains polite and relaxed about being picked up, carried, and lowered to the ground.

Exercising Puppies

[Debbie Gross Torraca, DPT, MSPT, Diplomat ABPTS, CCRP](#) | www.wizardofpaws.net



© Jennifer Grebinoski

The question of when to begin exercising puppies is a common one. The answer is really multifactorial. The physical age, mental age, condition, breed, and owner's ability are all factors. I become very alarmed when I discover a dog is championed at a young age in a jumping sport such as agility. I was recently at the Westminster agility event and was dismayed to see so many titled two-year-olds running. My concern is the practice – when did training start? Of great concern in agility is the tight turning done while weaving and the strain and stresses of jumping. The American Little League Association (I know we are talking about dogs!) only allows a certain number of pitches per week for children up to the age of eighteen. This has been well researched in human sports medicine and serves to protect growing bones, ligaments, and musculature structures. Throwing, much like weaving, places a significant amount of stress on the ligaments and may cause irreversible changes.

I like to think of the growth plates in bones like little factories helping the bones grow. They are located at the end of each bone throughout the dog's body. Some of the factories close up sooner than others. Typically, in an average size dog, such as a Border Collie or a medium size Golden Retriever, growth plates shut down at approximately eighteen months of age. However, the growth plates or factories in the long bones may not close until thirty to thirty-six months in large breed dogs. The only way to absolutely determine if growth plates are closed is to take radiographs or x-rays.

While the growth plates or factories are working, they may be damaged by repetitive, strenuous jumping, weaving and running.

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Most of the growth in the bones of puppies occurs between three and nine months of age. <http://vsoak.com/ww2/images/stories/pdf/Orthopedic%20Problems%20in%20the%20Immature%20Dog.pdf>

The Type I muscle fibers in a dog's body assist in balance, proprioception, postural control and core. These muscle fibers are especially important in the growing puppy, and proper development may decrease the incidence of joint disease such as canine hip dysplasia, elbow dysplasia, and other problems associated with decreased strength. During this time period, low impact, non-repetitive conditioning exercises, done with control and supervision can help build a strong core and prevent injury. The increase in body awareness (proprioception) and coordination in a pup that has done simple on-the-ground core exercises, itself helps prevent injury.

I am fortunate enough to see many litters of all different breeds at eight weeks for a structural evaluation. There is a huge difference between puppies that have been exposed to many different objects versus those kept in an enclosed area. The eight-week-old pups that have been exposed to many things are already so ahead of the game with regard to experiences, strength, and confidence. They are confident in their physical and mental abilities. Having followed many of these puppies, several have gone on to successful and healthy lives with a very low incidence of physical and mental problems. Complete prevention of problems is not a realistic goal, but the more we can do to improve the dogs' quality of life, the better.

The more exposure young pups have to different experiences, surfaces, and objects, the better. We ultimately want a strong and confident pup, and a safe introduction to low-to-the-ground canine conditioning products can help. Learning to sit and stand on the K9 Kore Disk or Wobble Board is a fun way to combine fitness and behavior training. Targeting paw PAWDS is a great proprioception exercise. Playing touch while the pup is on a K9 Kore Disk creates simple weight shifting motions that teach the pup to balance and strengthen core muscles. Exercises like these should be kept to short sessions, and the pup allowed to stop when it shows signs of being tired: losing interest, sitting or lying down.

Getting out and walking your pup is a great idea. But it needs to be taken slow. I mentioned five minutes per month of total exercise. This needs to be tailored to their needs. Play is wonderful as long as it is not too rough. Most puppies will self regulate, but puppies playing with other puppies need to be regulated.

Training for sports should begin with the basics, keeping in mind the goal SHOULD be long term goal. When you start with a puppy, envision the puppy living the best quality of life for the longest time. There are many things not within your control for that (sudden disease, accidents, etc.) but there are many things within your control. Waiting until they are psychologically and physically mature to begin more intense activities is optimal. With regard to agility, I prefer not starting full closed weaves or their jump height until at least eighteen months or longer depending upon the dogs. The same holds true for other sports. Excessive jumping, running and twisting is a recipe for disaster. You have plenty of time to work with your dog. Let them enjoy life.

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It is also crucial to mention the surfaces that pups grow up on. Pups should be raised on a non-slippery surface, such as yoga mats, textured mats, and other surfaces with some sort of grip. Although it's easier to clean a linoleum or ceramic tile floor, these have been shown to increase the instability of the puppies' movement. All of that slipping is not beneficial to growing pups. They need tactile surfaces to keep them from sliding while they learn to use their bodies correctly, and sufficient padding to prevent joint concussion while learning or playing. This is an excellent article reprinted in USDAA News and Events on why early strength and environmental factors are so important with puppies. It summarizes a study by Norwegian researcher, Randy Krotveit.

<https://www.usdaa.com/article.cfm?newsID=2288>

The Magic of the Treat Magnet

Hannah Branigan | www.wonderpupstraining.com



© Hannah Branigan

It's generally easier to keep a puppy's attention than it is to get it back after it has wandered. However, in the course of a training session, there will always be times where you need to move the puppy from place to place, or keep him occupied while setting up a prop, or take a moment to think about what to do next. These are the spaces between the actual training. If we don't give the puppy some structure here, something positive to do, he may then wander off and get into trouble. And we all know how quickly a wandering puppy gets into trouble!

This is a great place to use a special kind of lure, not to teach any particular behavior, but simply to manage the puppy in the space between active training when you're not 100% focused on the puppy and his behavior. It's a fabulous tool in for keeping his attention and prevent unwanted habits from developing, because it really lets us (and the dog) concentrate on the goal behavior.

We call this excellent tool a "Treat Magnet," a name I first heard from Emelie Johnson Vegh and Eva Bertilsson's book *Agility Right From the Start*. It was one of those simple yet elegant techniques that makes you want to just bop yourself on the head. #duh!

The Treat Magnet is crazy useful any time you need to transport your dog through space:

- from his crate to the training area
- to the starting point of a sequence
- moving through a crowd
- into position to begin a new rep

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The important thing to remember is that while I'm Treat Magneting (yes, that's a word Siri) my dog, he's not actually learning anything. But I am keeping him connected and happy, and preventing anything undesirable from happening. It helps me maintain my "training bubble" and keep my session clean of extraneous junk.

Here is an example of one of the places I commonly make use of a Treat Magnet. I'm setting my dog up to work on his A-frame behavior. The focus of my session is on him hitting the contact zone, so that is the behavior I want to cue and reinforce. But to reset after each repetition, I have to move him 3247 miles back to the other side of the equipment. That could result in a GIANT gap, dropping my rate of reinforcement (ROR) to almost nothing, and where teenage terrier might decide to go sightseeing and discover his own source of reinforcement in the environment.

