

Mount Berry Animal Hospital

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HANDLING AND SOCIALIZATION

PRIMARY PUPPY TRAINING

I. Handling your puppy:

It is very important that your dog become accustomed to regular body touching and handling. A properly acclimated dog will make everyday life much easier for you and your veterinarian. Should your dog ever become critically ill, this early training could save your dog's life. It is very important to begin this handling as soon as your puppy is brought into your home. Set aside a few minutes each day and repeat the following exercises.

- A. Turn your puppy upside down and cradle him in your arms. If he struggles, do not let go. It is also important to avoid trying to soothe him verbally. Often this is mistaken for praise and you do not want to praise and reinforce this unwanted behavior. As soon as the struggling stops gently put your puppy down and praise him quietly. If your puppy does not struggle or whine, then praise him quietly while holding him and then again when you put him down. If the pup does not struggle, hold him about 30 seconds.
- B. Place your pup in a down position on the floor. Hold him there with one hand and play with each of his feet. If he struggles and pulls his feet away, do not hold onto them. Just reach and fondle them again. Do this for a few seconds each day. When he is calm, praise him. Puppy hood is also a very important time for the introduction of nail clipping. If you are not familiar with the process of nail clipping see your veterinarian or groomer for some assistance.
- C. As embarrassing as it may be for some of you, it is important that your dog allow people to touch his genital or private areas. Dogs are very protective of their privates in the wild and it is important to teach them that it is safe to let people touch them in these areas. Make a point to place your hand gently on this area each day, even before the appearance of your male dog's testicles. Dogs that have not been handled in this way have been known to bite a person who approaches their rear ends. This is a preventable situation with some early training.
- D. Each day, make a point to open your puppy's mouth and touch his teeth and tongue. All puppies struggle and fight this, but it is very important. At some time in your dog's life you will probably have to give oral medication. A dog whose mouth has not been handled is impossible to pill or give oral medication to. Also, you should be able to remove objects from your dog's mouth.
- E. You never know when your dog's life might depend on your ability to do this action. If your dog is about to swallow something life-threatening, you will appreciate the skill.

II. Socialization:

People frequently do not understand the importance or purpose of early and frequent socialization. Dogs that are not taken out of the home into new and unusual environments can develop into difficult fearful animals. It is very important to introduce puppies to new and different people, places, and things. Puppies should be taken to a new place at least twice a week once they have received their initial vaccination series. Try the park, a lake, or an outdoor shopping center. You'll produce a well-behaved dog that can be controlled around strangers, children, and other animals. Some people believe that socialization will make a potential guard dog less protective. Not true. Socialization will make a potential protector more trustworthy and reliable and lessen the chance that the dog will bite the wrong person in the wrong situation.

III. Primary Puppy Training:

Dogs do not learn appropriate behavior through osmosis. They must be trained. The earlier the better. It is important to understand that puppies have a shorter attention span than adult dogs and require a lot of patience on your part. The best way to train a puppy is through structured play. Listed below are some important things to do with your puppy. However, this list cannot cover the entire range of new skills and behaviors that a puppy should develop. Therefore, it is highly suggested that you locate a reputable training program in your area and enroll your puppy in training classes as soon as possible. Dog obedience classes are a worthwhile and enjoyable experience that will continue to pay for themselves for your dog's entire life.

IV. Early Puppy Play Training:

- A. Avoid tug of war games where you are the play toy. These games encourage aggressive behavior and should be replaced with more structured play. Do not allow growling and biting, even if it is only play behavior. Many people think it's cute to growl back at their puppy when wrestling with it. Bad idea. It gives the puppy the idea that you're a competitor. You're not. You're the one in charge. Also don't allow your puppy to chew on your fingers. It may be cute and harmless now, but you'll teach her that it's OK to have human hands in her mouth. Later in life, she may bite when she's unhappy or doesn't get what she wants. Your puppy needs to learn that it is NEVER OK to bite or chew on humans. If she gets too rambunctious and very "mouthy" during playtime, grab her muzzle and keep her mouth closed. This action mimics the mother dog covering the pup's head with her own mouth. It says, "Calm down and behave. You're getting out of control." Your pup may struggle a while, but once she relaxes and submits, let her go and praise her profusely. Then you can resume play. Repeat this dominant behavior each time she goes overboard. Sometimes a puppy can be having so much fun that she gets completely out of control and no amount of discipline will calm her down. (I like to joke that at this point, her brain has completely disconnected from her body.) Your best option in these situations is "time out." Take the puppy and put her in her crate with a chew toy and leave her alone until she quiets down.
- B. **Never** wildly chase your puppy for **any** reason. You will find yourself chasing your adult dog and not catching him. If you want your puppy to come to you, call him in a high pitched voice, squat down and clap your hands. If this does not entice your puppy to you, run away from him while calling his name. Believe it or not, this will surely get your puppy to come to you. Praise him when he reaches you. **Never** call your puppy to you to punish him. *Go get him* for punishment, or you'll teach him that coming to you ends with an unpleasant experience.
- C. Puppies retrieve naturally. Be sure to get your pup's attention and then roll a toy along the ground. When he gets to it and picks it up, run away from him while calling him. He should come to you,

but he may drop the toy in the process. Praise him anyway when he gets there. Soon he will have enough concentration to carry the toy to you. Use the command “drop” or “give” and remove the toy from his mouth.

