

5 secrets to a well-adjusted new puppy

Socializing your new furry bundle of joy (and energy!) is something you can do with your veterinarian's help. Start here.

Did you know that puppies learn and develop a big part of their adult personality by 16 weeks of age? It's true, and if you want a happy dog that takes life in a joyous stride, the clock is ticking. The positive (or negative) associations that young dogs develop during this critical stage of brain development can last a lifetime ... for better or worse. So let's make it better!

Note: Don't force things! Make sure these exposures are done in a way that's comfortable for the puppy. Don't keep exposing a puppy to a new experience if the dog is scared. Talk to your veterinarian for guidance.

1. Handle your puppy—literally

Make a point to touch your puppy all over. Don't ever be forceful or push to the point of struggle. Just touch and hold gently and reward his acceptance with a special treat. Remember, over time, you'll need to be able to trim toe nails, clean ears and brush teeth. If your new puppy actually *enjoys* these rituals, life is better for you both.

2. Socialize with your puppy

Let your puppy meet people of all shapes, sizes and mannerisms to learn there's nothing to fear from people of all kinds. Introduce children, men and women, and even people with hats or costumes—Halloween comes around once a year. Don't forget the treats to make "scary" fun!

3. Play dress-up with your puppy

If your dog is ever going to need a sweater or coat—or even a bandage—now's the time to teach him about them. Even if you just tie an adult T-shirt around him and let him get used to the feeling, it's an investment in

his future. Best of all, if you can help your new puppy learn about an E-collar—like those cones and collars the veterinarian will use when your furry friend recovers from surgery or illness—your veterinary team will really appreciate it. Someday your grown-up puppy won't be as freaked out when he needs to wear one to save his life.

4. Make noise with your puppy

Expose your pup to loud noises and novel objects, like the vacuum cleaner, the doorbell and even suddenly rattling a can with coins. Show that these things aren't harmful and reward her only when she's calm. Startling at a loud noise is typical, but your puppy can learn there's nothing to fear and recover quickly from a startle. Noise phobias are real, and you can do your part to prevent them.

5. Adventure with your puppy

You and your pup will experience all life has to offer together, but the experiences won't be as fun if your puppy is afraid or difficult to handle. Take your puppy everywhere you can for exposure to new places. Visit your veterinarian on a day just for a visit—and some friendly treats. Take the puppy on errands to see lots of new sights and smell new smells. Make all the places that you go extra special with great treats or repeat the visits until they're so normal that your pup is bored with them.

Science shows that it's easier for brains to remember bad experiences than good ones, so make sure your foundation for your puppy's brain is filled with terrific associations. You can avoid big problems in the future and, let's face it, handling and spending time with your puppy is a ton of fun!



THE SECRET

to housetraining your puppy



There are a lot of myths out there about properly housetraining your fur baby. Here's the real secret to making sure that your puppy's eliminating (peeing and pooping) properly—and both you and your pup are happy in the end.

Here's the good news: Your dog's wired to make housetraining possible. But it's up to you to set her up for success. Wild canines bed down in a den together with their mom. When they're really small, their mom cleans up after them, but as they grow, cleaning up after six to eight kids can become daunting! Because of this, nature has provided. As a puppy's brain matures, she starts to instinctively resist soiling the den. Humans can take advantage of this tendency and use it as a tool to teach a puppy when and where to eliminate.

A place to call home

Simulate a "den" experience for your puppy with a crate or safe zone. Keep in mind that it should be small enough to trigger her brain to recognize that it's her den, but obviously not so small that it's uncomfortable. Make it a happy place with special toys and treats. Whenever you cannot be there to supervise, she should be safe in her happy place.

Frequent outings

Puppies can't typically hold their bladders for extended periods, so make accommodations for her to get outside regularly as often as you can. Whenever she eliminates outside (it might help to take her to the same place every time until she associates that spot with peeing and pooping), reward her with praise and treats.

A predictable outcome

Your puppy's elimination can be predictable—as long as you help:

- Don't leave food out for around-the-clock snacking.
- Practice mealtimes and make sure you'll be available for a walk about 10 to 15 minutes later. A full stomach can trigger the bowel to empty, and you can reinforce this tendency with rewards and praise.
- Make sure you can be counted on too. Don't leave your puppy alone in the crate for longer than she can "hold it." Every time she's forced to soil the crate, she's sending her brain the wrong message.