<https://youtu.be/tjiUQ2IWyTg>

In fact, if you do a little math here, you'll see that it takes me at least 9 seconds just to walk back to our starting point, and then some amount of time to get him set and position myself in the relevant location... resulting in a ROR of something like a treat every 17-20 seconds... waaaaay too low to keep this little dude in the game.

I could cue him to heel with me back to the starting point, but then I'd be stuck having to decide if I want to maintain criteria on his heel position, or risk having that (very expensive) behavior degrade. And heeling isn't the focus of this session. A-frame is. So instead, I use the Treat Magnet to pick him up directly from the Pet Tutor and transport him back to the other side of the A-frame.

During that 9 seconds of ridiculously slow walking (on a terrier scale), he's nibbling the treat in my hand and quite happy to do so. When we get where we're going, he gets that treat. And then we are all set to do the next rep. In that time, I'm also free to think about what happened in the last rep and consider my criteria for the next one. I can even talk to my friend who is videotaping for me, and generally rest my brain for a second. All without having to worry about my dog disconnecting and going off marauding about his yard, peeing on who knows what and possibly finding a hole in his fence.

In another example, here I am using the Treat Magnet to keep my dog (same wily terrier!) engaged while I "hide" a scent article in the leaves for him to find, in preparation for scent discrimination and seek back exercises.

<https://youtu.be/6byjZZTT6EQ>

In this case, the Treat Magnet gives me a moment to set the article exactly where I want it and set him up at the desired distance for each rep. Using a Treat Magnet here, instead of calling him to heel or putting him in a sit stay, again lets us both focus on the single element that is the focus of our training session - finding the article! We are able to keep a high rate of reinforcement and keep the flow of the session going so that he stays happy and motivated.

To teach the Treat Magnet:

Objective: Dog maintains contact with your hand holding the treat, nibbling the treat and following your hand as you move

1. Hold a treat between your thumb and the flat part of your first two fingers. (This gives your dog a flat surface to press against and protects the sensitive tips of your fingers.)
2. Present your hand to the dog, palm facing his nose.
3. When the dog contacts your hand, move your thumb to uncover the treat and let the dog take it.
4. Repeat, gradually moving your hand a few inches at a time, releasing the treat to the dog when he maintains contact with your hand.
5. Keep adding more duration and distance to your treat magnet. To move longer distances (like clear across an agility field), you may need to reinforce several times by letting the dog get the treat and starting a new treat magnet from there.
6. Practice in different environments and around distractions.

Most dogs pick this up really quickly – following food is something they are already pretty good at! The hard part is remembering to use it in your sessions.

It's always easier to keep a dog's attention than get a dog's attention. Using the Treat Magnet is a simple way to keep my dog engaged throughout the session, so that I am less likely to be stuck having to refocus him between reps. Once you are in the habit of Treat Magneting (still a word!), you won't know how you ever trained without it!



Sport Games

Building the Foundation

[Julie Symons](#) | www.savvydogsports.com



© Sheree Sutherland

Like many FDSA instructors, I use a marker system to indicate type, location and delivery of reinforcement. Communicating **WHAT** kind of reinforcement will be given and **HOW** it will be delivered lets our dogs know what to expect. When our dogs know what to expect, they are more motivated and confident. To introduce the first applications of my marker system, two fun and energizing games I play with a new puppy are “Get it” and “Thrus.”

“Get it” is a nice interactive game that stimulates the dog’s prey drive and accomplishes the following:

1. Teaches a specific marker cue for getting a tossed treat.
2. Encourages movement which dogs love.
3. Teaches quick pick-up and turn.
4. Enables fun recalls.
5. Used for resets during any training.

To teach this game to a new puppy, say the cue “Get it,” pause, and then toss the treat. For young puppies who don’t yet have the motor skills to see a treat being tossed, roll it out like a bowling ball and only a few feet away. As they pick up the tossed treat, cue the next “Get it” and toss a treat the other way. The puppy will quickly learn to associate the cue “Get it” with a treat toss and will anticipate and start looking for the treat to be thrown after the cue.

As with all interactive training, make sure you are animated and fun! Pay attention if you are cuing the next “Get it” too late. Dogs will get slower or start to sniff the ground if you are too late with the next cue, so be sure to cue the next “Get it” just before/as they are getting the first treat. This should be a fast paced, high rate of reinforcement game!

Once the puppy has learned to look for the tossed treat on the “Get it” cue, you can then start to add their name. “Get it” ... “Fido, get it.” This will introduce some early recall practice and speed up the response for the next “Get it.” You can then start to cue them earlier, just before picking up the treat, to encourage a quicker grab and return.

Putting “Get it” on cue is a great way to teach our pups that they should only take treats off the ground with permission — that treats on the floor aren’t always available anytime during training, only after the cue “Get it” is given.

<https://youtu.be/IEvR5ZIdYM0>

“Thrus” are the next game I’d like to share. They are used to get your dog comfortable with going through your legs. “Thrus” can be performed in either direction. Coming toward you is a great precursor for formal obedience fronts, while coming through from behind is the precursor to the “squish” position coined by Denise Fenzi, founder of Fenzi Dog Sports Academy. Dogs learn to love the “squish,” a position that can help them feel safe and that they find reassuring.

The reason that I like to acclimate puppies to go through our legs or being in a “squish” position is that it places them along the centerline of our body. This will nurture your fronts before you start asking for fronts! Instead of asking for a formal front, we will use a treat toss to encourage them to go through our legs. This develops a centerline, encourages speed, and addresses any frontal pressure sensitivities that your pup may have by removing them. Plus, dogs like to move! They learn to love running through your legs. It taps into their prey drive by chasing a treat as well as simulates performing an “obstacle” type skill.

Important Note: This game can be problematic for large breeds or other circumstances where you can’t have your dog go through your legs. Since the main goal is to work on fronts, there are many other approaches that you can take. You can play the same game but using a front platform, or having your dog jump up on you to receive a treat. You could also take off running as they get close and use a toy to engage with them or toss a treat as they catch up.

To teach “thrus”

1. First, experiment and play with getting your pup to go through your legs with a toy or treats. If your pup does not go through your legs after a treat toss and decides to go around to chase the treat, let it go! Don’t try to fix or stop your pup. Usually it’s a timing issue with your treat toss. Next time, wait a second longer before tossing the treat, when the puppy is closer and more likely to go through. If you toss too early when they are first learning, they will often react to the movement behind you, which usually bounces off to the side and they will naturally take the direct route! Adjust your timing, try again and continue to build value for going through your legs.

<https://youtu.be/QNJzcc56dwc>

2. Next, try the “squish” position and reward heavily for getting and staying in that position.

<https://youtu.be/oV9DCb8DIXE>

Here's an advanced dog working both “squish” and “thru.”

