



## Starting Your Puppy on the Right Paw

So you have brought home this adorable little puppy full of love and energy! This handout is a guideline to keeping this puppy as happy and well adjusted to life well into adulthood and beyond. Let's start first with the most difficult challenge to overcome.

**Potty training:** Potty training tends to be one of the hardest things for new owners so here are some tips to hopefully make things go a little smoother:

Crate training—crate training is the ideal method of potty training your pet. Some people are a little nervous about the idea of keeping their cute little puppy in this cage but in reality a crate or kennel can be a really good thing for both you and your puppy. Wild dogs have a den a small enclosed space where they sleep and eat, think of it as their own little room. Another bonus of this den mentality is that they will usually not go to the bathroom in their den. The ideal crate for a dog is one just big enough for them to stand up and lay down in comfortably. They should be kept in a central area of the house to help the puppy become part of your new “pack”. Ideally puppies should sleep and be fed in their crate not only to reinforce potty training but also to keep the crate a positive experience. Always treat your puppy when they get in the kennel to reinforce that it is a good place to be. A stuffed food toy can also be helpful when puppies are learning to be okay in their kennels. During initial adjustment to the crate puppies may whine or bark, it is very important to not look at, talk to, or get puppy out of kennel while this behavior is going on (we want to train the puppy to become part of our lives not vice versa). It is also a good idea to set an alarm for the middle of the night about 30 min prior to puppy waking up to go potty outside. This can slowly be stretched out over time until puppy can be trusted to hold it overnight. It is very important to keep the puppy in the crate anytime it can not be supervised. This is both to prevent the puppy having accidents in the house but also to help prevent the puppy from chewing up or swallowing things that they should not be using as chew toys. Although it is recommended to feed your puppy in the kennel it is not ideal to leave food in with puppy all the time. Feed puppy as much as it would eat in about 10 minutes and then remove food from kennel.

For effective potty training puppies need to be taken outside immediately after waking up, immediately after eating or drinking, and during play or exercise. Puppies need to be interrupted during play and taken outside before they remember that they need to go potty. Puppies should ALWAYS be taken outside on a leash and collar while potty training. You should always take them out the same door, to the same area of the yard to establish a bathroom area. It is also a very good idea to give puppy a command when going out to use the restroom such as “go potty”. Only reprimand your puppy when

caught in the act, they will not understand what you are so upset about 20 minutes later when they are playing with their favorite toy. When your new addition does relieve its self outside it is very important to give the puppy IMMEDIATE rewards both with treats and verbal rewards. Make a fool of yourself out there your puppy relies on its ability to read your body language to know when it is doing a good job. Now, it is also important to realize that dogs are not considered fully potty trained until they are a year old, there will be good weeks and bad weeks. Just make sure to reward the good behavior and understand that during this initial year your puppy has a lot to learn and remember.

**Play:** Now let's talk about all the fun you and your new addition will have. Here we can talk about all the wonderful ways that you and your puppy can let off some steam. Great play for puppies includes fetch, teaching puppies how to do tricks, and chewing on dog toys. Great toys for puppies include Frisbees, stuffed toys made for dogs (with no eyes or noses), interactive toys that reward the puppy for playing with them (kongs, buster cubes, and busy buddies), nylabones or pressed rawhide are also good toys for chewing. It is very important to schedule at least one hour of playtime every day. Toys and games that are not ideal for puppies include old shoes and socks, because to a puppy there is no difference between old and new, children's stuffed toys because these usually have eyes and noses that can be swallowed by puppies, and any household items or bones. All of these things have a potential to be eaten and turn into something your puppy can not pass through on its own. Also, wrestling and tug of war are not ideal games for puppies to play with humans unless you teach a command for the puppy to let go of the toy although they are completely wonderful ways for puppies to play with each other. If you must wrestle with your puppy just remember that this is going to be something that you must find acceptable as the puppy gets older. If it is okay when they are 5 pounds then it needs to be okay when they are 70 pounds.

**Socialization:** Socialization is getting your puppy used to all things we expect from him or her later on in life. All new experiences should be as pleasant as possible for the puppy so remember to have lots of good treats and toys while they are being exposed to new things. If something seems to startle your pup during this period it is a good idea to go even heavier with the treats to lessen the chances of future fears. This also helps prevent certain phobias later on in life. It is a good idea to massage and stroke your puppy all over from tip of nose to the tip of their little tails everyday; this includes touching their feet and their ears. Your puppy should be exposed to as many different kinds of situations as possible early on in their life. This includes interacting with different people and pets early on. Try to introduce your little one to people of different races, heights, both men and women, introduce them to people with hats and both children and older people. The more different kinds of people your puppy is introduced to at a younger age the more comfortable they will be in a social situation. Make these introductions both inside and outside the home. It is also a good idea to let your puppy learn to socialize with different dogs and cats so that they learn how to play properly with these animals. Take the puppy to the groomer if you plan on having them groomed later on in their

lifetime and take them to be boarded just so they can be used to the boarding experience later on in life. This way if something occurs and you must board your pet it will not be a foreign concept and they can be more comfortable when you need to be away. We also advise that if you have more than one pet take them out separately sometimes this way if they need to be apart for any reason it is not scary for your new addition to be without its partner both in the home and out and about. During this time we also want to teach the puppy that everyone in the family has the ability to take anything away from the puppy. In young puppies play in their food bowl while they are eating and if they handle that well, have everyone in the house play in the food bowl. This can help discourage food and toy aggression later on in life. Take toys away when the puppy is playing with them and give them a treat. When the puppy releases the toy praise them for being so “trading” things with your puppy teaches them to trust you and readily give things to you when you want them. This is also a great time to start with your obedience training. A puppy’s prime socialization time is 8-12 weeks and they can learn HUGE amount of information in this period. Puppies love to have a job to do and obedience should be a great asset to both you and them. Important things to teach puppies are to sit, come when their name is called and to properly walk on a leash. If you have problems teaching these commands along with any other questions about raising your puppy please don’t hesitate to ask. We are here to try to make both your puppy and your life together into a happy relationship for both of you!