

Caring for Your Puppy

How exciting! You have a new puppy—now what?

Getting to know your puppy in those first days is so much fun. Did you know the early months of development can set the stage for your puppy's behavior later in life? We want to help you get your puppy started on the right paw and avoid encouraging the development of common behavior problems.

Here are some of our ideas to get you going:



1 Go to puppy training

A good puppy class will save you a lot of effort by teaching you exactly how to teach your puppy basic commands while providing your pup with essential dog-to-dog socialization in a safe, controlled environment. Preventing problems is always easier than fixing them later! Learn about our affordable training at sbhumane.org/training

2 Introduce people

Early handling helps puppies bond with you, gets them used to human touch, and can calm excitable puppies.

- Expose your puppy to a broad range of people.
- Some examples include men and women, young kids, teenagers, men with hats, people with canes or walkers, bike and skateboard riders, etc.
- Exposing them while they are young creates a more comfortable puppy and eventually adult dog.

3 React positively to encourage good behavior

Use praise with your words, by touch, or even by giving a treat whenever he exhibits behaviors *you* want.

- Sitting or lying down are great behaviors to encourage.
- Praising when he sits instead of jumps can result in a puppy who sits more and jumps less.
- Entering his crate or going potty outside are other examples of behaviors to encourage.

4 Manage puppy behavior

Puppies will do “puppy things” and scolding is a natural human approach. But it is much more effective to manage your puppy's activities. Until your puppy is potty trained and gets through teething, plan to have an eye on their behavior at all times or crate them when you cannot.

- Remove objects they could choke on or that you don't want them to chew.
- Get in the habit of putting things high and out of reach like on counters or on top of dressers.
- Close doors to rooms and closets you are not in, so he doesn't get into trouble while you aren't looking.
- Don't leave food or other tempting smells out for them to investigate without you around.

5 Actively work to prevent aggressive behavior

To help prevent protectiveness of food and toys, approach your puppy when he is eating and put something better in his bowl. You can do something similar when your puppy is chewing one of his toys. Exchange the toy for a treat and then return the toy to your puppy. Your puppy should welcome your approach by wagging his tail and perhaps even backing away from his food or toy. This will even make it easier to retrieve stolen articles from your dog without confrontations.

6 Refuse to respond to behaviors you don't want

This can be a challenge. Sweet faces and big eyes are hard to say no to, but these are usually the behaviors that are most annoying if you don't take care of them. Keep in mind that you are giving your dog the gift of your attention even when you are reprimanding him. To many puppies, this is better than no attention at all and will encourage behaviors you don't want.

- If you don't want your dog to bark for attention, don't acknowledge him or go to him when he is barking.
- If you don't want your dog to jump on people, don't pay any attention to him and make sure your guests don't either, until all four paws are on the floor.

7 Get that puppy involved in positive socialization

Until they are about four or five months old, your puppy is very impressionable. This is your window of opportunity to give your puppy positive experiences with different types of people as well as the sights and sounds of everyday life.

- Show your puppy that new people and things are fun.
- Praise and give your puppy treats when he meets children or when strangers pet him.
- Get him out and about.
- Follow your veterinarian's advice about avoiding exposure to diseases, but take him with you when you can.

8 Don't walk when the leash is tight

Leash pulling is the number one problem in obedience classes. By the time the owners seek help, the dog has spent his or her entire life pulling on the leash. If you allow your puppy to pull against the leash now when he is small, he will continue to pull as hard as he can when he is bigger and stronger.

- Prevent this problem by resolving to stop right in your tracks whenever your puppy makes the leash tight.
- Stop and wait for your puppy to try a different behavior like looking at you, sitting, taking a step back, etc. Be patient.
- When he stops pulling or changes to a positive behavior, praise him and give him a treat as you encourage him to walk with you in the opposite direction.

9 Get chew toys and bones your puppy really likes

The goal is to give your puppy chew toys that he or she will prefer over your furniture, shoes, carpeting etc. Feeding your adult dog out of a stuffed Kong keeps them busy and keeps their mind engaged. Here are some suggestions of long-lasting options:

- Kongs – Here's a great link to learn all about choosing the right Kong for a puppy to adult dog, and how to use them.
<https://www.kongcompany.com/learn>
- Offer knotted ropes and sterilized beef bones.
- Rotate your puppy's toys to keep them new and exciting.