Punishment is a no-no

Never strike your puppy or rub her nose in an accident. She can't sort out her fear of your handling from what you're trying to convey, so she'll just learn to fear you when you seem upset. If you see her start to posture for elimination, quickly scoop her up, place her on the spot you prefer and reward her when she finishes there.

Accidents will happen

Clean up mishaps with an enzyme cleaner to keep your puppy from going back to that spot. Don't depend on the puppy to warn you of an impending incident—just take her out every two hours or so. Eventually, she'll learn to let you know when she needs to go. Hang in there. Remember, the idea of selective elimination is natural to your dog. If you're being consistent and still can't seem to housetrain your puppy, ask your veterinary team. They can make sure there are no medical causes for the problem and offer more tips.

Why many pets need **vaccines**

Doctors have a way to protect pets from diseases: vaccines. Here's why our hospital recommends them.

What is a vaccine?

The history starts with an epidemic of smallpox, which killed millions of people. In 1796, a physician named Edward Jenner noticed that the milk maids, who were routinely exposed to cowpox, did not get sick with smallpox. He wondered whether their exposure to cowpox protected them ... and the idea of vaccination was born.

A vaccine exposes the immune system to inactive or incomplete disease-causing agents to train the immune system to quickly and effectively respond when exposed to the real thing.

Why do we vaccinate puppies?

Since we know that vaccines train the immune system how to react quickly to certain diseases, we want to protect puppies from diseases we have vaccines for. If we expose our pups to vaccines, if and when their immune systems face the real disease, they can fight it more easily. Think of vaccination like a training gym where athletes prepare their bodies and minds for actual competition.

Which vaccines does my puppy need?

When a disease is widespread, dangerous—or both—researchers develop a vaccine against it. Vaccination choices are based on an individual puppy's lifestyle and risk factors. Your veterinary team can tell you which vaccines are appropriate and how they can be given.

Why does my puppy need to repeat vaccines ("boosters")?

We know that an immune system "remembers" diseases from vaccines, but we don't know how long the memory is for each individual animal. Because we don't want to gamble with protection, veterinarians and other medical



professionals believe it's far better to vaccinate too often than not enough.

While puppies receive some immune protection from their mother after they're born, that doesn't last for a dog's entire puppyhood. Eventually, puppies need to develop their own protection, and that's where vaccines come in. Since maternal immunity can interfere with the effectiveness of vaccines, we repeat them to make sure they're present when the puppy's own immune system takes over. This timeline varies between individual dogs, so we follow guidelines to protect as many puppies as possible.

Are vaccines safe?

Vaccines have been accused of being dangerous. There is no scientific evidence to support these claims for dogs. Vaccination has saved innumerable lives, both human and animal. There are isolated cases of allergic reactions, but these are rarely life-threatening when treated appropriately. It is important, however, that puppies not be randomly vaccinated outside of published recommendations. Vaccines are not one-size-fits-all and should be tailored to the individual puppy.

New pup predicament: "What's for dinner?"

Your puppy is your new best friend, and you want to give him the best foundation to grow and thrive. You certainly don't want to unknowingly contribute to anything that might be harmful or inadequate for him. This is where nutrition can come in! We all know that there are pet food brands and varieties stacked to the ceiling at pet stores and grocery stores, so how do you know what your puppy really needs as he grows?

Here are some common questions and a few important tips to help you put the perfect portion on your pup's plate, peppered with advice from Dr. Joe Bartges, a board-certified veterinary nutritionist and internist.

What's the most important thing to know about feeding a puppy?

Dogs are omnivores, like people. Puppies are trying to build healthy bones and muscles, as well as brains and organs. The right nutrition is critical for the building blocks for development. A balanced diet really does matter. It's important that your puppy get a diet that is labeled for "growth" or at least says "all stages of life." These diets have been shown to be adequate for growth for an average dog. But beware, your puppy might not be average, so be sure to ask your own veterinary team to weigh in about the ways your pup might be unique.

Should I give my puppy vitamins?

Since it's especially important that puppies have what they need while they are growing, be aware that

high-quality diets should provide all the nutrients needed, making vitamin supplements unnecessary. In fact, giving supplements to growing animals can be a bad idea. Excessive or abnormal mineral balance can impact normal growth. Ask your veterinary team for their favorite food brands, and keep in mind that the best brands might not be the most expensive and rarely are the most advertised.

