



WHS Dog Adoption Guide for Puppies

By Laurel Saville

Chewing And Potty Training

Puppies need to chew and eliminate, a lot and frequently. Giving your pup plenty of appropriate chew toys and taking him to his pee and poop spot regularly will help set him up for success. However, mistakes are inevitable and here are some tips for handling them. When your pup picks up something you don't want him to chew, trade your sneaker or sofa cushion for a high-value chew toy. Crate train your puppy, so he has a positive association with his confinement area and give him appropriate chewables in the crate. Establish a regular routine for eating, drinking, and defecating. When your puppy eliminates outdoors, praise him and give him a treat. When he makes a mistake indoors, don't reprimand him – this only makes him afraid to eliminate in front of you which complicates potty training – simply take him immediately outdoors. Clean up mistakes with an enzymatic cleaner like Nature's Miracle, as these products are the only way to remove every trace of the smell – dog noses are highly sensitive, and they will go where they've gone before. Understand that a puppy can only hold his pee and poop for a limited number of hours, generally his age in months plus one, so a two-month-old puppy needs to go out every three hours. Be patient and know that progress can be a few steps forward and one step backwards. They're not puppies for long!

Behaviors That Are Rewarded Get Repeated

Puppies learn quickly. To set your pup on the right path and develop a strong bond, focus less on trying to fix what she's doing wrong and more on catching her doing something right. When she goes into her crate on her own, praise and toss her a few treats. When she chews on her toy instead of your shoelaces, praise and pet. When she sits in front of the door before going out, praise and treat. Several times a day, say your pup's name and give her a treat so she has a positive association to this all-important word.

Puppy Classes, Socialization, And Sensitive Periods

From about 3 weeks to 3 months old, puppies are in what is called a "sensitive period" for socialization. In order to grow up into a confident, friendly, social adult dog, it is *crucial* that puppies have many *positive* exposures to people, dogs, and new experiences during this time period. Your puppy will not have her full slate of vaccines, so you want to make sure she's introduced to vaccinated, friendly, gentle adult dogs, who have a lot to teach her about play and communication. Introduce him to polite children, all kinds of adults, including those wearing glasses, hats, big coats, and carrying umbrellas. Show her bicycles, traffic, and novel objects, and encourage him to walk on different substrates. Attend a puppy class so you learn how to communicate and teach your puppy everything she needs to know to live safely and cooperatively in a human world. If you haven't already received one, ask WHS staff for a list of local positive, reward-based trainers.

Mental And Physical Exercise

Puppies need to exercise both their bodies and their minds. Chew toys, food puzzles, tug toys, and novel objects like a cardboard box filled with crumpled newspaper and a handful of kibble are great ways for your pup to use his nose and mind to gain confidence and get tired out! Physical exercise is also important, but be sure not to

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over-do it. Your puppy's joints and bones are growing fast, so walks and playtime are good choices, but don't take her jogging, especially on pavement, for at least a year to 18 months, depending on the breed. Check with your vet before turning your pup into a hiking, jogging, or biking partner.

Puppies And Kids

Everyone loves the feel-good, "awwww" pictures of puppies and kids together. However, in real life, kids need to learn how to interact appropriately with puppies, so the child doesn't get injured and the puppy doesn't develop bad habits. A good positive, reward-based dog trainer can help, but the most important thing you can do is teach children to respect a dog's personal space. Don't let a child hug, tug, or ride a dog – no matter how cute a puppy is, it is not a toy. Teach kids to leave dogs alone when they are eating, playing with a toy, or sleeping. Don't allow a puppy to chase or nip at children. Don't let your puppy and child play together unsupervised. Remember: a very high percentage of dog bites to children come from the family dog, and in the majority of cases, the dog was provoked, however unintentionally, by the child's behavior. Your puppy and children can have a wonderful, rewarding relationship, so long as an adult teaches them how to relate and respect each other.

Have Fun

Puppies are incredibly cute and a very big responsibility! They will drive you crazy and make you laugh. Remember that time invested in understanding and training your pup during the first several months together will pay off with a calm, confident, responsive canine family member for many years to come.

Resources:

DogStarDaily.com

TheFamilyDog.com

Positively.com

3LostDogs.com

"The Puppy Primer" by Patricia McConnell

Whatcom Humane Society
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