

## How to Raise a Happy Puppy – a vet’s advice

- When collecting your puppy from the breeder, make sure that this is a happy and calm experience: the puppy must travel to its new home on bedding of some sort, the smell of which is familiar to him or her (get this from the breeder); your puppy must never be placed by itself in the back of the vehicle – it is better that it travels beside someone; it must be constantly reassured throughout the journey. In this way you will limit the trauma of it being taken away from its siblings and mother. Also, its first association with a car will be a positive one, thereby preventing a whole host of problems with travel later.
- All toys, food, and objects belonging to existing dogs must be cleared away temporarily before the new puppy is brought in. If there are other, existing dogs in the new home, they must all be brought outside to the car when you arrive back home, which is more neutral territory – then introduced in a cheerful fun way to the new puppy – and then all go into the house together, with the puppy at the back. Place the puppy on the floor, and more-or-less ignore it. Do not fuss over the puppy or any of the other dogs while the introductions are happening. Everybody must remain calm and cheerful, and avoid eye-contact with the new puppy for around 10 minutes (all dogs see eye-contact, touch, or talk, as a privilege). Talk to each other in a happy way because your dogs are taking their cue from you as to what to do in this situation.
- When an older dog is brought home, a slightly different procedure is followed: before going into the house, all the dogs must be taken on a brisk walk of at least an hour. This tires them out, and replicates the ‘migrate-then-rest’ routine that is followed in the wild. Go into the house together and sit quietly (everybody) until all the dogs are fully settled. Then proceed as for a puppy.
- From this moment onward, all members of the household must follow the same rules with regards to the puppy. Doing otherwise will confuse the puppy and lead to problems later.
- Do not introduce any other elements of competition (like treats, toys, or feeding) into the equation for several hours. Leave feeding until well after the situation has calmed down.
- Give full attention to existing dogs while the new puppy is being introduced to the house, praising good behaviour (no touching at this time) in an exaggerated way, and using an unambiguously firm voice when bad behaviour is being displayed (remember, dogs understand the tone and not the meaning of a word). When good behaviour returns, praise that immediately and equally unambiguously.
- At all times use a quiet, calm, and assertive tone with the puppy whenever training or feeding.
- If the puppy shows any panic or appears scared (cowering, snapping, or growling, for instance), DO NOT console it. I repeat, DO NOT console it! This is the same as praising it, and tells the puppy that this is a good way to behave when in a challenging situation. This is a very important moment in the life of the puppy.

- As soon as the introductions are completed, **START WITH EVERYTHING AS YOU MEAN TO GO ON**. Do not be persuaded by your puppy's 'sweetness' to forgive its transgressions or inappropriate behaviour. Their 'sweetness' is entirely evolutionary: its function was to persuade us to look after them (while their parents went hunting). Being taken in by a puppy's 'sweetness', and allowing it to get away with bad behaviour only confuses it about its position in the household – this will result in troubling behaviour that may last a lifetime. Remember, a well-adjusted and trained puppy, that knows its place in the household hierarchy, is a happy puppy. A confused puppy, however 'sweet' it is to you, will turn out to be an anxious, and possibly aggressive, dog later. An aggressive dog is not a happy dog.
- The puppy must not be allowed onto the furniture. Status in the canine hierarchy is signalled by the 'levels' in relation to the floor/ground/other dogs. The top dog (YOU!) is always at the highest point in the den. By allowing your puppy onto the furniture (and worst of all onto the back of the sofa, and therefore at eye-level) you confuse the other dogs in the household as well as the new puppy. This is the root cause to many aggression problems which manifest as the puppy grows up. The aggression we see in toy breeds is usually because of this. Once your dog's behaviour is completely trustworthy, they may then be allowed onto furniture, but only at your request. Remember always to initiate and terminate all privileges as far as your dog is concerned.
- The puppy must be allowed to sleep by itself from day one, and this must always be downstairs. Never allow a young puppy to sleep on the bed with you. For this reason we recommend fold-up, wire dog-crates. This acts as an indoor kennel in which the puppy feels safe – and must be the appropriate size. The puppy must be locked in the crate last thing at night (after a toilet outing, and a vigorous play session), and left in there till the morning. The whole floor of the crate must consist of bed, ie there must not be a 'toilet area' in the crate because you puppy is learning that it is possible to hold onto the bowel and bladder. **DO NOT** respond in any way to the puppy crying out to join you. Be prepared for several nights of interrupted sleep while the bedtime routine is being established (it is worthwhile warning any neighbours who are within earshot. A gift of flowers will sometimes help to generate goodwill during this time). Crate-training a puppy assists toilet-training. The puppy will not produce urine or faeces in its crate if there is no space for it to do so. This lets the puppy know that it is indeed possible to delay going to the toilet till wake-up time.
- It is a very good idea to keep a puppy crated when you are out while the other dogs get used to the idea of it. In other words, never leave your puppy alone with adult dogs unattended, until well into its puppyhood.
- When feeding your puppy together with other dogs, always feed it in relation to its position in the hierarchy. This is usually last. As you lower the food-bowl to the floor, call out its name, and praise it for waiting its turn. Since a puppy is fed more frequently than adult dogs, do the additional feedings separately, with the other dogs excluded from the room. Never feed a puppy, or any dog for that matter, just before you yourself are about to eat – this informs them that they are higher in status than you are, and may lead to dominance problems later. Separate your dinner and the dogs' dinner by at least 15 minutes.
- Your new puppy **MUST** be left on its own from the very start. From the very first day you must close a door between the family and the puppy for 10 – 15 minutes at a time. Exclude it from rooms like the toilet and bathroom while you are in there – this lets the puppy know that there are boundaries in the world. Gradually increase the length of the time it