<https://youtu.be/lUystSABJ04>

3. Now let's get to lots of “Thrus!” Start by tossing a treat away from you and then call your dog, throwing another treat between your legs as your dog comes back. Turn around for another “thru” between your legs. Make sure to cue “get it” before tossing the treat. You can also get fancy with a hopping “thru!” Hop into the position to send your dog through. Lots more fun!

At the end of this video, you'll see the final outcome of adding some formal fronts after all the “thru” games!

<https://youtu.be/PTBePIkG3XI>

“Get it” and “thrus” are a fun way to add excitement and the movement dogs love into your puppy’s training sessions. At the same time, these energizing games introduce useful markers, build confidence and develop foundation skills that will serve you both well in your future training. Enjoy!

“Spot” Games for Agility Puppies & Dogs

Amanda Nelson | www.fluidmotionagility.com



© Deborah Jones

One of the first games I like to teach my young dogs or puppies is my Spot game. The core of the game is to teach them to come in-between my legs for their “spot.” This is a great tool to use later on in their agility careers for start line setups, or as a fun game to play while waiting to go into the ring.

This game also teaches my dogs a “safe” place. If I need them to get out of a crowded situation, or move them closer to my body so that I can make sure they aren’t in the path of other dogs, this is a great behavior to have. My dog Ally has issues with loud noises and when she starts to feel insecure, she will try to get into her “spot” to be close and feel more secure in her safe place.

In my more advanced teachings of this game, I will chain together other behaviors with it, but in the beginning, I am just looking for a puppy to come in-between my legs. Once they understand this behavior, I will start to ask for other known behaviors like Sit, Down, or Stand. Then, I can use “Spot” chained with these other behaviors while I am waiting to go into the ring, to stay engaged with my dog, or to create a fun “pre-run” routine that has both me and my dog working together and not just standing in line.

How to Teach Spot Games

I like to use a mat, bed, or anything that my puppy will go to or target. It’s easier to start with them just a little bit behind you. First, I ask the pup to go their mat, target or bed. Then I turn to stand a slight distance from them, facing away. I take a wide stance and bend over slightly with a cookie in my hand. Making sure that my puppy can see the cookie, I invite them to come in between my legs from behind, and quickly reward them for even just sticking their head through. As we repeat the exercise, I will work on my dog’s confidence coming in between my legs until

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they are completely relaxed and secure being in the final position that I want. I like for their front feet to basically be right in between my feet, but this is personal preference and each dog will be a little different in their foot placement.

Now, some dogs do not like to come into someone's space like this, or if you have a little dog, bending over that low can really hurt the back. For these situations, I like to use a spoon with some sort of sticky treat, a little cream cheese or something of that nature. By using the spoon, you won't have to bend over as far for the little dogs, and if your pup is unhappy about coming into your space when you are bent over, the spoon really helps for that.

Before I start adding any behavior chains, I really want to make sure that my puppy or dog understands to come in between my legs from behind, no matter my position. Even if my dog is sitting in front of me, when I ask for "Spot," they will run behind me and then come in between my legs for their spot. Once my dog can do this, I will start adding behavior chains to their spot game.

This video shows Ally doing some of her spot work:

<https://youtu.be/F-Nxm0Qowow>

Advanced Spot Games

Now that my dog understands and has confidence to drive to their spot, I will start adding in other behaviors. I will add only known behaviors at this point, as I don't want to try to teach a new behavior along with working on advanced spot games. Usually, I start with Sit, since it's one of the first basic behaviors we teach our puppies and it's easy to work with as the first behavior chained with the spot.

To teach this, as my puppy comes in between my legs for their spot, I will reward them and then ask for the Sit. If my dog is having a hard time getting into the Sit, I might lure them with cookies once or twice to help them figure out how to sit while still between my legs. I will repeat this until my dog is comfortable with coming in between my legs and sitting.

Once they are comfortable with sitting, I will start on the next behavior I want. Depending on what your dog knows, this could be a Stand or a Down; I usually do a Down next, followed by the Stand. As with Sit, when my dog comes in between my legs for the Spot, I will ask for a Down. Again, if my dog is having any issues with lying down between my legs, I may lure them a couple of times to help them work it out. I will work on the Down in between my legs until I feel that my dog understands the behavior and is confident and comfortable doing it.

From here, I will now start asking for multiple behaviors. I can ask my dog for their spot, and once they come between my legs, ask for a Sit, then a Down, then back to a Sit, and then maybe a Stand (if that is something I have worked on with them.) You can definitely mix up the patterns you want to do with your dog when it comes to the order of the behaviors while doing the spot.

And you can always add more! I love teaching multiple different behaviors along with the spot, like teaching them to put their front feet on your feet or walking with you while you walk (and they stay between your legs.) The more I have, the greater my Spot tool will be while waiting to go in the ring to compete at a trial, to give my dog a safe place, or any situation where I need the dog to engage and focus with me.

Release the Hounds

Using a Release Cue

Laura Waudby | www.tandemdogsports.com



Before beginning to teach the concept of stay / duration, you first have to teach your puppy what to do when released! She needs to understand that there is a clear end to the behavior. It's not just stay there until she gets bored and wanders away or until she wants to run after something! I recommend teaching your release as a specific action, the same as any other behavior. Just being "allowed" to move is not clear enough criteria to the dog – what if she doesn't move? My release actually serves as a cue to the dog to initiate movement towards me. A RELEASE IS A CUE!

You may have several different release cues that you use with your puppy. In this article, we are going to focus on a release that tells the puppy to get up and focus on you. This is not the same as an "all done" cue that might tell your puppy that they are free to zoom around and sniff things!

For most dog sports you will need your release to be on a verbal cue. We don't want our dogs thinking that our motion away from them is the release – that will make it very difficult to work on distance behaviors! And for agility, it is extra crucial that the dog isn't trying to analyze our motion as we lead out. I think we have all seen dogs that release as soon as their handler starts to raise their hand, or looks like they are going to start moving again!

Teaching a Release Cue

For your puppy's early lessons, start with them on a sit directly in front of you. Reward them for sitting. Pause. And then cue your release such as "break!" Do NOT move your feet, hands, or head as you give the verbal release!

If your puppy stands up on your break, that's exactly what we want! Reward them! If your puppy does not move on the verbal release, make sure to say the word first, then take a step backward and encourage the dog to come towards you. Make sure to pause between your verbal and any help from your body movement.

Practice this release cue with your puppy in front of you, and then do the same exercises with the puppy sitting on your left side, and on the right side.

General Impulse Control and Duration

My favorite way to teach the concept of a Stay with a puppy is to first build lots of value for a puppy choosing to be in a crate or on a taller platform. Both those choices make it very black and white that I am rewarding them for remaining on a surface.

