

Whatcom Humane Society Puppies

It is essential that puppies be socialized to humans and dogs by the time they are 12-16 weeks old. This is a critical period for them and if they don't get the exposure they need, they will never catch up and will probably have issues to some degree for the rest of their lives. By interacting with the puppies each time you go to the shelter, even if for a few minutes, you can greatly increase their chances of becoming a well socialized dog and having a normal life.

1. Every time you are at the shelter, play with every puppy there. Be sure to wash your hands well between puppies (or at least kennels of puppies).
2. Be sure the puppy is standing or sitting with 4 paws on the floor before entering the kennel.
3. Touch or pick up the puppy only if the puppy has all paws on the floor. You will need to be FAST to reward them when they are showing appropriate behavior.
4. **TEACH BITE INHIBITION:** Biting is a natural and very important part of puppy learning and development. A puppy that does not bite can run into serious problems later on when they have mature, strong jaws if they haven't learned how to control those jaws. We teach them this by letting out a sharp "OUCH" when the puppy bites too hard. Then go back to playing with the puppy. If he does it again, he loses his play partner—stand up and turn away from him for 30 seconds (no eye contact, no reaction for jumping up etc), then resume playing. If he does it a 3rd time, leave the kennel immediately. You may go back to play with him in a few minutes but leave the area so he can't see you.
5. **Cookie sit:** Place the cookie on the puppy's nose and move it slowly back toward his tail. As his haunches hit the ground tell him "sit", give him the cookie and release him by using your release word and throwing a cookie on the floor a few feet away. Repeat 5 times over the course of your visit.
6. **Cookie down:** With the puppy in a sit, place a cookie on his nose and move it slowly from his nose down to his toes and slide it along the ground away from him. As soon as his elbows touch the ground, say "down" and give him the cookie by dropping it on the ground. If he is very reluctant to go down, reward him with a treat for approximations as one paw extends forward etc.
7. **Stand:** From the sit or down, put the cookie on his nose and pull the cookie forward just far enough that he is standing. As soon as he is upright, say 'stand'.

8. **Sit/down/stand:** Lure your dog into the sit, down, stand, sit, down, several times, mixing up the positions.
9. **Take it/Leave it:** Offer your dog a treat and tell him 'take it'. Repeat 2 or three times. Then, holding your hand steady, ask him in a light voice to 'leave it'. Do not release the treat. Wait until he backs off in frustration. Immediately click and tell him 'take it' as you give him the treat. Do a few more 'take its' and then 'leave it'. Repeat.
10. **Tug/give:** Play tug with the puppy. Enthusiastically tell him "tug" as he pulls, then ask him to "give" and put a cookie at his nose. Praise and feed him the cookie when he lets go, then give him back the tug and play more. Repeat.
11. **Restraint and desensitization:** Sit in a comfortable position and place the puppy in your lap on his back or sitting with his back to you if he is a larger puppy with your arm across his chest grasping his opposite foreleg. You may stroke him or feed him treats to have him settle down. As soon as he settles, you may release him. Once he can settle easily, check his ears, his teeth, his paws, his tail, and his belly being very gentle. If he starts to struggle again, wait until he stops (again, you may help him) and then release him when he calms again.
12. **Recall:** Call his name in a high-pitched voice and clap your hands softly. Treat and play with him when he comes to you.