

THINGS TO KNOW

All animals learn through conditioning - good behaviors AND bad. Never let a puppy do anything that would not be acceptable when they are grown: NO biting, chewing, jumping up on you or furniture. If your puppy does not obey after you have told it to do something twice, get up and correct it. Consistency is CRUCIAL.

Manners

When people want to see your pet at home or while out walking - put your puppy (or grown dog) in a sit, step 2 feet to the side and have the people come to your dog to meet and greet. If your dog breaks a sit command, immediately put him/her BACK in a sit. Do this as many times as is necessary until they hold a sit to meet people. This exercise will prevent your dog from ever jumping on someone. Also, do not let people pet them on their face/nose/eyes. You may permit them to pet your dog/puppy on the back of the head, neck, behind the ears, back or lower chest, but NEVER allow anyone to put their face in your dog's face.

Before you take a new puppy out in public you should have all initial puppy immunizations, including bordetella and, if you are going to be out a lot, Rabies (as soon as possible).

Using the Crate

Every time you open the crate door to let your pup out, IMMEDIATELY pick the puppy up and take him/her outside and to the area you have chosen as their "potty". This will condition them always to use one spot in your yard.

Retrieving

When you begin teaching your puppy to retrieve, you should always use something they like to pick up and mouth. This is usually something soft and medium-sized that fits comfortably in their mouth.

I usually start little pups with a big, discarded sock that I twist into a knot in the middle. I throw it one to three times and do whatever is necessary to get the pup to come straight back. Puppy should receive LOTS of praise and pats for successfully accomplishing this. ALWAYS stop after 2 or 3 throws during the first 30 to 45 days while the pup is perfecting this skill. This is considered a training exercise and can be increased by one throw as the pup's eagerness and will to please increases. It is alright to do this exercise a couple of times a day (spread throughout the day). Always put away the object you are using to retrieve. This way, when your pup sees you get it, he/she will get excited and know what it is you are getting ready to do.

Growth and Development

All puppies will shed their baby teeth between 4 and 5 months of age. All retrieving should STOP at this time, including tug of war games. You may take a tennis ball, wet it and put it in the refrigerator until it is cold, and give it to your puppy to chew and mouth. This will soothe the gums. Kongs and the softer Nylabones also may be used.

Puppies between 8 and 9 months (usually closer to 8) of age will go through emotional and chemical changes: puppy adolescence. At this time any new training stops and any time they are not with you they should be put back in their crate, even if you have stopped using it. Get your pup big basted, beef femur bone heads and let them have at it. They may have as many as one per week, if necessary to satisfy their need to chew. Chewing is soothing to them and releases endorphins which help to calm anxiety. This change usually lasts 30 to 45 days. Everything should then go back to normal. The purpose of crating them at this time is to prevent them from being destructive and learning bad behaviors during a time when they just cannot deal.