The concept of a dog "staying" is very hard to narrow down. By the usual definition, we're focusing on the dog NOT doing something (not moving) versus focusing on what we actually want them to do. Teaching the puppy to remain on a surface allows a trainer to teach the concepts of impulse control and a release cue to a dog without having to worry about the actual position being held or small foot movements. Note that in a crate or on a pedestal I don't really care if the dog moves a little bit as long as they don't come off. I'm essentially training a small boundary cue first and I do NOT use the stay cue for this.

I begin by simply giving the puppy lots of cookies for remaining on the surface. Gradually I add time between cookies. This helps to teach the puppy that a cookie is not a release!

If the puppy comes off the surface I usually talk to them, "well that was silly!" and either wait briefly to see if they can fix it by getting back on the surface or I can just help them get back on. Make sure to use your release cue frequently to teach the puppy the concept of a beginning and an end!

Early on I will also start to proof whether the puppy can choose to remain on the surface and leave a visible cookie held in my hand or on the floor. If the puppy comes towards the cookie, cover it up and either wait for them to problem solve or help them out by getting them back on the surface. This is their first real choice in deciding to remain in position instead of rushing forward towards a distraction!

Slow Cookies & Zen Proofing

When your puppy starts to get the idea of remaining on a surface until they hear the verbal release cue, we can then introduce the idea that position matters. Don't use any type of stay cue yet though! We really want the puppy understanding the idea before we attach a cue!

Start by getting your puppy in a sit position with cookies held just out of their reach. If the puppy does not move towards the cookies, mark and then very quickly bring your treat hand to the dog to reward. Repeat, moving the cookies slower to them each time. Any time the dog moves toward your hand, take the cookies away and wait until they are still again or get them back into the original position if they switched. Periodically release your puppy and play with them in between reps!

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Progress until you can slowly zoom the cookie back and forth in front of their nose, getting closer and closer, while your puppy patiently waits!

You can then try having the cookie slowly moving at all different angles around the dog. Can you bring the cookie to your dog's hip while they keep their feet still? How about having the cookie move over their head and towards their butt? Can it touch the ground?

Repeat this game with your puppy in a down position too! You may need to kneel on the ground in front of your puppy so that a treat coming from above isn't quite so hard. Remember, our goal is the puppy maintaining position; if the elbows come off the ground, pause your cookie delivery until elbows are back down!

By teaching your puppy that your release word is the cue to move to you, you will help them understand that they should hold their stays until they hear it, even in the presence of temptations like cookies or handler movement.

Earning a Paycheck

Teach Puppy to "Push the Button" for rewards

[Lucy Newton | www.lucynewton.com](http://www.lucynewton.com)



Calixx d. Polizei, Police K9 'Calix'

While I have been working with dogs all my life, over the past 15 years, I have been focused full-time on training dogs for various working tasks, raising puppies to become certified working dogs for search and rescue, detection and police work. Within each of those venues, the dogs are required to have a rather extensive skill set in scent work, apprehension, obedience, tracking, and agility. I have also increased my participation in competition sports as a way to keep my own personal dogs entertained. Training for dog sports offers some unique training challenges as well, which require me to be a better dog trainer.

Because of my experience, people are often curious about my selection of a working prospect puppy and how I start them. I have to admit that there has not been a lot of precision to that selection process: I have had pups that I have carefully selected, I have had breeders select a pup for me and I have raised several pups that were "rescues" in one way or another. Some just happened to cross my path and were not intended to be working dogs. Regardless of the intended venue of my pups or what I am training a puppy for, there is one thing that I emphasize with all of them when I start. The first concept that I want the pup to understand is that if he wants something, he can do something to get it.

This simple yet important concept is the basis for everything that I am going to train my dogs to do later on in their careers. If I know what the working goal for the puppy is, I might do a few things to prepare him for his future. But when I first start, I am less concerned about what behaviors I specifically train and more concerned with the puppy understanding the concept: that the things he does have (positive) consequences. I want the puppy to learn to figure out what "button to push" and then demand that you reward him for his efforts!

Some of the exercises I begin with are pure puppy management. “I want you to not leap into your food bowl as I am lowering it to the floor.” So I start with withholding the bowl until the paws are on the ground for a nanosecond and build up to where I can set the bowl down and release the puppy to the food.

However, at no point do I try to make the puppy do what I want. I do try to gauge the challenge of the task so that it is not unreasonable for the pup’s current ability – I don’t want him to fail over and over. But I do want him challenged; that is a very important point. If the pup jumps for the bowl, I want him to notice cause and effect without additional input from me. I want him to figure out how to be successful – how to make me lower it. I want him to understand that he controls his reinforcement with his behavior.

Similarly, I might want to teach a puppy “I want you to pause before I open the crate door.” Again, I want to set him up so that he controls his reinforcement. I might start by not touching the door if paws are hammering on it. Then I progress to opening the door a tiny bit. Breaking the plane with his nose makes the door (gently) close. Again, the pup’s behavior controls the outcome. Ultimately, I want him to hold back until I release him. But the outcome is only a by-product of my ultimate goal: for him to learn that behaviors have criteria that, when followed, lead to rewards.

In addition to working on the life skills and things that make living with a high drive working puppy slightly more bearable, there are also many working skills that can be taught in this manner. But again, my concern is less about getting the skill set on board than it is about the puppy learning that he controls his reinforcement by following criteria: “pushing the button leads to rewards.” The behaviors and the criteria will get more complicated as we go along, but by then I have an older dog that has learned to be very attentive to figuring out the criteria.



Some of the basic skills behaviors that I have used to teach pups the concept includes:

- Circle a cone to the left and right
- Front paws onto an overturned rubber bowl
- All feet on a platform
- Front paws on a touchpad
- Nose touch to hand
- Chin rest on hand
- Eye contact – first stationary and then while I am moving

Although it makes sense to teach things that are going to be useful later on, again, the tasks themselves are not my focus. I do try to pick a variety of skills that require the puppy to apply the concept in many different ways: when focusing on me (eye contact), when going away (touch pad) and coming to me (hand touch). This is so that a location doesn't become a zone of reinforcement: opportunities to "push the button" may be anywhere. Some of the behaviors that I want later on, like detection, require independent effort from the dog – I am not involved until the dog lets me know he has found something – so I really like behaviors that send the pup away rather than just staying close for cues.

With these behaviors, I don't worry about breaking things down into tiny steps to achieve perfection. Though I never want the pup to get overly frustrated or shut down, there is nothing wrong with challenging him to figure out the criteria of simple behaviors. The important thing is that the puppy sees the "props" as a means to an end: they are a way to get me to give him reinforcement. The reinforcement might be food, it might be a toy, it might be anything of value to the puppy. Later on, the "prop" might be an odor, or an article, or a directional table – all the things that could cue a behavior so that, when performed to criteria, the puppy can "make" me reward him. For the tiny puppy, I want him to see things like getting on a platform or going into a crate as "buttons" – ways to make me provide a reward.

