



Puppy Fact Sheet

Socialisation

This is the most important thing you should be doing with your puppy. Socialising your puppy means introducing them to everything they need to be confident with throughout their life. This doesn't mean you should overwhelm your puppy, but take them out and show them the 'world'. By the age of 12 weeks your puppy should have met at least 100 different people (men, women and children). Carry them outside until they have had their vaccinations and are safe on the floor. Go to places where they can see, smell and hear lots of different environments. Think about your personal situation and see if there are any gaps that you need to focus on, for example, if you are a single lady, then you really need to focus on your puppy meeting men and children. Go to places where children play and let your puppy get used to the noise and speed of them! It's really important that your puppy isn't fearful in these situations. If they are looking overwhelmed then increase your distance from whatever you are near. Sit on park bench and let them watch the world go by. Feed them some food treats so that they pair the nice food with being around whatever new experience they are being exposed to. Meet lots of different dogs – this doesn't mean just let your puppy run up to every dog, some won't appreciate that. Ask the owner of the other dog if their dog would like to say hello. Think about loud noises such as traffic or building works. Don't expect your puppy to be confident next to a busy road for example, so start on some quiet roads and build up the noise level. By the age of 16 weeks your puppy's socialisation period starts to close, so you only have a few weeks to shape your dog's view of the world. This doesn't mean you stop at 16 weeks, but this is the most critical age of forming your dog's opinions of the world.

How puppies learn

Do not expect your puppy to know the rules of living in a human world. You have to show them how to behave.

REWARD behaviour you like. If your puppy is chewing on their toy, tell them "good dog". If they greet someone without jumping up, reward them "good dog" or feed food treat.

IGNORE your puppy if they are doing something you don't like. If your puppy jumps up on your guest, don't talk to them or interact with them; when they then put their paws on the floor – reward with attention/praise. If they are barking at you to get your attention, make sure this doesn't work by you speaking to them/telling them to be quiet. Wait until they are quiet, and then reward them by giving your attention.

DISTRACT your puppy if they are doing something you don't want but cannot ignore. For example, they are chewing a table leg, go and have a game with their toy in another corner and engage them with that. If they learn your table leg is tasty then they will do it again.

MANAGE the environment – don't expect your puppy to not put everything in their mouth (they are exploring the world) so you mustn't leave anything lying around that you don't want investigated. Shoes now live in a cupboard, children's toys are in a room that the puppy doesn't have access to, (stair gates are very useful), pot plants don't live on the floor, the TV remote control isn't left on a low coffee table etc. Don't set your puppy up to fail. Overtime you can let your puppy have access to the whole house, but only when you know they are not going to destroy anything. Keep your house and puppy safe!

Toys

Play lots of games with your puppy. Play tug games and chasing games – whatever they enjoy doing. Playing with toys is a really important part of building your relationship with your puppy. When playing tug games let your puppy ‘win’ the toy. These games should be noisy so don’t worry if they are being vocal. If your puppy gets too excited during play and bites your hand by mistake, stop the game. Start again a few seconds later with the toy and show them how to play (see puppy biting handout for more information on biting). Using games like this is great at teaching puppies how to use their teeth when playing with humans. Don’t leave lots of toys on the floor, keep some back and rotate them to keep them special. I suggest you keep their favourite toys hidden away and only let your puppy play with them when outside on a walk. Having a puppy wanting to play with you outside will help when your recall training. Keep outside games short and keep them wanting more; if you play too long and puppy gets bored and leaves the toy, you have played for too long.

Stealing – we often ‘steal’ from our dogs and this teaches them not to trust us with their prized possessions. When we take things out of our dog’s mouths, we are ‘stealing’ in their viewpoint. We are trying to keep them safe but they don’t understand this. Manage your puppy’s environment so they cannot pick up items that are unsafe or you don’t want them to have. If they do pick up something that you don’t want them to have, I don’t want you to chase them all round the house and take it from them (such fun and lots of attention!). Simply distract them by either starting to play with an appropriate toy and get them to engage with you, or rattle the biscuit tin so they rush into the kitchen. You can then engage them in another activity and pick up whatever they dropped and shouldn’t have had.

