



# Puppy Training

- Puppy training is an important step toward a lifetime of good behavior.
- Learning is adult-like in puppies by 8 weeks of age.
- Puppies respond better to positive reinforcement than punishment.
- Puppies should always be supervised or should be confined when you are away.
- Training should be consistent, involve positive reinforcement, and include everyone in the family.
- It's important for your puppy to be socialized around other people and other pets before he or she is fully vaccinated, but consult your veterinarian about disease risks before exposing your puppy to other dogs or areas where unfamiliar dogs have been.
- Group puppy preschool socialization classes are a good way to socialize your puppy while minimizing disease risks.
- Group puppy kindergarten classes are excellent for teaching puppies basic manners with exposure to other puppies and a training expert on-hand for guidance.

## Why Is Puppy Training Important?

Like children, puppies need to learn the appropriate behavior for living in a household and interacting with others. Puppies also seek positive reinforcement and are willing and able to learn. Learning is adult-like by just 8 weeks of age.

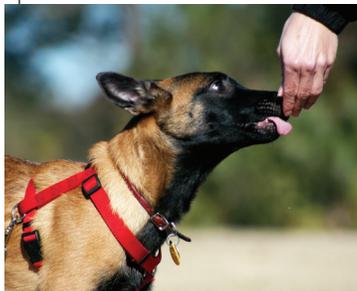
Unfortunately, many puppies grow into dogs that are eventually surrendered to shelters because of behavior problems. In most cases, it's not the dog's fault. It's simply because of a lack of early appropriate training and socialization.

Proper puppy training early on will help you avoid bumps in the road and lead to a better relationship with your dog in the years ahead. Training can not only prevent some undesirable behaviors but also give you appropriate ways to address problematic behaviors. Training can provide for clear communication between you and your dog.

## What Should I Know About Puppy Training?

Several basic rules of puppy training will lead to a more rewarding experience for everyone involved:

- **Reward good behavior.** Puppies respond best to positive reinforcement. Reward good behavior with a special treat, piece of kibble, petting, or praise.
- **Be consistent.** When you are training the puppy, make sure a consistent cue (verbal or hand signal) is used by everyone in the family. If, for example, one family member says "here" and another says "come," the inconsistency may confuse the puppy. Consistency will make it easier for the puppy to understand what you are asking for.
- **Be predictable.** Have predictable interactions with your puppy. Predictable interactions foster trust and teach good manners. Before feeding, or giving a toy, ask your puppy to respond to a known cue, such as "sit."



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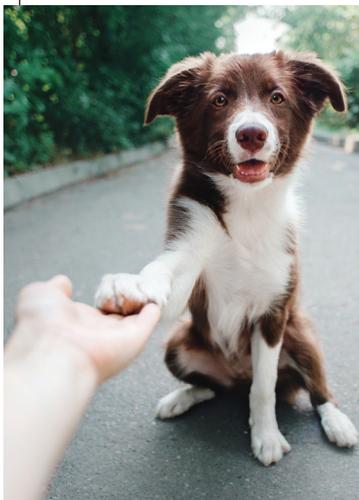
Once you receive an appropriate response, give the puppy the food or toy and praise for good behavior.

- **Avoid punishment.** You should never spank or yell at a puppy, yank on a puppy's collar, or rub a puppy's nose in urine or feces. Punishment not only can weaken a puppy's trust in people, but also can lead to fear, anxiety, and aggression. For example, with house training, punishment just teaches the puppy not to eliminate in the presence of people rather than where it's appropriate to eliminate. If the puppy has an accident, simply clean the soiled area without scolding. Take the puppy outside and reward elimination in the appropriate area. Consult your veterinarian if you are having problems house training your puppy.
- **Puppies should always be supervised.** Until your puppy is trained, he or she should be supervised at all times or confined safely in a crate, kennel, or exercise pen when you are away. This will reduce accidents in the house and keep your puppy from chewing on or swallowing items that could be dangerous.
- **Keep training sessions short.** Like children, puppies have short attention spans. Initially, training sessions at home should only last for about 1 to 5 minutes. Sessions may be lengthened as the puppy matures. Exposure at group classes should be careful not to overwhelm the puppy.
- **Teach your puppy to be comfortable being handled.** Whenever possible, offer food treats when handling your puppy's paws, ears, mouth, and body. Fostering positive associations with being handled will make it easier for you to trim nails, brush teeth, clean ears, and give medications. It will also make for less stressful trips to the groomer and veterinary clinic.

