

# Make a Pact with Your Puppy

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**"I welcome you into our family pack and promise to be a good leader. To provide you not only with food, water and shelter but with exercise, companionship and knowledge of how to live in a human world."**

Congratulations! Today you are proud parents of a beautiful new, squirming, big eyed bundle of tail wags and kisses. Promises of wonderful adventures lie ahead for you both. However many of these beautiful puppies will never see their second birthday, not because of any viral epidemic but because no one taught them the skills needed to live in a human world. Behavioural problems kill more young dogs than all other causes combined. Some of these problems are as simple as jumping up, chewing and digging. Most of them are normal dog behaviours displayed in ways that are inappropriate or annoying to humans. The good news is that it doesn't have to be like this. With a little early effort on your part, the vast majority of these problems are easily preventable.

**The First Step** - is to change your mind set from:

**"How do I STOP** my puppy from .... (chewing, jumping , biting, etc.)"  
to  
**"How do I TEACH** my puppy to . . . . (only chew his toys, sit when greeting, accept physical handling)".

This change puts you in charge because it means that instead of being a 'victim' of your puppy's behaviour, you have assumed the responsibility for teaching him what will be required to live in your home and share your life.

## **Positive Training and Good Management.**

The best way to train your puppy is by rewarding him for the things you like and ignoring him for things you don't like. Rewards can be attention, praise, games and food. To make it easy for your puppy to succeed you need to provide him with an 'errorless learning environment' – to prevent mistakes and to provide lots of opportunities for reward. For example, it would be silly to allow a young puppy full freedom of the house before it has learned to toilet outside. By confining your puppy to a small area and taking it out every hour to the appropriate toileting spot, you are preventing mistakes and ensuring that you are present to reward the correct behaviour. Rewarding any behaviour makes it more likely to happen again and again. By confining your puppy now, you will be ensuring that he learns good house etiquette and will have earned the right to much greater freedom as an adult.

## **A suitable confinement area.**

You will need a confinement area that contains:

- A comfortable sleeping area
- A clean bowl of water
- Suitable chew toys such as 'kongs' and hollow bones stuffed with kibble and treats
- A toileting area (ideally a piece of turf )

The purpose of this area is to :

- Prevent mistakes
- Develop a good chew toy habit ( as it is all that is available)
- Reduce the options of where your puppy may toilet
- Teach your puppy to settle down quietly in it's own area
- Teach your puppy it's ok to be alone for periods of time.
- Gives you peace of mind and a little break!



Unless you are actively playing or supervising your puppy it should be confined in its special area. Some people also like to have a short-term confinement area such as a crate, where the puppy is very unlikely to want to toilet as it would soil its bed. Training your dog to accept crating can be very useful as a crate can be used for a variety of purposes as the dog matures. The crate can become your dog's main sleeping area (with the door normally left open) and can also be useful when traveling and staying in new places. It is important to remember however that crates are not storage units for dogs and are suitable for short term confinement only. Leaving your dog the run of the back garden is another alternative but in itself is not as effective for training your puppy as leaving it in its confinement area. Firstly, being in the back yard does nothing to teach your puppy to settle quietly in the house. Secondly, there will be many more temptations other than chew toys such as irrigation systems, clothes lines and pot plants. Thirdly, you will be less likely to interact with your puppy when it is outside and you are inside.

## THE TOP TEN LESSONS FOR THE PERFECT PUPPY

**Puppy hood - from eight to eighteen weeks is the most important developmental period in your dog's life.** It is the best time to develop good habits and prevent bad ones. It is the best time to introduce all the amazing things that will encompass your puppy's world – people, other dogs and animals, kids, vacuum cleaners, garbage trucks, toddlers, bicycles, skateboards, slippery floors, teenagers, stairways, motor cars, veterinarians, football games, swimming pools and babies – to name just a few. Even though your puppy will not be fully vaccinated until nearly the end of this time there are still lots of lessons you can and should begin to teach your puppy TODAY!

### Teach Your Puppy to Toilet Outside

This is probably the most urgent of issues and one that will have profound effects on the rest of your relationship. Dogs want to be where the rest of the 'pack' or family is – in the home. You'll double your enjoyment of your puppy if he learns right from the beginning how to live and behave in a family home. Statistics have shown that dogs who are relegated to the backyard are more likely to engage in nuisance behaviours such as barking, hyperactivity and destructive chewing and are also more likely to end up in animal shelters. This can be prevented if you take the time now to teach your dog the appropriate place to toilet.

**Step 1:** - Assuming your chosen toileting area is your back yard lawn, include a square of turf in preference to paper as the toileting area in your dog's confinement area. This cuts out 'the middle man' in your dog's education – making it easier from the start for your puppy to understand that grass is the preferred surface.