- D. Several times a week you should remove your dog’s food bowl while he is eating. If your pup looks at the food bowl and shows no aggression, then praise and return the food bowl. If the pup growls, then give a loud verbal reprimand and do not put the bowl down until 5 seconds after the aggressive behavior stops. If your dog growls at any time, then you should begin removing the food bowl at least once during each meal.
- E. Put a properly fitting collar on your pup at 8 weeks of age. Your pup will object to this, but he will get used to it. After a week, go out with your pup to a strange area and snap a leash on the collar. Put no pressure on the lead and walk where the pup wants to walk. Do this each day for one week. During the third week, begin putting small amounts of pressure on the leash and encourage your pup to walk with you. Over the next few weeks, walk with your puppy on leash each day for short periods until the pup walks on the leash without struggling and fighting the leash.

How to Develop Proper House Habits and Housebreaking Procedures

To understand how housebreaking is accomplished, one must understand a little about a dog’s behavior in the wild. By nature, dogs are pack animals. This means that they are social creatures and, therefore, have a very ordered set of rules in their natural societies. In addition, dogs are den dwelling animals. In the wild, dogs do not soil their den area with excrement. As pups, they begin following their mothers to the bathroom area as soon as they are old enough. They will continue to return to the same area by identifying the scent.

There are several reasons that housebreaking problems may arise. First, the inside of your house is considerably larger than a den would be in the wild. Since dogs do not understand the difference between the inside and the outside of the house, a pup can easily establish a den area and a bathroom area inside the house. Dogs that are left to roam the house unattended will soon be soiling the carpets. The dog will establish a den area (probably where he sleeps) and all other areas of the house may be fair game as bathroom areas. Even a small room may be too large, as one corner is the den and the other side may be used for bathroom activities.

For those of you who work, some obvious problems can arise during the house breaking period. Puppies must be shown what you want. Punishing the dog for accidents only serves to confuse and frighten it. You must control and shape the puppy’s habits by **preventing** the use of the house as the bathroom area. The procedure outlined below will show you how to housebreak the dog with a minimal amount of trouble.

Supplies Needed: One puppy, one or more owners, one collar and leash, one food and one water bowl, several chew toys, one airline crate (one large enough so that your dog can just turn around in it when full grown), plenty of patience and consistency.

How to Play the Game to Win (The Rules)

1. **Anytime** you are not at home, or too busy to watch your dog, it should be in the crate!
2. The pup should be taken outside on a leash and collar to the same spot in the yard

each

time.

3. Paper training only serves to teach the dog that it may use the house for bathroom purposes. Paper training will confuse your pup. Generally, it is the easy way out. You and your dog will pay for it later.
4. The dog should be taken out the **first** thing in the morning. This includes weekends. It is important to stay on schedule.
5. The dog should be taken out the last thing before going to bed.
6. The dog should be taken out after every meal.
7. The dog should be taken out after a drink of water and before and after playing.
8. The dog should always get verbal praise for going to the bathroom when you take him out.

9. When you are home and your pup is out in the house, you should always keep it within your eyesight. Use barriers to prevent the dog from roaming the house. This will prevent accidents from occurring without your knowledge.
10. If you catch the pup in the middle of an accident in the house, **DO NOT PUNISH!!** Instead, startle it with a loud reprimand and quickly pick it up and whisk it outside to the bathroom area. Stay out with the pup until it finishes its bathroom business, and **praise profusely!!**
11. Do not expect a dog to be reliable until at least 4 months of age.

Crate Breaking Your Pup

NO! Putting your dog in a crate is not cruel and inhumane. It is a proven fact that dogs sleep most of the time when their owners are not home. With the proper introduction dogs grow to love their crates. It represents a secure den and, therefore, the dog feels safe in the crate. Many owners report that their dogs go into their crates on their own when the door is left open.

There are several additional benefits to the use of the crate. First, the dog cannot chew when inside the crate. Chewing is not only destructive, but can be very dangerous to your dog if it chews on electrical cords or swallows unusual sharp or obstructive objects. All dogs go through a chewing stage that can last up to two years.

Use of the crate prevents this dangerous activity completely. Dogs also travel well in a crate if they are used to crates. When visiting a new place, you can ensure appropriate behavior if you bring the crate along. Often an otherwise well-behaved dog will become destructive in a strange environment.