Food guarding

We want to teach our puppies that us being near them whilst they are eating is a good thing. Whenever they are eating from their bowl, walk past and throw some high value food towards them e.g. cheese, chicken, sausage. Do this a few times per mealtime. Your puppy is learning that when you are near, you don’t try to take their food, in fact you actually mean high value food is coming. All family members should be involved in this training. The same principle applies for when your puppy is chewing on a bone or filled kong, walk past them and throw high value food treat towards them.

Feeding routine

I really want to encourage you to not always feed your dog in a food bowl. Get your puppy to earn their food and keep mealtimes interesting. When training at home you can use their dried dog food as rewards for good behaviour. Stuff a kong with their meal so that it takes your puppy longer to eat their dinner (you can add warm water to dried food to make it soft and then stuff in a kong). You can also freeze kongs which make them harder to chew and therefore more of a challenge for your puppy. Use a food treat dispenser (you add dried dog food and your puppy has to knock it around and food treats fall out of it). Scatter feed – throw a handful of food around the garden and get your puppy’s nose engaged to find all the pieces. Use mealtimes as a great opportunity to train your dog some basic obedience like, sit, down, wait etc. Make mealtimes fun!

Make sure you are feeding a good quality diet; it doesn’t matter whether that is wet or dried food. Brands such as Bakers and Pedigree are full of additives and will lead to excessive biting and excitable behaviours. Brands I can recommend are: Burns, Barking Heads, Canagan, Eden, James Well beloved, Wainwrights, Orijen, Arden Grange, Natures menu and Nature diet. There will be others that are also good, just check the label. You want ‘real’ food ingredients and not lots of additives and derivatives. Raw feeding is also something you might like to consider – please make sure you feed a balance of meat with vegetables. Giving your puppy raw vegetables are great to add to their nutrition and make excellent chew toys.

Leaving your puppy/night time routine

When your puppy comes to live with you, understand that this is a real shock to the system. They have only known their mother and litter mates and now they are on their own in a strange place. The first night is going to be very hard. I suggest you have your puppy in their crate in your bedroom (or you sleep downstairs). They can then be near you and hear your breathing and will be much more able to settle and sleep. This will also help with toilet training because if they do disturb and need the toilet, you can easily get up and carry them outside to go the toilet (see toilet training fact sheet for more information).

You must get your puppy used to being left on their own. This is not natural for dogs so it's something you must focus on and show them being left is ok. If you have other dogs at home, they must also learn to not always be with them too. Start slowly and build up the length of time you leave your puppy. I start using a crate or behind a stair gate (your puppy shouldn't be able to follow you). Tell them to "stay" and walk away a few paces, then return and reward your puppy. Say "stay" again and walk away a few more paces, then return to your puppy and praise. Build up the length of time you leave and where you go, for example, go upstairs or leave the house etc. If your puppy cries when you leave them, you have progressed too fast. Go back to them but don't look or interact with them (don't reward them for crying) but you cannot just leave the puppy to become stressed. When you need to leave your puppy for a few hours, always use a crate so they are safe. Tire them out first, make sure they have been to the toilet and then settle them into their crate with a filled kong and water bowl (use one that clips onto side of crate) and leave the radio on for some background noise. You cannot leave a puppy in their crate for more than a couple of hours, so if you do need to leave them for longer then you will have to leave them in a safe room with lots of things to chew as they will become bored. If you need to leave them often, do consider getting a dog walker or ask a friend to come and visit them during the day. Dogs of any age should not be left alone all day.

Handling/grooming

It's really important that your puppy gets used to being handled and enjoys it. You need to regularly touch their feet, ears, teeth, belly etc. This will help you when your puppy needs to go to the vet and also you need to check them for grass seeds, or cuts and lumps. Clean your dog's teeth (use dog toothpaste) and clean their ears with ear wipes. For longer coated breeds, get them used to being brushed; little and often is the best way. Don't turn the brush into a toy! I would expect a puppy to stand still for a few seconds whilst I brush them, and I would be feeding them to make sure it's a positive experience. If you are going to use a groomer, go and visit them now and get your puppy used to being in that environment.

