

Basic Puppy Training Rules

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Rule 1. Always Be Consistent

1. The First Rule of general training is Always Be Consistent. There should be no exceptions here if you want the training to go as rapidly and as easily as possible. This relates to your actions and words. From the very start you need to decide exactly what you are trying to teach or control and how you will do it. If you are going to use a certain word or phrase as part of a command, always say the exact same thing in the same tone of voice. This is important for all the members of a household. Everyone that is involved in the training should know and use the same expression. As an example, let's think in terms of the "Come" command. It obviously will not make things go faster if you use the word "Come", your spouse uses the word "Here" and one of the children uses "Yo, Boy". All of this simply confuses the dog. Always be consistent!

Rule 2. Keep Training Sessions Short

2. The Second Rule of general training is Keep Training Sessions Short.

Generally speaking, most successful training sessions at home are no more than 10 or 15 minutes regardless of the age of the animal. This seems to be a good duration for most dogs to tolerate or enjoy. If this window of time is exceeded, the learning process actually starts to go backwards. It is important that the puppy enjoy these sessions.

There are ways to get in additional training time other than the brief scheduled periods, and these extra ones can be very important. If your animal is doing something that you are trying to train it to do, use this opportunity to reinforce the command. A best case scenario would be when you are getting ready to feed the puppy. You've learned that as soon as the animal hears you filling the bowl he automatically comes running. As soon as he starts toward you, bend down with the bowl and say "Come". It is a free, can't fail training session! Another example would be when you are trying to train the puppy not to do something. Let's say you are trying to keep him from jumping on people. You've learned that every time you first come home, the puppy rockets through the house and jumps up on your leg. Be prepared and when he jumps up immediately step backward to make him get down. Then when he has 4 feet on the ground, bend down and greet the puppy just like you always do.

Rule 3. Stay Calm and in Control

3. The Third Rule of general training is Stay Calm. This is where most people fail in training. By staying calm we are talking about you, not the dog. In training situations you can never lose control or get excited because when you do you may become mad, lose your temper and do something exceptionally stupid. Training should be enjoyable for both you and the animal. If the puppy isn't having a good time she won't learn anything.

You will learn that your demeanor is directly proportional to the amount the puppy will learn. If you are up for this and enjoying it, the potential is there for the dog to make solid headway. If you get mad and lash out or treat the puppy harshly, you have destroyed any good that might have come from the training and put a black cloud over the relationship between the two of you. When you do something to another person that you should be sorry for, you can sincerely express your regret and apologize. If they are of a forgiving nature, the act or unkind words are forgotten. Unfortunately, you cannot sit down with your puppy and reason through the stupidity of your act. What's done is done and you must work long hours to regain the animal's trust.

Rule 4. Always End on a Positive Note

4. The Forth Rule of general training is to Always End On a Positive Note. Every training session should end with praise. The last thing you ask the puppy to do should be completed with the puppy doing it correctly. Some day when things are not going as well as you would prefer, for the last command, choose something that is easy and can't fail. When the puppy does it correctly, praise her and move someplace else for some recess time or relaxation. You want the pup to finish one lesson and look forward to the next session. Always remember that to the dog, praise helps fulfill her desire to please you.

Rule 5. Forget Discipline (Punishment)

5. The Fifth Rule of general training is Forget Discipline. Now before you overreact, understand what we mean. To some trainers and most dog owners, discipline usually means to punish the animal for something he has done. To these same people, punishment usually means to hurt the animal in some way. In our minds this isn't necessary. If discipline means punishment or causes pain, forget it!

Let's look at the most common reasons people discipline their dogs. The most common one is for something the animal did. Notice we didn't say "something the animal was doing". Rather we used the past tense. People punish their dog for something she did in the past. Examples would be finding a stool in the house during the housebreaking process. You didn't catch the animal doing it, you only discovered it later. The pup is picked up, scolded, and put in her crate. A second example would be if someone's dog runs away from home without them knowing it. Two or three hours later she returns so, to make her see the error of her ways, the owner punishes her. They use a rolled-up newspaper to give her a spanking. Neither of these animals had any idea what the punishment was for. They didn't sit there thinking, "Gosh, I wonder what I did lately that deserved punishment?" Dogs don't reason. Just because they got punished, they don't assume they did something wrong. All they know is that their owners were mad.