- **Expose your puppy to other people and pets.** The earlier your puppy is introduced to other people, the more comfortable he or she will feel around them, and the less likely he or she will be to exhibit shy behavior. Puppies should be allowed to interact at their own pace rather than being forced into an interaction. Treats should be used to create pleasant memories. Exposure to other pets is important, too, but be careful of disease risks at dog parks or from interactions with unknown dogs with a questionable vaccine history. Consult your veterinarian regarding the benefits of early enrollment in a puppy socialization class. Your veterinarian can help you manage disease risks while still allowing for smart socialization experiences with environments and other dogs.
- **Provide your puppy with appropriate chew toys.** Puppies explore the world with their mouths and enjoy chewing. Consequently, your puppy may want to chew on furniture, clothing, hands, and other inappropriate items. Simply interrupt the undesirable behavior by getting the puppy's attention in a nonconfrontational way and redirect the puppy to something more appropriate to chew on. Avoid giving your puppy a sock or other article of clothing to chew. These items may be inadvertently swallowed, and may also give the puppy the message that it's okay to chew on clothing. Consult your veterinarian about which chew toys are safest.

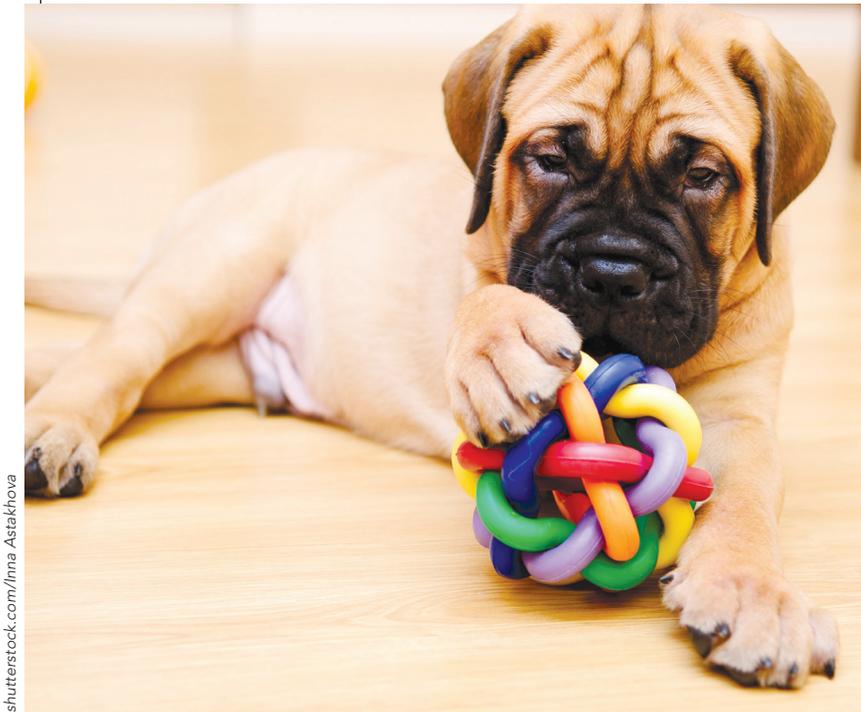
## Why Should I Consider Attending Group Puppy Preschool Socialization Classes or Puppy Kindergarten Training Classes?

Puppy preschool socialization classes are designed for young puppies in their socialization period (under 3 to 4 months



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of age). The focus is on education regarding normal behavior, providing positive socialization experiences, and teaching problem prevention techniques. Puppy kindergarten training classes are for puppies outside of their socialization period (older than 3 to 4 months of age). Generally, there is a greater focus on teaching basic manners in older puppies and building on previous experiences.

Attending a group puppy class led by a training specialist has several advantages, including:

- Empathy and understanding regarding normal behaviors
- Expert guidance and answers to questions or concerns regarding undesirable behaviors
- Introduction to positive reinforcement training
- Knowledge of how to implement problem-solving techniques
- Prevention of behavioral problems related to fear, anxiety, and aggression

- A controlled and safe environment for puppy play, socialization, and exploration during sensitive periods of development

Group puppy classes are offered by many veterinary clinics, dog training facilities, and pet supply stores. It's important to find a course that emphasizes pet parent education and positive, controlled socialization experiences. Classes should highlight positive reinforcement training rather than punishment.

Ask your veterinarian for recommendations regarding group socialization classes and puppy training classes. Several positive puppy training resources are available. Among other things, good puppy classes should cover:

- Proper socialization and environmental exposure
- Play biting and mouthing
- Destructive chewing
- Prevention of food and resource guarding
- Crate training and exercises fostering independence
- Handling and restraint exercises
- Housetraining tips and techniques
- Basic training for good manners and loose leash walking

Reputable facilities will require proof of vaccination and good physical health for all puppies attending the course. This minimizes disease risk, especially while young puppies' (younger than 4 months) immune systems are still developing. Some vaccinations need to be given at least 7 to 10 days before the class begins to protect your puppy. Consult your veterinarian about when your puppy will be ready to attend classes. ■