Recall training

Make sure your puppy knows their name. Whenever you say their name, something 'good' should happen e.g. food treat, start of a game, dinner time etc. Don't ever use their name as a negative. To start recall training, I want you to move away from your puppy and call them sounding really exciting! They will run towards you and you will then reward them. Get them used to having their collar touched when they come to you. So take hold of collar as you feed treat. Don't call your puppy when they cannot respond, for example, if they are in the middle of a game with another puppy, they are not going to come away from that game and respond to you, so you are teaching them it's ok to ignore you. (Over time, your recall will get better so you can call them away from any distraction, but not at this age.) Practise your recall in lots of different locations building up the level of distractions, such as other dogs, or smells. At this age, you are responsible for making sure they get 'recall' right.

Get your puppy off lead as soon as possible. Make sure you are in a safe place (not near a road side) and reward your puppy for being near you. When they 'check in' reward them for this good decision. Remember, dogs repeat what they think is rewarding, so make sure you are rewarding these good decisions. If the thought of letting your puppy off lead is too scary then use a long line attached to a body harness. A long line is not a flexi lead, this is a 10 meter piece of cord that can drag along the floor so you have a safety net on your dog that you can grab if required. If your puppy learns that playing with other dogs or sniffing the ground is more exciting than you, then you will struggle with your recall. Make sure

when on a walk you are interesting to your dog! Play games, get them to 'find it' (hide food in long grass) and just run around and have some fun. So many puppies learn that going to the park to interact with other dogs and people is the most fun part of their day, so they aren't going to want to come back to the owner when they get called because you ruin their fun. Make sure you are the most fun thing your puppy interacts with!

Walking on a lead

This takes a lot of practise to achieve so you need to get it right from the start. Most puppies find being outside quite overwhelming and will often sit during a walk. Don't pull your puppy to move forward, just stand still and let them take in the environment. If they get really stuck, then pick them up, walk a few steps and put them down again. Give them the chance to walk again. Don't bribe them to walk forward by holding a piece of food in front of them – they will learn to wait until you have food out before they walk, just encourage them with your voice. The other problem is the puppy that pulls at full steam ahead and starts to choke themselves in the process. Don't follow the pulling dog. This rewards them pulling because they get to move forward. I also recommend you use a body harness for young dogs whilst they are learning to walk nicely on a lead so they don't hurt their necks in training. I use a harness that has a ring at the front of the harness and one on the back with a double ended lead. This means you have control of the front end and don't just give them all their strength to pull with by only having the lead attached to their back.

To practise walking nicely on a lead you will need lots of very small pieces of food, take a step forward, if you puppy is at your leg side, feed them a treat, take another step and feed if still at your side. Use your voice to encourage them to be near you. If they pull forward, simply change direction and walk and when they are at your leg side, reward. Straight lines won't be happening for a while! A puppy cannot concentrate for long periods of time, so if you are doing a lead walk, then don't expect to get very far to start with. Let your puppy have some time to stop and sniff during your walk. Don't be in a rush, remember it's a new world they are exploring so take your time. You can drive to your dog walk, let your dog off lead (or use a long line) and when they have burnt off a bit of energy, then attach lead and do some training.

Puppies and children

Puppies need to know the rules of play before trusting them with children. Children must also learn that puppies are not toys and should not be expected to tolerate anything the child wants to do to them. Whenever a puppy and child are together they must be supervised by an adult. Rough and tumble games can lead to both your child and your puppy becoming over excited and this always ends in tears! Involve the children in the day to day care of your puppy; let them help with feeding and training. Most dogs tolerate being hugged and picked up, but most don't like it. Please teach your child to respect any living animal and give them boundaries. When your puppy is having a wild few minutes, that is when your children are busy doing something else or vice versa. Manage the situation so that the puppy doesn't learn inappropriate behaviours. Children will always be more exciting than adults therefore they will usually be the focus of puppy biting. As the adult make sure the puppy learns how to play with us (whatever age) by always having a toy in their mouth. (See puppy biting fact sheet for full details.)

And finally...

Puppies need lots of sleep so if you have a busy household or they don't seem to settle much on their own, you need to put them into their crate or quiet room frequently so that they can get lots of sleep. They need about 18 hours per day! Tired puppies are most likely to have problems with excessive biting.

Enjoy your new addition to the family. Even if you have had dogs before, a new puppy is always a bit of a shock to the system as they require a lot of time and patience. Putting in the time and effort now will be worth it when you end up with a well-mannered, sociable adult dog. If you want any help then please don't hesitate to contact me.

Jo Williams 07919157201 info@paws4teaching.co.uk