Introduction to the Crate

1. Feed your dog in the crate. Start with the door open and place the bowl in the back corner of the crate. Try this for a few days or until your dog seems comfortable going into the crate.
2. Begin closing the door during meal times.
3. Begin closing your dog in the crate with some safe chew toy. You may have to push your dog into the crate at first. It is important that you disregard your dog if he barks or cries. **DO NOT** punish him for this, just disregard him. (Negative attention is still attention and your pup could learn that whining and barking brings you running, even if it is to yell at him.)
4. When your dog is quiet, praise and let him out of the crate. Most dogs will go happily into the crate in a few days.

How and When to Correct Your Dog's Behavior at Home

In the wild, dog packs are controlled by a leader, referred to as the Alpha dog. This pack leader, or Alpha dog, establishes rules and never allows pack members to break these rules in his presence. The Alpha dog punishes other pack members to assert his dominance. When the

offending pack member submits to the Alpha dog, the threat of punishment stops. Wolves and other wild dogs have evolved their own systems of communication to maintain order in the pack. Without these systems there would be chaos in the canine society, which would ultimately cause its downfall.

Even domesticated dogs maintain these hierarchies. Your dog still lives by the rules of the wild dog pack and sees you as the pack leader, or Alpha dog. Because of this phenomenon, there are often misunderstandings between dog and owner. The guidelines below will help you understand your dog's system of communication as well as the environmental needs of your dog.

Rules of Crime and Punishment

1. Never punish your dog for **anything** you do not catch it **IN** the act of doing. Dogs **do not** make any association between the mistake they made and your punishment if it does not happen at the time of the mistake. Many people believe their dog knows when it has done wrong by its behavior. The dog is actually responding to the behavior of the owner, usually some cue word like "what have you done wrong" or the tone of the voice or even the posture of the owner. Punishing after the fact only serves to frighten and confuse your dog. Often, this leads to a less secure dog which often leads to even **more** destructive behavior.
2. Punishment should be as mild as possible to be effective. Effective punishment does nothing more than stop the offending behavior at that moment. Start with a loud verbal reprimand.

With some dogs a good shake by the back of the neck or the skin of the cheeks is necessary for the appropriate response. Whatever the punishment, it should immediately stop the offending behavior. If the dog is chewing an unacceptable item, then the dog should drop the item and freeze all motion. Most dogs will exhibit some submissive behavior when punished. Submissive behavior is characterized by lowering of the head and body, tucking the tail under the body, or even rolling over and showing its belly. When an owner sees submissive behavior, all punishment should cease that instant. These signals of submission are designed to save the life of the subordinate pack member from the aggression of the Alpha dog. The Alpha dog ceases all aggressive postures when the offending pack member submits. Therefore, it is **VERY** important that you do the same.

3. It is much better to control the environment in an effort to prevent as many punishable situations from occurring as possible. Many people believe that it is necessary to physically punish a dog if they are to have the dog's respect. Following the rules of appropriate socialization and handling will still teach your dog to respect you without the need for excessive force.
4. Always redirect any behavior that you have stopped. For example, you have caught your pup

chewing on the foot of the sofa. You have stopped the pup's behavior. Now, you should immediately give the pup an acceptable chew toy and praise the pup as soon as he begins to chew on it. This way you will soon show the pup that it is okay to chew on his toys, but not on any other item. Punishing a dog for chewing is bad. Since chewing is a natural part of canine development, teaching a dog that chewing is not allowed does not make for good mental health.

5. In the wild, dogs deal with consistent pack leaders. The rules are the rules and they do not vary from day to day. Therefore, it is important that you provide a similar environment in your home. For example, if you do not want your dog to jump on you when you have on good clothes, then he must not be allowed to jump on you at all. Your dog does not know the difference between your good clothes and your gardening clothes. If you do not want your dog to jump on you or others at certain times, then he must not be allowed to jump on people at all.

6. At times when you have asked your dog to do something and he refuses to obey, it is very important that you take the proper corrective action. First, you must never allow your dog to win one of these arguments. This will lead to further serious disobedience from your dog. Hitting the dog will not accomplish your goals and will only serve to scare and confuse your dog. You should physically make the dog perform the requested task. For example: you attempt to trim your dog's toenails. Lay him down on his side and begin, at which time he begins to struggle and scream. He breaks free and runs under the bed. At this time you should go get the dog out from under the bed by pulling him out physically. To coax him out with food at this point would give positive reinforcement to the very behavior you are trying to avoid. You should take him back to the area and finish the job of nail clipping, no matter how long it takes.
In this way, you have shown your dog that you can physically enforce a command. Yelling and beating the dog shows him nothing positive and only frightens him. Other examples: tell the dog to get off the couch only once, then remove him immediately: **DO NOT DISCUSS IT WITH YOUR DOG.**

Tell your dog to go out the door and if he does not respond immediately, **PUT** him out the door physically. If the dog jumps back on the couch or comes back in the house, correct him again. Keep correcting the behavior until the dog gets the idea. Consistency is the key.