A big part of what I have done with dogs has been to train behaviors and then stay out of the way and let the expert, the dog, do his job. That training philosophy has carried over from originally training dogs for detection to all kinds of working and sports tasks. Even though this concept is not specifically focused on my teaching specialties at the Fenzi Dog Sports Academy, tracking and nosework, it is an important aspect of how I raise my puppies. All too often, when I am working with people, particularly with detection, I suggest that the handler get out of the way and let the dog figure things out. Focusing first on the simple but powerful concept of "push the button" will ultimately lead to better behaviors in the above venues as well as others.

Here is an example of a young Rottweiler pup doing a few of the exercises listed above. Again, remember that it is not really about the exercises, it is the pup figuring out which "buttons to push" in order to get rewarded.

https://youtu.be/gS_NtVOqQBg

TRICKS

for Body Awareness & Relationship Building

Sara Brueske | www.zoomdogtraining.com



© Sara Brueske

Puppyhood is a great time to focus on training behaviors that aid in developing learning skills and body awareness. After spending countless hours pouring over pedigrees, meeting parents and relatives, talking to breeders and counting down the days until our new performance prospect puppy comes home, it can be difficult to not jump into training immediately. However, there is an argument to be made about taking the slow approach to performance training, holding off on the high-pressure competition behaviors until our puppy's mind and body are more mature. If you're like me though, you enjoy training and want to explore that part of your relationship with your new puppy.

That's where "trick" training comes in handy. Whether you call them parlor tricks, throw away behaviors or essential skills, they all serve an important function. Every new behavior learned is adding to your puppy's learning skill database, building their confidence and strengthening your working relationship. Every new behavior is helping to build your understanding of your puppy, how they learn and communicate, what rewards they like best and how they react to your emotions. Every new behavior helps build your unique language and communication system with your new working partner. Teaching low-pressure behaviors that are fun for both you and your puppy can do wonders for your relationship.

While it's important to get a head start on some foundation aspects of future competition behaviors, be sure to have plenty of low-pressure, throw away behaviors to focus on as well. As you learn about your new puppy, it will be far less stressful for both of you to experience hiccups while learning how to do a parlor trick than it would be if you were working on your formal competition heel. Mistakes in learning will happen; it's much easier to handle those mistakes when they happen in an informal behavior.

Each new behavior also aids in our puppy learning to move and coordinate their body. Our puppies are growing at an incredible rate, and it can be difficult to find ways to teach them body awareness while still keeping their joints safe and healthy. Low impact tricks like the ones below are a key component to the foundation work for any performance dog.

The two tricks we will focus on in this article are both fantastic for rear end awareness and teaching our puppies about offering behaviors: All-4-In and Backup.

All-4-In

All-4-In is just as it sounds, all four paws in one box. We will start this exercise with a large box, one easy for our puppy to stand in, and gradually move to smaller and smaller boxes. The smaller the box, the more difficult it is for the puppy to coordinate all four limbs in simultaneously and balance for any duration. This behavior will be free-shaped, meaning we will mark and reward for successful approximations of the final behavior, gradually increasing criteria until we have the complete behavior.

Begin with a box large enough that your puppy can stand in it squarely with no curve in their back. Grab your treats, clicker, box and puppy. Put the box on the ground and be ready to immediately click and reward any interaction with it. Gradually increase criteria to only clicking and rewarding paw interaction, then one paw in the box. Reward in place for 2-4 clicks, then toss a reset reward away from the box. This treat toss will help your puppy's mental stamina and allow you to evaluate their understanding of the behavior in regards to interaction with the box. If your puppy is successful, continue to increase criteria to 2 paws in the box, then 3, then 4.

Once your puppy is eagerly putting all four paws into the large box, switch to a slightly smaller box. I like to do this exchange at the beginning of a new session – one or two reps with the larger box, then switch it out for the slightly smaller one. That way your puppy is already thinking about putting all four paws in and the box change will be easier on them. If your puppy struggles with the new box, decrease criteria to two paws, and gradually increase it back up to four paws in.



© Sara Brueske

As the smaller box becomes easy for your puppy to put and hold all four paws in, follow the same pattern for switching to a smaller box as before. Continue to go smaller and smaller as you can. Remember, we are building coordination and balance with this exercise, the process to go to a tiny box could span over several weeks as our puppies develop in body awareness. Do not rush this process!

Backup

The second behavior we are going to discuss is backup. There are two different ways to teach this. The first is to use rear foot targeting and the second is to free-shape the behavior. We are going to focus on the first method as the second doesn't need much explanation outside of building criteria slowly and utilizing reward placement (toss the treat to your puppy after they back up.)

Use a low platform for this (a telephone book, a small upside-down box, etc.) Place the platform on the ground, click and reward any interaction. Gradually increase criteria to all four paws on the platform. At this point, reward on the ground in front of the platform, encouraging the puppy to move into the two-on-two off position (front paws on the ground, rear paws on the platform). Reward in position multiple times and then toss a reset treat. Instead of clicking all four paws, pause and see if your puppy will offer the two-on-two-off position. If they don't, click for all four paws, rewarding in the correct position as before. Eventually, they will move into that position themselves after the reset treat. Jackpot (extra treats, throw them a party, lots of verbal praise) when that happens!



© Sara Brueske

Now that our puppies are moving into that two-on-two-off position by themselves, we can start teaching the back up. Reward in position once, then reward slightly further from your puppy so they have to stretch to get the reward. Click and reward the lean back into position, that's the start of our backup. Reward in position once, then again out further so puppy has to stretch. Repeat this process, moving the "out of position" treat further and further until your puppy is taking a step forward with their rear feet. Hopefully, because we've clicked the lean back into position, they will take a step back to get back into the two-on-two-off position. Click and

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reward that. If they circle around to get back onto the object rather than backing onto it, the “out of position” treat was just a little bit too far.

Shaping rear foot targeting, beginning of backup video: <https://youtu.be/qRd-aYY2-xA>

With each success, move the “out of position” treat further and further so that your puppy is now taking multiple steps backward to get into the two-on-two-off position. Once you are happy with the distance of the backup, add a verbal cue just prior to your puppy offering the behavior. Then, remove the platform and use the verbal cue only to cue the behavior.