**Step 2:** - Take your puppy out to the designated area of your garden after every play, sleep, meal or drink – on average every hour. Say your special word that will eventually tell your dog to eliminate such as 'hurry up' and wait. When your puppy squats praise and reward him with several food treats. Make a really big fuss – this is great stuff. Your puppy may wonder why you think a natural function is so amazing but pay him big time and he'll be happy to oblige you quickly and consistently.

**Step 3:** -Repeat! Your puppy will need a long 'reward history' before he makes the connection that toileting outside is a consistently good thing to do.

### Common mistakes:

- **You** forgot to go out with your puppy to reward him thereby providing less confirmation to your puppy that 'toileting outside is good!'
- **You** roused on your puppy when he wee'd on the carpet in front of you – so now puppy is reluctant to 'wee' in front of you at all! Convinced you have a problem with bodily functions, in future he will take care to hide when he needs to go – behind the couch, under the bed . ...etc.
- **You** let your puppy out of its confinement area unsupervised. One mistake is all it takes before your puppy's keen sense of smell tells him that the lounge room *is* the appropriate



place to toilet. Avoid cleaning accidents with products containing ammonia, diluted white vinegar and wool mix or one of the washing powders containing bio-enzymes will neutralize the odor better.

## Teach your puppy what to chew

Puppies need to chew not only because it is good for their teeth and gums but because without hands, it is their way to investigate their environment - "ah, this smells interesting, I wonder what sort of texture it has and whether it's good to eat?". Most owners do buy toys for their puppies and leave them lying around the home, but once your dog has checked out the plastic hamburger and 'killed' the squeaky inside it's probably not very interesting - not nearly as interesting as that wonderfully aromatic shoe of yours!" Now is the time to develop an appropriate chew-toy habit. By keeping your puppy in his confined area, you have removed the opportunity to make mistakes. Instead provide your puppy with irresistible, long-acting chew toys such as 'Kong's', treat balls and hollow bones which can be stuffed with a variety of foods (including much of puppy's regular meal) to keep them eternally interesting. Rotate the toys and add a few different tidbits each time. These toys can be stuffed loosely at first but as your puppy progresses they can be packed tighter and tighter to challenge any dog's perseverance - keeping them entertained for ages.\* Confinement teaches your puppy to focus his 'destructive chewing' on appropriate objects (as no other are available) and allow him to develop a habit which will continue as your puppy matures.

## Teach your puppy 'it's ok to be alone'

Dogs probably spend more hours alone today than ever before. Many will develop bad habits when their owners are away because :

- daily needs for social interaction, exercise and/or play have not been met and the dog is bored.
- there is no one to stop them from entertaining themselves with normal doggy pursuits such as reactive barking, digging and chewing. The worst behaviour is often seen in puppies whose training is based on punishment for wrong behaviour rather than setting puppy up to 'get it right' through good management.
- they have never learned how to occupy themselves with appropriate chew and 'home alone' toys.
- they have never learned to 'settle' quietly and wait.
- they have not developed the confidence to be separated from their owners.

Leaving your puppy in his special confinement area as you work around the house, will teach him that there is no need to 'shadow' you everywhere. You come and you go, there is play time and there is quiet time. By all means take your puppy out and play with him as often as you wish, but when he can't be supervised return him to his area. He will learn that he has everything he needs there and is safe until you come to play with him again. When you leave, prepare a yummy chew toy but don't let him have it until just before you go. Pass it to him and walk out quietly with as little fuss as possible. When you arrive home say hello to puppy and take him outside but don't make a huge fuss. It is always best to keep 'greeting rituals' low key so as not to over excite your dog.

## Teach your puppy to play and to 'settle'

It is fun to play with your puppy, but it is easy for puppy play to get out of hand. Consistently standing still and taking away your attention when games start to escalate is the most effective way to teach your puppy self-control. Make sure you and your children spend lots of quiet time with your puppy as well as play time. Mix up active and passive activities such as chasing a ball with 'sit' or 'drop'. This should develop a lifetime habit of using play as a reward for settled behaviour and gives you excellent control of your dog and the games you play together.



## Teach your puppy to like being handled and hugged.

It is important that your puppy allows you to hold and restrain him for short periods of time. Right from the beginning, only put your puppy down when he is *not* struggling. If he is going to be a large dog, continue practicing restraint on the ground. Acceptance of handling will make all health care issues such as nail trimming, grooming, and veterinary check-ups so much easier and will help to develop your puppies self control. Pay particular attention to sensitive areas such as ears, mouth, paws, rear end and around the collar. In cases of emergency or even just to clip your dog on lead, you are likely to reach out and grab the collar. This is actually a very threatening gesture in dog language so you need to desensitize your puppy to this action now. Take the collar and treat your puppy. Gradually reach out and grab with a little more force. Repeat and treat hundreds of times with kids and adults. You are actually 'classically conditioning' your puppy to enjoy being grabbed and handled.

