



# A New Puppy! (What Do I Do?)



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Congratulations on your new puppy. The tasks ahead may seem overwhelming, but the payoffs will be years of unconditional love and friendship. The first few months of your puppy's life are very formative. Your puppy needs to be socialized, he needs to learn where to eliminate appropriately and he needs to learn to inhibit his bite. These important stages in development can ensure a behaviorally healthy adult dog and a joyful companion.

Young puppies have very sharp teeth as I am sure you have found out by now. The goal is to have the puppy stop biting, but first you must teach the puppy to bite soft. When your puppy softens his bite you can move on to not to biting at all. We start with bite inhibition because if your dog ever needs to bite, he will need to know how to bite without causing injury. Puppies learn bite inhibition prior to four months of age. It is one of the most important lessons in their young lives. When adult dogs are hurt or fight with another dog, they may bite. Learning bite inhibition at a young age will insure their bite is not dangerous to people and other dogs. Puppies learn to inhibit their bite from other dogs, so make sure to get your puppy around friendly vaccinated dogs at a young age. The first couple of weeks that your puppy is in your home you should yelp or say "ouch" in a high pitched tone when your puppy bites.



After you say "ouch" you should get up and step away from you puppy ignoring him for a few seconds. When you go back to the puppy you should ask for a sit and offer an item that is acceptable for your puppy to chew on. It is helpful to have a variety of alternatives such as toys, bully sticks, chewies and Kong toys. If your puppy's biting is inconsolable at the moment then he probably needs a nap.

## *Teach Your Puppy to Soften His Bite by Offering Him Acceptable Items for Chewing*

When your puppy has learned to soften his bite it is time to teach him not to bite at all. At this point, any time your puppy puts his mouth on you the game and attention should end. You can get up and walk away or teach the puppy to "leave it". Never teach your dog not to bite using pain or aversive actions. Pinning your dog down or flipping your dog over will cause your dog to fear you and fear is the number one reason why dogs bite.

Housetraining is on everyone's list of first things to do when you get a puppy. Housetraining takes a lot of patience and observation. When

you are frustrated, keep in mind that your puppy has only been on the earth a very short time and teaching him where to eliminate appropriately can be a very tall order. Dogs and Puppies are habitual about where they choose to eliminate. It is our responsibility to teach them the appropriate place to go. The amount of time this will take depends on many factors. If a dog was purchased from a pet store or kept inside of a whelping box which they cannot get out of, their innate desire to keep their sleeping area clean may have been damaged.

Watch for signs that the puppy needs to go. They will pace, sniff and circle. Puppies need to go to the bathroom after they wake up, after they play, after the sleep and after they eat or drink.

Begin by putting the dog on a schedule. Start by taking him out every 30 minutes and then gradually increase the time. When you take your puppy outside to go to the bathroom, say "go potty" as your dog starts to go and then reward your puppy with praise and a treat. Your "go potty" cue will be helpful when you really need your dog to go in a hurry. The dog will learn where to relieve himself and be assured that you will take him to the right spot. Be consistent about the door you choose to go out when bringing the dog outside. This will make it



*Like Babies Everywhere,  
Puppies Need Regular  
Naps to Be On Their  
Best Behavior*

easier for the dog to ask to go outside. Don't bring your puppy immediately back inside after he eliminates. He may learn to hold it so that he does not have to go back inside. Praise your puppy like crazy when he goes in the right spot.

Don't make a big deal about mistakes. Don't rub his nose in the mistake and do not frighten the dog during the mistake. Some dogs may become frightened and try to hide or become afraid to eliminate near you. When your dog is doing its duty in the house stop the dog and bring them to the desired spot. Clean the soiled spot with vinegar and water or a neutralizer found at a pet store. Barricade the area so that habits do not form. Remember, if you paper train, you may have to untrain the puppy by moving the papers outdoors. Paper training and puppy pad training can slow the housebreaking process but can be helpful if you cannot be home to let your dog out. Make this decision with much consideration. Once you puppy pad train you will have to live with your dog eliminating in your house throughout his life.

Be sure to confine the puppy appropriately when you are not present or cannot watch the puppy. You can put the puppy in a crate or a pen. If you want to learn to crate train, ask your vet for my crate training article. When

you are present, watch the puppy at all times. Every mistake you prevent or stop brings you one step closer to your final goal.

The most important thing you can do to ensure your puppy has a good temperament as an adult is to socialize your puppy. Socializing limits fears and increases friendliness to strangers. Dogs that are not socialized can be fearful and reactive to new people, dogs and objects. Puppies should be socialized at his or her own pace and should not be forced into any situation. When you first bring your puppy home your vet may not what you bringing him to public places. Make sure that you invite over as many friends as you can drum up until he is adequately vaccinated. You can also bring your dog to friends' houses or invite over friendly healthy dogs. Bring treats on your outings so that strangers can give treats. You can also make noises and objects more pleasant by pairing them with treats. Make sure to introduce your pup to new things daily. He should experience new places, people, surfaces, sounds, dogs of all ages and sizes and friendly pups. Make sure your puppy sees everything that it will be exposed to as an adult. Some examples are umbrellas, boxes, bags in the wind, people of all sizes, colors, and excitement levels, and friendly vaccinated dogs. Basically, your puppy needs to see and hear everything. This will help your dog



adjust to new situations without fear. Ask your dog to sit when meeting children and adults. When meeting other dogs, your dog will learn how to talk dog. This is important in preventing aggression. There is no time to when it comes to socializing a puppy. Puppies go thru many critical developmental stages early in their lives. If you miss this opportunity you may not get it back. Anything a puppy does not see in its first four months, it may first react to in fear. The behavior expert, Dr Ian Dunbar, recommends 100 new experiences in 100 days. There are great puppy socialization checklists on line.

*Enjoy the Training  
Process and Have Fun  
with Your Puppy*

Housetraining, bite inhibition and socialization are the ingredients to a well adjusted adult dog. Have fun with the process and enjoy your puppy. There are many other great things that puppies can learn so consider training with a positive reinforcement trainer. Again, congratulations on your new friend and family member.

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