Almost finished back up video: <https://youtu.be/yINpnbpB4II>

SOCIALIZING

The Future Nosework Dog

[Stacy Barnett | www.scentsabilitiesnw.com](http://www.scentsabilitiesnw.com)



©Rebeccah Aube

Is your puppy destined to become the next Great Nosework Dog? Or are you planning on doing Nosework in addition to other sports? Exposing puppies to trial environments so that they can take in the sights and sounds at an early age is an important step to preparing them for later work in those challenging environments. Remember that training is only PART skills! Confidence is the foundation for a solid and successful Nosework dog, and carefully exposing your puppy to new situations will empower that confidence. Like Obedience and Agility puppies that go to trials with the older dogs, your future Nosework star will need socialization to prepare them for their sport. With your Nosework puppy, though, you want to think about how that socialization is different, and how it should be tailored to meet the unique demands of their sport.

One of the most important things for a future Nosework puppy to learn is to be able to stay comfortably in a crate. If you plan on doing AKC Scent Work, you might have indoor crating opportunities. In this case, you need to do something similar as Obedience puppies: you need to teach the puppy to stay quietly in their crate.

But in Nosework, you will many times not have the opportunity to crate indoors: in many venues, dogs will be left crated in the car until it is time for them to perform. So in addition to being comfortable with the indoor crating arrangements similar to Obedience trials, your Nosework puppy will also have to be thoroughly comfortable and relaxed with waiting in his crate in your car. Crate training started at home needs to be heavily generalize to staying crated in the vehicle.



© Stacy Barnett

Typical parking set up at a Nosework trial.

Another challenge Nosework puppies face is unfamiliar or unusual surfaces. Slippery or shiny floors are the bane of many a Nosework team! In the future your puppy will need to compete on gym floors – a popular location for the Container element—and there is no limit to the locations that your puppy may someday get to search... everything from camps and schools to racetracks and ballparks. Socializing your puppy to different types of floors and substrates will prepare them for events held in locations of all kinds.

Speaking of all those locations... all those unique places will have different smells! Your puppy will need to work in the presence of often competing smells. Your puppy will get exposed to the smell of oil and gasoline, the smell of dirt and mulch, and everything in between. Taking your puppy to unique places that have different smells will help prepare them for the challenges of doing Nosework in a wide variety of smelly situations. Remember as you explore new locations, it's VERY important not to scare your puppy! Take special care if your puppy is an older puppy who might be going through a fear stage.

Which leads us back to vehicles. In addition to being comfortable crated in your vehicle, your future Nosework puppy will need to be socialized to being around vehicles in general. Some dogs and puppies are afraid of cars. In some venues, your puppy will be searching vehicles, so it's important that he isn't afraid to go near one!

In addition to socializing your Nosework puppy to future sights and smells, a final important piece that is different than most other sports is to start getting him used to proper gear. Searching with a harness is preferable to searching on a collar because (1) a harness used only for Nosework is a contextual cue, (2) it's easier to keep a harness up off the dog's back while searching, (3) it's easier to keep the line from tangling if you use a harness and (4) you are less likely to accidentally correct your dog off of odor.

We all know that puppies are sensitive and that even the first collar can be an annoyance to your puppy! So you'll want your puppy to get used to the Nosework harness. Make sure you don't force him to wear it without making that harness a good thing first! A super way of getting

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a puppy used to a harness is to first associate the harness with food. You can feed the puppy when he sniffs the harness. Then, in small steps, start to put the harness on the puppy while rewarding. For example, place the harness over his head, feed and then take off. Repeat until he's comfortable. Keep your sessions short. Soon you'll be able to put the entire thing on! Once the puppy is comfortable with wearing a harness, you can start letting him wear it for short periods of time.

Although not completely unlike socialization for other sports, Nosework dogs need socialization



©Stacy Barnett

Brava, the Labrador puppy, learns to accept her harness.

that is a little unique. Careful socialization consideration of a variety of locations, smells, flooring, gear and vehicles will help your puppy to grow up into a confident competitor!

Puppy Parkour

Melissa Chandler



© Kelsey Menhoff

Want to take your puppy on an adventure? Then Dog Parkour is for you! Dog Parkour is a rapidly growing sport and a great way to provide enrichment for your puppy. Through Dog Parkour, puppies learn core life skills while playing in different locations and interacting with many different objects and surfaces. Puppies are introduced to the world of climbing, balancing, crawling under, and getting in different obstacles in their everyday world, all while being rewarded for effort and thinking. Your puppy will also develop great rear end awareness, movement, balance, and coordination. Parkour can be done anywhere and is only limited by one's imagination. You will look at the world differently after playing Parkour, and you can even earn titles while having fun playing with your puppy!

Dog Parkour is great way to have fun with your puppy in new environments while building confidence and a great relationship. Puppy Parkour obstacles include 2 feet on, 4 feet on, balance, under, through, in, and creativity. Listed below are the IDPKA (International Dog Parkour Association) obstacle descriptions:

4 feet on: Dog approaches an obstacle and places all four feet in no particular order onto the obstacle in a safe manner and remains on the obstacle for at least 5 seconds. Two different obstacles must be used, and at least one must be at least elbow height. The 4 feet on videos may be edited together to make one video. Be sure that we can see the dog getting on and off each obstacle.

2 Feet On: Dog walks up to obstacle and places two front feet onto the obstacle and remains on the obstacle for at least 5 seconds. The object must be at least elbow height.

Under: Dog crouches down and passes under an obstacle shorter than head height.

Through (between two obstacles): Two obstacles must be less than dog's body length apart from each other. The dog must pass through these two obstacles with confidence.

In: Dog must safely walk into or hop into an obstacle that has four sides. All four feet must remain in the obstacle for 5 seconds.

Balance: Balance across an obstacle that is twice shoulder width or narrower and 3 times longer than dog. Dog must have all four feet on obstacle and safely walk across it.

Creativity: Owner chooses and demonstrates two different parkour behaviors that can be done with a single obstacle. For example, a dog may do an under and 2 feet on using the same obstacle. The behaviors must be parkour behaviors and not just tricks.

Dogs under 18 months of age should only jump off obstacles that are lower than their stopper pad. Canine measurement information can be found here:

<http://www.dogparkour.org/measurement-guidelines>

When starting your puppy in Parkour, safety is an important component. It is important that your puppy wears a back-clip harness that comes up through their front legs for proper spotting. The ultimate goal of spotting is that if something goes wrong, you are already in a position to help and soften the landing. Spotting keeps you and your puppy safe and prepared in case they slip, fall, trip or just get distracted. If you spot correctly, you will not interfere with their performance.

In addition to a correctly fitted harness and the proper spotting, always check the surfaces and environment before asking your puppy to perform an obstacle. Check for glass, nails, loose bricks, hanging branches, etc. Check the obstacle – is it too hot or cold, slippery, wet or wobbly? Be sure that the entire area is safe before introducing your puppy. Be prepared for what your puppy MAY do – your puppy may be so excited they offer 4 feet on instead of 2 feet or attempt to jump over the obstacle. Puppies should be lowered or carried off an obstacle as long as it is safe and comfortable for the puppy. Or you can use an alternative way off the obstacle. Be ready for your puppy's exuberance for Parkour – always opt for safety!

