



HUMANE SOCIETY OF BROWARD COUNTY

Puppy Beginner Class

Handout #1

Socialization

Early socialization helps your puppy develop confidence. From 3 to 14 weeks is considered a sensitive period during which behavior patterns and social skills are being learned. During this period, puppies should have the opportunity to interact with other animals and all types of people in a safe and controlled environment.

By 16 weeks of age your puppy should experience:

- All types of people, including children and seniors
- Other puppies and gentle, adult dogs (make sure vaccinations are up to date)
- Cats, birds, ferrets (or animals your dog will be exposed to as an adult)
- Various walking surfaces: rugs, tile, stairs, mulch, concrete
- Public places, sounds and moving objects
- Collar and leash
- Gentle restraint and grooming
- A consistent house training routine

Grooming and Handling

Depending on the type of puppy you have, grooming will vary. Some breeds require more maintenance than others. You can get your puppy used to having his feet, teeth and ears touched by working that in while you are petting him. Try touching, treating and telling him what a good puppy he is while accepting the physical contact. If the puppy gets uncomfortable then stop and start up again later. Try to brush or groom when the puppy is tired.

Bathing – How often you bathe your puppy may depend on the breed. You will probably find you will be bathing your puppy frequently (puppies are messy) but try not to over do it. Too much bathing can dry out the hair coat and the skin. When it is bath time do not forget to start slow and make it fun for your pet. Start with the feet and use small food treats and verbal praise to positively reinforce your puppy as you slowly proceed.

Brushing – Show the pup the brush and allow him to sniff it and then give him a treat. Start by touching him with the brush and treating and as he becomes more comfortable, increase brushing while treating and using verbal praise. Your puppies breed will be a big factor in deciding how much brushing is needed. Long hair and thick coats need more brushing to eliminate matting and remove excess hair.

Ear Cleaning – Make sure you are checking your pet's ears often especially breeds that have long ears such as cocker spaniels and basset hounds. Longer ears will allow less air and light to enter and dark, moist places are perfect environments for infections to develop. Touch your pup's ear and offer him a treat. Gently wipe a tissue around the ear

flap and treat. Remember always start slow with a new behavior and work your way up to the final goal. Never stick anything in your dog's ear canal. You can easily cause injury to your pet if he jumps or is startled. If you notice a large amount of dirt or moisture deep in your dog's ear you should see your veterinarian.

Nail Trimming – Start by investing in a good pair of clippers. Good clippers will stay sharp and make trimming less traumatic. Hold your puppy's foot and give him a treat. Let him sniff the clippers and treat. The first nail clipping may be only one toe nail. Remember start slow. It will be very important to not clip your pet's nails too short. Quicking a nail is very painful and can cause bleeding, this would not be a good memory for your pet and may cause fear in your puppy the next time you need to trim his nails.

What to Expect in the First Year

- 8-12 Weeks: “Infant stage” Puppies are cute, cuddly, compliant and clingy. They are unable to hold it through the night and will cry to go out. Important social skills are being learned. Socialization and a puppy beginner class are recommended at this age.
- 4 Months: “Toddler stage” Puppies become more independent and interested in the world around them. They may start to run away from you when you call them.
- 4 ½ - 5 Months: Puppies begin to lose their puppy teeth and get their adult teeth. Chewing may increase, as this activity can alleviate discomfort from teething. They can usually sleep through the night and spend several hours in the crate without eliminating. Basic dog obedience classes should begin.
- 5 – 7 Months: “Adolescent stage” Puppies become rambunctious and jumping and mouthing can become excessive. Their exercise requirements will increase greatly.
- 7 Months – 1 Year: “Teenage stage” Puppies may seem to be regressing, rebelling or forgetting their training. This is where the foundation of early training is a life saver. Remember to be consistent and patient.

Boundaries and Realistic Expectations

Teaching your puppy the house rules will be much less frustrating than trying to correct problem behaviors once they develop. If you do not want your puppy on the furniture as an adult then do not let him up as a puppy. Your puppy will grow up fast so start putting boundaries in place early so he understands what is expected of him in the future. Some common problems you may see if you do not set any boundaries:

- Jumping up on people
- Destructive chewing if left alone unsupervised
- House training problems
- Pushy puppies
- Digging, barking or other undesired behaviors

The entire family must agree on the house rules early on and stick to them. Write them down and put them on the refrigerator so everyone is reminded of the training plan. Have realistic expectations about what your puppy will be able to accomplish on his own. Do not set the bar too high at first, most problem behaviors can be avoided with environmental management. If your puppy gets in the garbage, put a lid on it or put it up so he cannot get to it.

Appropriate Play and Exercise

Play is excellent physical and mental stimulation for a dog, and satisfies a natural instinct. Ground rules should also be set for play time. It is not recommended to use your hands to play with your puppy as this may increase the likelihood of play biting. You should always offer a variety of toys for your puppy to interact with; stuffed Kong, rope toy, puzzle toys, plush toys. Play should be controlled and supervised at all times. If play becomes too rough then it is time to take a break. Arousal levels should always be monitored so you can determine if your puppy is playing nicely or needs to take a moment to calm down. For more information on appropriate play and your pet please see the handout on our web page at www.humanebroward.com.

Like humans, dogs need exercise and mental stimulation. A consistent exercise routine burns off excess energy and helps keep your pet calm. Exercise means interaction with the family, playing games, walking, jogging. A well exercised dog is a happy dog. For more information on exercise and your pet please see the handout on our web page at www.humanebroward.com.