spends alone. You may even want to leave the house for short periods right from the start. This ensures that your new puppy quickly develops 'independence of mind', making it less likely to show separation anxiety later. It also teaches the puppy to endear him- or herself to you, rather than take you for granted. This will also dramatically reduce the chances of dominance aggression later.

- Start handling your puppy immediately. While playing, turn it over onto its back when it is least expecting/wanting it, and count to ten. Do not allow it to resist this until you have counted to ten. At a different time, also open its mouth and examine its teeth and throat daily. Handle its feet and ears. Brush its coat even when it does not need it yet – this encourages bonding and informs the puppy that you are in charge. The ending of any handling-session must be decided by you – just as YOU decide the end of play or displays of affection.
- A puppy is at its most impressionable up to the age of 16 weeks. It can get used to anything! You need to 'normalise' everything you would like the puppy to get used to: loud bangs, cars, applause, the sound of traffic, fireworks (CD recordings are available), the washing machine, vacuum cleaner and tumble drier, rattling aluminium-foil, loud laughter, etc. It is a good idea to sit with your puppy by a busy road-side, making sure it stays relaxed and happy while doing so. This will avoid the situation where your puppy/dog panics when a vehicle passes by. You want to make your puppy 'bomb-proof', in other words.
- Even though your puppy may not be fully vaccinated yet, you must start to socialise it. The puppy IS allowed to meet dogs you know are not ill or who are fully vaccinated. The puppy IS allowed to meet cats, with caution. The puppy must be allowed to meet toddlers and babies, making sure that toddlers/children are fully instructed as to what they are and are not allowed to do. Limit the time that children and puppies are allowed to interact or play. A tired puppy is a grumpy puppy – you must never allow this situation to arise, or this kind of behaviour to manifest itself because it can remain permanent. A tired puppy must be placed in its crate and allowed to sleep. Remember, when a pre-pubescent or pubescent puppy bites a person, it is NEVER its fault. It is YOUR fault.
- It is essential that children are trained as to how to behave around a puppy. On first contact, always allow the puppy to go to the child. Never allow a young child to chase the puppy, or run up to it, when they first meet.
- Start basic training from the minute the puppy arrives. It needs an easily recognisable 'behaviour framework'. A puppy that knows what to do is a happy puppy. Dogs look for instructions from us all the time. If these are not forthcoming, the dog will be confused, which may make it aggressive and show dominance or inappropriate behaviours.
- It is strongly recommended that you attend puppy training classes with your new puppy. These few weeks will make the many years ahead a happy period in the life of you and your dog. Certain breeds require more work than other, so always do your research before choosing a dog.

To summarise:

- MAKE SURE THE PUPPY'S FIRST JOURNEY IN THE CAR IS A HAPPY ONE.
- ALWAYS START ITS TRAINING AS YOU MEAN TO GO ON.
- YOUR PUPPY IS LOOKING FOR THE LEADER IN YOU. IT IS NOT LOOKING FOR A BEST-FRIEND IN YOU. 'FIRM AND FRIENDLY' IS THE RIGHT ATTITUDE TO YOUR PUPPY OR ADULT DOG. YOU NEED YOUR DOG TO ADMIRE AND RESPECT YOU.
- ALL MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD MUST BE CONSISTENT IN THEIR DEALINGS WITH THE PUPPY. IT IS A GOOD IDEA TO WRITE DOWN A SET OF RULES.
- CRATE TRAINING IS A GOOD IDEA.
- NEVER ALLOW YOUR NEW PUPPY ONTO THE FURNITURE.
- NEVER ALLOW YOUR NEW PUPPY TO SLEEP ON THE BED.
- TEACH YOUR PUPPY 'INDEPENDENCE OF MIND' – IE. LEAVE IT BY ITSELF (OR WITH SETTLED WELL-BALANCED OLDER DOGS) FOR INCREASING PERIODS.
- START SOCIALISING YOUR PUPPY EARLY. YOU MAY DO SO BEFORE IT IS FULLY VACCINATED, PROVIDING THERE IS NOT CHANCE OF ACQUIRING AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE.
- START TRAINING AND HANDLING YOUR PUPPY IMMEDIATELY.
- REMEMBER TODDLERS AND CHILDREN NEED AS MUCH TRAINING AROUND A PUPPY AS THE PUPPY ITSELF NEEDS. BE FIRM ABOUT THIS. A PUPPY THAT BITES IS NOT A HAPPY PUPPY.

#### Conclusion:

A few weeks of getting things 'just right' at the start of a puppy's life can lead to a long happy relationship of many years. Such a dog is one you can take anywhere and do anything with, and is happy all the time.