Always warm up your puppy before playing Parkour. Warm up exercises are important before doing any type of physical activity with your puppy. Leash walking by starting slow and gradually increasing speed, figure 8s through cones or your legs, walk on a low balance object, front feet on object to stretch their spine, play bow or balance on wobble discs. Warming up your puppy before any physical activity can help prevent injury.

The benefits of Dog Parkour go beyond physical exercise—Parkour is also a great way to build confidence in soft dogs and puppies. Shaping fits Parkour perfectly and is a great way to empower your puppy to make decisions and control the game. When shaping, soft dogs do better interacting with an obstacle as they have a hard time “making up” behaviors. In Parkour, there is always an obstacle encouraging their interaction. Provide a variety of obstacles and shape

2 feet on, 4 feet on, balance, in, etc. The environment can also be controlled for soft puppies by starting in very comfortable, familiar environments and then going to parks, woods and other outdoor locations where you are the only ones there. You can also have sessions where take your puppy to a new place and reward everything – all their interactions with objects!

In addition to confidence, Parkour also builds great communication between you and your puppy. Respect what they tell you – always! If your puppy tells you they cannot do something, do not lure or force them to do it. Your puppy may not have the necessary strength, balance or confidence to perform the obstacle. Examine why they do not want to do it and modify or just go play on another obstacle. Consider your puppy's overall condition, especially if Parkour is providing new activities. Respecting your puppy will build great trust, which will build confidence and empower your puppy to do more and more obstacles and challenges. And don't forget to always reward effort!

Obstacle Training and Tips

2 Feet On can easily be shaped or lured. Build duration by feeding in position. By practicing on many different types of obstacles, your puppy will generalize at a lower height which will make it easier once the height increases in other sports or higher levels of Parkour.

4 feet on. Start with a low object and either shape or lure your dog to get on the object. Start by rewarding any paw interaction with the object and continue until your puppy has all 4 feet on the obstacle. Continued feeding will build duration and then slowly increase the time between each cookie by one second, then two seconds, then one second and slowly build time by using the ping pong method (one second, three seconds, two seconds, etc.).

In. Reward any interaction with the obstacle, if your puppy is comfortable, you can toss the cookies in the object and then reward your puppy for getting in the obstacle. If your puppy is not so sure, toss the cookies away and use treat/retreat with the object. You can also reward your puppy for any approach toward the obstacle and continue building interaction with the obstacle. You can start with a shoe tray or crate pan as these have very minimal sides and some traction. Small sleds or swimming pools are also great obstacles to start training in.

Balance can be taught with a plank on the ground. Have your puppy on a short leash and present the plank so they can walk across it; support them as they walk along beside you. You can feed as they are walking if needed. If your puppy needs to stop or stand on the board, reward for any interaction. Allow the puppy to dismount the board at any time. Once your puppy is comfortable walking across the board on the ground, you can raise it on bricks or platforms. The board should still be low enough that the puppy can dismount easily without injury.

Under. Start with a dowel rod between two cones or stools, or make a PVC over / under apparatus. Be creative and make something similar to an agility jump, however it is best not to use an actual jump as we do not want to teach our puppies to go under jumps. Ensure the obstacle is secure and there is no risk of the bar falling on your puppy. Start with the bar at head level. Shape or lure your puppy to go under the bar. As your puppy is comfortable with each height, slowly lower the bar. If your equipment allows, you can lower one side at a time. If your puppy is not comfortable going under at head height, make it higher and / or further apart. Set it up so your

puppy is successful.

Through can be taught using several large cones or similar objects. Set the cones up in a configuration that your puppy can walk through several of them. Place the cones so that the distance between the cones is 1-1/2 -2 times their shoulder height and some are 1-1/2 – 2 times their body length. Walk your puppy through the cones so they become comfortable going through and having objects on both sides of them. If the cones are too close, or overwhelming (too many) adjust as needed for your puppy. If you only have two cones, place approximately 2' apart and have your puppy go back and forth through them. Celebrate any and all success of walking through the cones. As your dog becomes confident in the setup, slowly decrease the distance of the cones. If your puppy is not comfortable going through the cones, increase the distance until they can succeed, reward any motion toward the cones and then have a party!

Creativity is combining any two of the above Parkour behaviors on one obstacle. Choose one obstacle and do any combination of two behaviors. Cue one behavior, reward and then cue the second behavior.

Parkour...what better way to prepare your puppy for other sports! Conditioning for all dog sports, agility-like obstacles without agility equipment, new environments and confidence to get into small spaces for nose work and barn hunt, strength and body awareness for obedience, conformation and dock diving... not to mention, Parkour is FUN for puppy and human!

Additional Resources:

<https://fenzidogsportsacademy.com/index.php/courses/6203>

Parkour Organizations

<http://www.dogparkour.org/>
www.alldogsparkour.com

Learning opportunities:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/dogparkourtraining/>
Parkour Class at <https://fenzidogsportsacademy.com>

It's a Puppy Not a Problem

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Left to their own devices, what do puppies like to do?

They like to bark, play, run through the house (sometimes with muddy feet), jump on people, put things in their mouths and chew on them, eat tasty foods, explore, sniff things, dig holes in mud and sand and dirt, and a host of other things that I don't have time to mention. They do these things because they are baby dogs. Fortunately we can train our dogs to show more appropriate behaviors, but it takes time and the natural outcome of maturity. Puppies are a challenge.

Left to their own devices, what do small children like to do?

They like to yell, play, run through the house (sometimes with muddy feet), jump on people, put things in their mouths and chew on them, eat tasty foods, explore, look at things, dig holes in mud and sand and dirt, and a host of other things that I don't have time to mention. They do these things because they are baby humans. Fortunately we can raise our children to show more appropriate behaviors, but it takes time and the natural outcome of maturity. Children are a challenge.

In the past, I trained pet dogs. The first session would almost always go something like this: Student would pull a list of problem behaviors out of their pocket. Meanwhile, their four month old puppy chewed on the leash and pulled various directions, causing the student to express obvious irritation. The student would then lay out all of the problems that they wanted to fix. "We're having problems with barking, wanting to play all the time, running through the house with dirty feet, jumping on people, chewing stuff up, excessive interest in human food, constant pulling on the leash to get to things, and digging holes in the garden. Oh yeah – could you teach a reliable recall, off leash, so that when I'm ready to leave the park we can go without me having to chase my dog?"

In short, could I make their young puppy behave like a grown up dog?

I'm curious about something. Since many of my clients also had human children (that the dog may have been nipping when the kids ran and screamed and behaved like children), did they take a similar list of problems behaviors to the pediatrician?