## Teach your puppy to swap and share

Lots of puppies learn that if they play with their own toys no one takes an interest but if they play with something of yours, a great game of 'catch me if you can' can be initiated. This is a mild version of 'resource guarding' when a dog won't allow you to have what he has. While 'stealing' is not usually a serious behaviour problem, some puppies will also learn to growl and bite to protect their food bowl or bones. Do lots of 'swaps' with your puppy right from the first day. Take away things he has including toys and food, look at them and either give them back or give him something even better. This is more effective than expecting your pup to give things up simply because you are the 'boss'. Being dominant over your dog may persuade him to give you a bone (reluctantly) but it will do nothing to safeguard your children or visiting children who may approach your dog when eating or chewing. Far better to change your puppies opinion about the whole situation - 'the approach of any human – big or small – is good news for me!'

## Teach your puppy that ALL people are 'ok'!

Puppy hood is the time nature intended for dogs to leave the den and explore the world. It is a time when they possess a lot of 'bounce back' – if something frightens them a little but they survive they tick it off as 'ok'. It is the perfect time to introduce your puppy to everything and anything he may encounter in his future life. The most important thing for your puppy to accept is people – all people, men, women, big kids, little kids, boys and girls – all look, act and smell differently to your dog. NOW is the time to socialize your dog with as many people as possible – ideally three new people every day for the first month of your puppy's life with you. Have a real 'puppy party' – invite all your friends and instruct them on how to meet, greet and treat your new puppy. If your dog is frightened of vacuum cleaners you can probably learn to live with it, but if your puppy has not learnt to like the company of people- all people- he could become a liability nightmare.

## Teach your puppy how to 'talk dog'

Well, perhaps *you* don't have to actually teach your puppy to 'talk dog' but you do have to give him the opportunity to learn! This is where puppy preschools are invaluable. Puppy preschools, normally held at veterinary surgeries, provide your puppy with a safe, supervised environment to socialize with other dogs and people before the completion of their vaccination programme. They are the perfect place for puppies to learn about other dogs. Young puppies think that all dogs look like their mum and littermates, but dogs come in a greater variety of shapes and sizes than any other species in the world. Your puppy needs to learn that even though they may all look different the fundamentals of dog 'body language' are the same. A play bow or a submissive roll over means the same to a German Shepherd as it does to a Fox Terrier. Learning to read and communicate these messages to other dogs, will help your dog to play and interact peacefully with other dogs. This play should also be interrupted with short sessions of 'settle' time – either by being held or by encouraging puppy to 'come' and 'sit' so that your puppy learns he can pay attention to you and still enjoy the reward of continuing play.



## Teach your puppy to bite softly.

**Bite inhibition involves teaching your puppy to first bite *softly* and then as he matures, not to bite at all. This is probably the single most important thing for your puppy to learn** yet it is often a difficult concept to initially grasp. The point is that there may be a moment in any dog's life when it feels the need to snap. If it has learned to inhibit the pressure from its jaws, the ensuing bite will be relatively minor. For your dog to learn bite inhibition, he must be allowed to experiment with his jaws, preferably on other puppies, while he still has needle sharp teeth set in weak jaws. If a puppy bites too hard in play, the other pup will yelp and end the game for a while. Again a good puppy preschool will provide your puppy with this opportunity at the right time of his life (under 18 weeks of age). People should try to teach bite inhibition in a similar way. Gentle mouthing from a small puppy should be allowed but if he bites too hard – yelp and withdraw all attention for a minute or so. By six months of age, the criteria should be raised to the point where any contact of canine teeth on human flesh results in loud 'yelp' and time out. This lesson if learnt well, will mean that even if your dog's tail gets slammed in the car door, or a strange child falls on top of him while chewing a bone, your dog's instinctive reaction will be greatly restrained causing little or no damage.

## Teach your puppy your signals for . . .

. . . 'sit', 'down' and 'come'. Your puppy already knows how to sit, down and come but what he doesn't know is our words for these behaviours and/or why he should do them. Reward based training quickly teaches your dog the hand signals and words to signify these behaviours and provides him with the motivation for doing so – praise, a treat or a game. Over time your puppy will learn that all good things in life come through you and the best way to get what he wants in life is to do what you want. This method is fun for both owners and puppies and fosters a positive attitude to learning.

## A happy future

Puppies need to be shown how to behave in our very human, urban world just as children do. The structure and exposure you provide for your puppy in your first two months together will have a huge impact on his ability to cope with modern life both in and outside your home. Although it is important to continue the good work you establish in puppy hood into your dog's adolescence, you will never again have such a 'clean slate' on which to make an impression – so please don't delay. Provide him with regular opportunities to meet and greet people and dogs of all sizes and shapes. Think ahead and apply simple management strategies to make it easy for your puppy to learn what you want and to prevent needless mistakes. Through this combination of socialization, good management and reward based training you will ensure that your beautiful new puppy will grow into a mature dog that you will be proud to own for a lifetime.

\*Visit The Kong Company website at [www.kongcompany.com](http://www.kongcompany.com) for instructions and recipes when using their product.

