

PUPPY TRAINING

Puppies are so cute when they are small and defenceless, and no matter what the breed all puppies are adorable. However we must remember these puppies grow up to be adults. It is easy to forget this and we all think its cute and funny when pups' misbehave and do naughty things. Remember that puppy time (especially the first three months of his life) is most important and what the puppy learns now will stay with him for a long time.

With this in mind here are some do's and don'ts and what to expect from a puppy:

Puppies should ideally stay with their mum until 10 weeks if possible, during which the mother will teach the pups so much and they will learn from each other how to play. There are too many pups which have been taken away from the mum and littermates too early. If this happens the pup will not have learned how to interact, when enough is enough, how far to push mum and the siblings. With no guidance these pups grow up with no manners and no 'bite inhibition' (the dog learns to moderate the strength of its bite) which makes owners task of teaching a little harder. At both our centres at Birmingham and Sunnyside we see many puppies that arrive on their own or in litters but with no mum, and sometimes these puppies can be as young as three weeks, certainly not a time where a pup should leave its mum!

Getting a Puppy

- Ask yourself why do you want a puppy? Think about your situation and if you have time to look after and train a puppy?
- Ensure that all members of the household have agreed to get a puppy.
- Set out rules that you will all follow, e.g. that the pup is not allowed on the furniture, bedrooms or dining room.

- If you have another dog or other animals will they accept a puppy, but don't forget puppies are lively.
- A lot of families have a puppy at the same time they have young children so it is important to ensure that there is enough time to supervise both children and puppy (having a puppy is like having another child).

The First Night

When you get your puppy home allow him to investigate the house with your supervision and guide him into the areas allowed. Make sure you show him where his bed and food/water areas are. Settling into a new home is a big experience for a new pup and this can be quite tiring for it.

Settle the pup down for the night and consider crate training (see our Crate Training leaflet). It is worthwhile exchanging blankets a week or so before you pick up the puppy so that the scents can be transferred. Place the blanket in the crate with the puppy and remember, some pups like a soft toy or rolled up blanket that represents a littermate.

If the pup has been on its own in the kennel you may get away with leaving him in the area you want him to sleep in from the first night. However if the puppy has been with mum or littermates up until the day you collected them, it may be wise to put the crate or basket by your bed for a night or two. It is a lot to expect a young puppy to sleep all by itself. As the pup adjusts to the environment gradually move him out of the bedroom bit by bit e.g., outside the bedroom door, then top of the stairs, bottom of the stairs and then into the kitchen.



DO'S & DON'TS

DO socialise your puppy - expose the pup to different noises, smells and other dogs that are safe and have been fully vaccinated etc.

DO make sure your puppy has had all vaccinations required before taking him out (until then carry the pup).

Do start to teach the basic 'sit' and 'stay' commands from day one (a puppy is never too young to learn).

DO teach your children how to behave around the pup (see our Children & Dogs leaflet).

DO ignore unwanted behaviour no matter how cute the puppy looks and always praise the wanted behaviour e.g. if a puppy is barking, ignore him and wait until quiet then go over. Otherwise the pup will learn that barking gets your attention.

DON'T allow anyone to disturb the puppy when sleeping.

DON'T leave a puppy (or dog) unsupervised with children.

DON'T leave a puppy alone for more than four hours during the day.

Common Behavioural Issues

Nipping / chewing

Puppies have very sharp teeth; they investigate new things by using their mouth. It is not until 6-7 months that a puppy will have all its adult teeth. Until then they will want to chew on everything. Just like toddlers, as their new teeth are forming, it will hurt and to relieve this puppies tend to chew more. Offer a puppy something else to chew on rather than your table leg. There are many soft puppy toys available and ice cubes are quite good for pups as they numb the area at the same time.

When playing, puppies should have learned from their mum and littermates when they have gone too far. However pups that do not have this advantage will not understand. If you are playing with the pup and he starts to nip a little too hard in a high pitch tone say 'OUCH' and stop what you are doing. Once the pup has calmed down, continue play. Use this word this word as needed throughout play to teach the pup that he has gone too far. If the pup does not seem to calm down, get up and walk away.

This will teach the pup that if he is not listening to you then play will stop altogether and your attention will disappear.

Dogs that are well socialised with other dogs, especially puppies, can be good for a puppy that has no 'bite inhibition'. They will tell the puppy off.



Watch carefully when dogs play as if it gets too intense you will need to stop the game. Once puppies have had a chance to have a little play make sure they calm down before removing them so they learn self control.

If the puppy plays too roughly with the child you should read the 'Children and Dogs' leaflet.

Many people want a puppy to grow up with their children and it is important to teach both child and pup how to behave around each other. Both child and pup need their own space and time out sessions. To begin with a puppy will see a child as a playmate and nothing more (especially the younger the child is) and they will play rough and tumble with the child as if it were their littermate. As the puppy's teeth are sharp and the child's skin soft you are bound to get a few tears. Always supervise child and pup and never leave for a second. If you need to leave the room either place the pup in the crate (where the child cannot get to it) or take the child with you. Accidents happen but on the whole with supervision and training both can play happily together and grow to be best of friends for life.

Children of a certain age can start to take responsibility for the puppy and show it that they are his owner and 'pack leader' and control all the situations and resources; food, walks, games, attention etc.

If you have had a dog from either Sunnyside or Birmingham Dogs Home and need further advice or are having a few issues, please contact the home or email on info@birminghamdogshome.org.uk or sunnyside@birminghamdogshome.org.uk.

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