How much do I feed my puppy?

It's important that your puppy have adequate calories during growth, but you do not want to begin a trend toward obesity. Your veterinary team is the best resource for telling you if your puppy is growing appropriately or is overweight, and they can give you an accurate feeding guide. It's important that you measure the amount of food you offer and set up feeding times so that your puppy does not overeat or snack excessively from boredom. Puzzle feeders or multiple feeding sites can provide mental stimulation to help build your puppy's brain too.

Isn't some vomiting and diarrhea normal for puppies?

Even if your puppy feels great, he should not be throwing up or having loose stool. It's critical to have puppies with these issues evaluated right away by a veterinarian. There are lots of causes of these issues, and only a veterinarian can diagnose and treat them.

Should I feed my puppy a homemade or raw diet?

Raw diets are in the news, but Dr. Bartges thinks that raw and homemade diets are risky for young animals. He thinks that the risks for nutrient imbalance and infectious disease are too high during such a critical phase of growth.

The best advice for having your puppy's nutritional needs met is to take advantage of your veterinary team's treasure trove of information that they'd love to share with you.



Don't let boredom ruin your puppy's brain



Your new puppy likely won't need to fight for food in the wild. That means you'll need some fun, *err*, enrichment at home to keep your canine cutie happy, healthy and out of trouble (from boredom).

You've taken the first important step to giving your puppy a happy, healthy life by seeing your veterinarian, but medical and preventive care aren't the only things a new dog needs to thrive. The good news is, veterinary professionals are an excellent resource for ways to keep your puppy physically and mentally healthy.

Enrichment is fun!

Dog ancestors hunted and foraged. Of course, your puppy is dramatically different in many ways from canine ancestors, because domestic dogs have evolved along with humans, but his puppy brain still needs challenges. We call these challenges "enrichment."

Zoo veterinarians have known for a while now that their animals were much healthier if their environments offered enrichment. You can

see polar bears floating with frozen fish or tigers rolling enormous balls. Our dogs, like these animals in captivity, are born to evade predators and find food, but they have their needs met by us in our homes, so we have to give them other interesting things to focus on.

Some fun ways to create interest are toys and games. Even if it's as simple as hiding treats under blankets or going for a walk outside, anything that makes your pup move and think is good for her. You can hide treats in an empty paper towel roll with the ends twisted (just be prepared to clean up a little mess).

Food helps!

Some of the most fun enrichment toys for you to buy will dispense food rewards as puppies figure them out. They are novel and interesting and can help slow down your

puppy's eating habits too. There are high-tech toys that launch balls for puppies to chase. There are puzzles that puppies must decipher for a food reward. Activity mats are designed to entertain puppies too, with pockets to explore. Some of the mats have thick threads that dogs have to sniff and search through to find their reward. The more senses your dog engages for each activity, the better!

You can harness your pup's natural curiosity to help her learn and develop normally. Don't forget, anything that helps keeps your puppy entertained and busy—and not trying to figure out what your shoes taste like. Ask your veterinary team what their favorite enrichment items are or be creative to find ways for your puppy to seek you, find you and get active with you at home. It doesn't matter what you do, as long as you do it together.

Teaching your new puppy the right way to play

Puppies can play rough. So to ensure a lifetime of safe and happy interactions, learn how to play appropriately with your new puppy from the start.

Most puppy play consists of chasing, pouncing, barking, growling, snapping, and biting. So how can you tell the difference between normal play and possible signs of true aggression in your new puppy?

NORMAL PLAY BEHAVIOR

In normal play, a puppy may play bow (lower its head and raise its hind end), present its front end or side to the owner, hold the front part of its body up, wag its tail, dart back and forth, emit high-pitched barks and growls, and spontaneously attack. Of course, even normal play can become too intense.

AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

Behaviors that may indicate a problem include prolonged, deep-tone growling; a fixed gaze; a stiff posture; and aggression that is situational or stimulus-dependent (not spontaneous). These aggressive behaviors may be related to fear, possessiveness, conflict, or pain. Talk to your veterinarian if your puppy is exhibiting these behaviors.



7 steps to proper play

Follow these steps to prevent inappropriate play:

1) Provide plenty of exercise.

New puppies are bundles of energy, so give them productive ways to expend that energy such as going on walks or playing "Monkey in the middle" (see sidebar).

2) Provide mental stimulation.