7. Feeling guilty for punishing your dog is useless and can even be detrimental in some situations. As much as we like to think they're little humans, dogs do not possess human emotions like guilt or remorse. When you punish your dog effectively, she will display behavior characterized by depression and withdrawal (tail-tucking, slinking off and hiding, rolling on her back to display her belly). Many people mistake this behavior for sadness, pouting, or anger, and immediately try to soothe their dog's emotional state and "make it up to her." This action only undermines the discipline you have just administered. It is best to leave your dog alone during this period.

8. **NEVER** punish your dog based on the value of some item he has destroyed. In other words, the punishment should be the same if your dog is caught chewing up a \$50 pair of shoes or a \$5 pair of shoes. Dogs do not know the value of material items. If you let your dog up on the

bed because you're going to change the sheets tomorrow, don't blame him for getting on the bed when the sheets are freshly laundered. He can't tell the difference. Clean sheets, dirty sheets. Cheap shoes, expensive shoes. These differences only have meaning in the human world. Your dog may be smart, but make sure you don't give him TOO much credit and assume he can tell when certain behaviors are appropriate and when they're not. Inconsistency will only confuse your dog.

How to Develop Good Eaters

Poor eaters are made, not born. Dogs should eat a balanced diet for dogs (no cat food!) Table scraps and goodies do not make a balanced diet. Some owners feel that feeding their dog from the table or by hand is a good way to express their love for their dog. If you really love your dog, then you will insist that your dog develop good eating habits, which will encourage good health. There is no sadder scene than a dog that will eat nothing but bacon and eggs. These dogs are usually grossly overweight and undernourished. When I suggest these owners allow their dogs to go hungry until they will eat regular dog food, they are appalled at such a suggestion.

But the dog is in poor health because the owners indulged in pampering that made THEM feel good, with no regard to the health of their dog. There is no excuse for this behavior on the part of the owner. With the responsibility of ownership comes the responsibility of controlling your dog's diet in his own best interest. The rules listed below will help you turn a poor eater into a good one, as well as establish good eating patterns in puppies.

The Rules for Developing Good Eaters

1. Set up a regular feeding schedule and stick to it, even on weekends.
2. **Do not** feed free choice (That is, don't fill the bowl and let the dog eat all day whenever he wants.)
3. **Do not** feed **any** table scraps at all.

4. At feeding time put down the amount of food that you expect the dog to eat. (Different dog foods have different caloric content so follow the feeding instructions on the bag according to your dog's weight to determine how much to feed.) Leave the room for 5 minutes and forget the dog.
5. Return after 5 minutes and take up any left over food. **Do not** feed the dog **ANYTHING** until the next scheduled meal, no matter how much your dog begs.
6. The dog will not starve.
7. The dog will be eating properly in a few days.
8. The owner will suffer more than the dog.
9. The owner should avoid giving into "the begging little beastie" at all cost.

How to Stop Your Dog from Chewing Up Your House and Destroying Your Sanity

In addition to using crate training to control chewing, one must find a way to control unwanted chewing when the pup is loose in the house. Most people would like to teach their dogs to retrieve as adults. Many people come to us with complaints about their dog's lack of enthusiasm for retrieving. Usually, the problem can be traced back to the way chewing behavior was handled during puppyhood.

1. Chew toys must be chosen carefully. Nylabones and hard rubber toys are good choices. DO NOT give your dog articles of clothing, shoes, or rags. This will only confuse your pup as you try to teach him what he cannot chew, not to mention that accidental ingestion of pieces of cloth, leather, etcetera, can obstruct normal bowel function and on some occasions, even kill the pet. Rawhide chews can also cause serious digestive problems, especially if your dog eats the rawhide instead of just gnaws on it. If your dog tends to inhale rawhide chews instead of nibbling on one occasionally, you'd do best not to offer rawhide at all. You should have only a few safe *indestructible* toys for your dog.
2. Remove as many chewable items from your pup's reach as possible. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. You have to "puppy-proof" your house just as carefully as you would child-proof it if you were expecting a baby.
3. When you catch your pup with something he should not be chewing, give him a firm "NO" in a deep voice and then give him something he is allowed to chew. Praise him when he chews on the correct toys. (This goes for chewing on fingers too.)
4. If you intend to teach your dog to retrieve, you must follow this rule carefully. If your pup comes into the room with something valuable or inappropriate in his mouth, do not yell at him or beat him until he drops it. Instead, use the command "DROP" and remove the article from his mouth. Replace it with a chew toy and PRAISE. Repeat every time he chews on the wrong things.