"Doctor, my toddler has a lot of problems that I want to stop. He talks really loud, wants me to play all the time, runs through the house with dirty feet, jumps on people, puts stuff in his mouth that he finds on the ground, shows an excessive interest in sweets, and is constantly pulling on my hand to get to things when we go places. And also, can you make him listen to me when it's time to leave the park, so I don't have to go and get him when I want to go?"

In short, could the doctor make the young child behave like an adult?

My guess is that the first thing the pediatrician would tell the person is that these are NORMAL behaviors for children and that they will go away with a combination of time, maturity, and appropriate direction and training from the parents. It's not a problem for a child to act like a child.

How about that puppy? Are those problem behaviors or normal ones? And if we don't like them, can we just get rid of them to save ourselves the inconvenience, whether they are normal or not?

Well, sort of.

If you use punishment, you can suppress behavior, whether or not you've actually taught anything at all. "Suppressed" behavior doesn't mean the dog or child is trained, simply that by virtue of not moving too much its hard to be annoying to others. This is true for both children and puppies. For example, I recently sat in a restaurant where I watched a father with his three young children, ranging in ages from about five to twelve. They were all eating their meals in silence (which one clearly didn't like) while dad looked at his phone. The kids were told to shut up and sit down if they tried to do anything to entertain themselves or expressed an opinion. Even the smallest one was behaving. Dad didn't even have to raise a hand – they listened and did what they were told. Which was....nothing. Do nothing.

Wow! Amazing. He had obedience, and at a very young age! Good, obedient children who made no trouble for anyone, anywhere. They did nothing, a truly abnormal state of existence for anyone, least of all for small children. On the other hand, those children never looked at their dad. They stared at their plates, or looked around vacantly. He had effectively taken the child out of the children, leaving behind a well behaved shell. I doubt he knew or even really cared that the oldest children clearly disliked him. He had what he wanted – a peaceful evening with his dinner and his smartphone.

Punishment works for dogs too. If you keep on top of your puppy non-stop, physically or verbally correcting him for all of the things he does wrong while instilling a solid foundation of obedience, you can eventually end up with a puppy who exists quietly, staring vacantly at nothing. A good, obedient puppy who makes no trouble for anyone, anywhere! You can

effectively take the puppy out of the dog and leave behind a well behaved shell. On the other hand, that puppy will make no effort to spend time with you, which brings up the question – why did you get a dog in the first place, if not to enjoy each other?

The vast majority of parents simply accept the fact that they'll have to hold their children's hands when they walk on busy streets. They accept that their meals won't be too peaceful for awhile because they'll have to chase their children down just as they try to sit down and eat. They accept that children need to use the bathroom at inconvenient times and that they'll get sick and disrupt their lives. There will be messes, noise, and disruption. And while parents often experience frustration and look forward to the coming stages when life is a little easier, they won't refer to this phase as the "toddler problem," and they won't ask the pediatrician to fix these annoyances. It's just the nature of small children. They aren't adults yet.

When you bring home a puppy, get used to the fact that you'll have to keep them on leash to keep them safe for awhile. You won't be able to have peaceful conversations because they'll want your attention too. They'll need to use the bathroom at inconvenient times. They'll get sick and disrupt your life. There will be messes, noise, and disruption. There is no "problem," there's simply a puppy who still has to grow into an adult dog. These behaviors will not resolve in days or weeks; it takes many months before you'll see glimmers of the adult dog that your puppy will mature into.

With time, consistency, maturity and well thought out raising, both your dogs and your children will make it to adulthood, and life will be a lot easier and smoother. How you choose to get there – whether you use structure and positive interaction for good choices or focus on punishment to suppress all behavior – will have both short term and long term effects on your relationship. Your decisions early on will influence how much time your charges choose to voluntarily spend with you. How much time they try to engage you for interaction. How much they use you as a resource when they aren't sure what to do. In short, how much they like you – if at all.

Of course, there are very forgiving puppies and children. In some cases, no matter what you do, you'll be rewarded with a wonderful outcome. But don't hold your breath on that one. Most of the time, you'll get what you give.

When my children were small, I removed valuable and breakable objects from the house. Same with my puppies. No more fights about "don't touch this" or "don't chew that." When my children were small, we ate most of our meals at home; no more fights about how to behave at a table in public. If I don't want puppies underfoot when I make food then I remove them from the room. When my children shared their toys or talked quietly with friends or remembered to remove their dirty shoes before entering the house – I told them I appreciated that! And the puppies? I help them too – they're puppies. Doing their puppy best. But they still need to be given a chance to express their puppy natures.

I'm not perfect with my kids or with my puppies. I get frustrated. I get mad! But at the end of the day, I know perfectly well that I am the adult – the one who is responsible – and that there is nothing wrong with my child or my puppy for behaving like a child or a puppy. There is no problem.

My kids are doing fine. They are growing into interactive confident young people with excellent manners and joyful personalities. My puppies are doing fine as well, and consistently grow into entertaining, interactive, confident dogs with lively natures. No one is breaking things or chewing up the wrong stuff anymore. The best part is that the kids and the dogs seem to like me! They choose to spend time with me, which is why I wanted them in the first place! It's working out okay, in spite of the fact that I spared the rod all around. It does not appear that I have spoiled anyone.

When you're frustrated or mystified by your puppy, consider how you raised your children and you might find a comparable technique that will work just fine. Think of puppies as pre-verbal children. Show patience. Structure the environment for success. Accept that inconvenience will happen. Remember that what you do now is going to determine the type of relationship you will have into the future. What are you looking for? Do you want to be seen as an accommodating person who creates opportunities to do interesting things, or as a domineering tyrant that is best avoided? When you ask your dog or child to come see you, do you want them to come running with enthusiasm, or to experience worry and anxiety about your presence?

If you hit your small kids, yelled a lot, and considered their childhood a problem to be solved, then it would make sense that you would do the same with your dogs. But if you raised your small children with patience and you accepted that small children are not little adults, then you might find that you have all of the tools you'll need to raise your puppies very very well. Now you just need a few tricks of the trade to give you ideas for how to manage specific situations and you're on your way. That's where a good dog trainer will be able to help you.

Find a trainer who focuses on what is right for both you and the puppy! Find a trainer who can help you understand appropriate management strategies as your puppy works through his more challenging phases. Find a trainer who can listen to you complain about how hard puppies are, and who helps you see the light at the end of the tunnel! Add a few skills like walking nicely on a leash and a solid recall, throw in a healthy dose of time and maturity, and you're on your way to having a very rich and interactive relationship with a well behaved adult dog.

But start by understanding that there is nothing wrong – there is no problem. There is only a puppy, and training to be done. What happens now is up to you.

Good luck.