Rubber toys that can be filled with treats, such as Kong (Kong company) or Busy Buddy puzzle toys (Premier), offer puppies a chance to chase and bite the toys and obtain a food reward.

3) Play with your pup.

Playing fetch or throwing a soccer ball for your pet to push around will sap some of your pup's energy.

4) Teach and review basic obedience commands.

A well-trained dog is more likely to follow orders when behaving inappropriately.

5) Conduct leadership exercises.

Follow three rules to maintain overall order:

- **Nothing in life is free.** Ask your puppy to respond to a command such as "sit" before it receives anything it wants or needs.

- **Don't tell me what to do.** It's OK to give your puppy the love and at-

tention it needs, but if it becomes too pushy about getting attention, such as by nudging, whining, barking, or leaning, pull your hands in, lean away, and look away. Walk away if your puppy is too difficult to ignore. Once the puppy stops soliciting attention for 10 seconds, ask it to sit and give it attention.

- **Don't move without permission.**

Anytime you begin to move from one area of the home to another, ask your puppy to sit and stay for a second or two before you give it a release command to follow you.

6) Don't sit on the floor with your pup.

This tends to get puppies excited, puts family members in a vulnerable position, and makes it more difficult to control the puppy.

7) Promote socialization.

Puppies must have frequent, positive social experiences with all types of animals and people during the first three or four months of life to prevent asocial behavior, fear, and biting. And continued exposure to a variety of people and other animals as the puppy grows and develops is an essential part of maintaining good social skills.

NIPPING BAD PLAY BEHAVIOR IN THE BUD

If your puppy plays inappropriately, here are the right ways to handle it.

- **Distract the bad behavior.** Always have a toy on hand that your puppy can transfer its attention to.
- **Speak up and step out.** If your puppy is biting hard, yell "Ouch!" and stop playing.
- **Interrupt problem behaviors.** A shake can or a water gun will startle puppies and stop the behavior. But don't use these techniques if a pet has a sensitive temperament or if they seem to make things worse.
- **Set up a dragline.** Both indoors and outdoors during supervised play, put the puppy on a leash that you can quickly grab to stop the behavior.
- **Use head halters.** These halters provide a more natural sense of control than ordinary collars do and limit the chances of biting.
- **Consider muzzles.** In extreme cases, muzzles may be used for short periods to prevent the biting behavior.
- **Give the puppy a time out.** If your puppy won't stop a bad behavior, put it in a room or in its kennel with toys to keep it busy until it calms down.

WHAT NOT TO DO

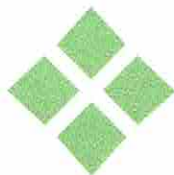
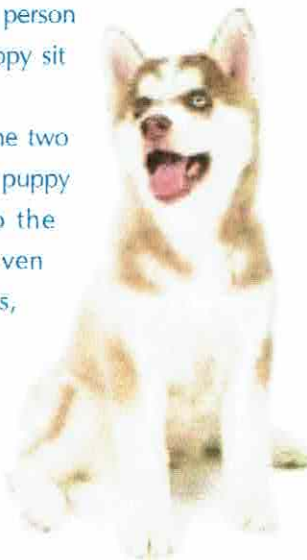
You and your family should never use physical punishment, such as scruff shakes, alpha rollovers, squeezing the puppy to the floor, thumping its nose, or swatting.

Monkey in the middle: An exercise in obedience

This game not only exercises energetic puppies, it also reinforces the basic commands of "sit" and "come," enhances name recognition, and teaches a puppy to run up and sit to get attention (instead of jumping up on people). At least two people are needed, and each person should have six to 12 small treats (regular puppy dinner kibble is usually adequate) at hand.

The two people sit opposite each other with about five to six feet in between. The first person calls "Skippy, come" in a high-pitched, upbeat voice. As the puppy approaches, the first person has the puppy sit for a treat. Immediately, the second person calls "Skippy, come" in a high-pitched, upbeat voice and has the puppy sit for a treat. Immediately, the first person calls again and has the puppy sit for a treat, and so on.

The distance between the two people can increase as the puppy becomes accustomed to the game—the people can even move into separate rooms, increasing the strength of the "come" command and the exertion needed to obtain a treat.



Remember, everybody wins when you take the time and effort to teach your new puppy how to play appropriately. You'll gain a well-behaved pet, and the puppy is more likely to remain a happy, important part of the family.