Often punishment that occurs as part of training is brought about because the owner is impatient. The owner is trying to push the animal through training too fast. Be patient, remember that with most training you are altering the natural behavior of the animal. The best

punishment for an incorrect reaction in training is a lack of a reward. If the animal does it right she is praised, if she makes a mistake, she receives no praise. A lack of praise may send a message. Praise is positive reinforcement, punishment is a distraction.

In most cases a stern "No" is all that is required. You catch the animal urinating in the house, you say "No", pick the puppy up and carry him outside. Dogs understand a change in the tone of your voice much better than they do most punishment.

Most things we want to punish our dogs for indicate a lack of training. Rather than punish them for doing something you don't want, train them to do what you would prefer. Until that can be accomplished, a firm "No" will bring an end to most unacceptable behavior.

Housebreaking

This is one of the most important things that your new puppy needs to learn. A dog who isn't properly house-trained is very difficult to live with and this problem is a contributing factor in many cases of dog abandonment. Get this piece of puppy training right and you'll be off to a flying start!

If you follow some simple rules you'll be able to help your puppy understand what's expected of him fairly quickly.

The secret lies in taking the task of housebreaking very seriously, right from Day 1. Supervision, consistency and patience are vital!

You'll need to help Fido realize that it's not okay to 'potty' inside the house. You can get this message across pretty quickly if you follow these guidelines :

- Designate a particular area of your yard as Fido's '**Potty Spot**', and always take him there to relieve himself.
- Use a crate to help housebreak your puppy. Crate training works WITH your pup's natural instinct not to 'mess' where he sleeps. It's the simplest, most effective and least stressful (for both of you!) method of housebreaking a puppy.
- Supervise your pup whenever he's not outside or in his crate. Your aim is to prevent any housebreaking accidents, as puppies learn through repetition and you don't want him to be repeating the wrong things!
- Take you little furball outside to go 'potty' regularly and frequently. An 8 week old puppy needs to go outside approx. every 30 minutes to an hour during the day, and after EVERY nap, mealtime and playtime.

Housebreaking your puppy requires dedication and hard work, but it can be done, and without tears too!

However, if you're half-hearted or inconsistent in enforcing your rules, you puppy will get confused and the whole process will be much more difficult and take longer.

If you want to potty train a puppy effectively you need to follow the Golden Rules! Puppies learn through repetition and it's very important that little Fido learns what you want him to, right from Day 1 (or even *Hour 1* to be exact).

Association and cause-and-effect are a very important aspect of dog training. Housebreaking is no different. Potty training begins the minute you bring that precious puppy home, before you even step inside your home.

It's easiest to potty train a puppy if you have a daily routine, a designated 'potty spot' outside, a crate, an understanding of the limited capacity of a puppy bladder/bowels (!) and a good dollop of patience.

Once you've assembled all of the above, you're ready to get started - **Your** puppy!

1. Designate a specific 'potty spot'

Make sure there's an area of your yard just for Fido, and ALWAYS take him there to potty. Introduce him to it as soon as you get him home, before you even take him inside the house, and hopefully he'll be ready to relieve himself.

2. Realize that puppies need to potty a lot! The average 8 week old pup needs to go out approx. every 30 minutes during the day. Always take him to his potty spot after every meal, nap and playtime - and anytime he is whining, circling and sniffing, or seems restless or agitated (all classic signs that he needs to 'go').

3. Never leave your puppy to run around indoors unsupervised

When you're beginning to potty train a puppy, NEVER leave your puppy to run around the house unsupervised. Dogs are naturally clean animals and will do their best not to soil in their den. However, your home is considerably larger than a dog's natural den, and it will take some time for Fido to realize that the whole house is, in fact, his den and needs to be kept clean. Whenever you're not watching him, put the puppy in a separate room (preferably with a clean-able floor!), in a fenced-off area of the kitchen or in his crate.

4. Pick a 'Trigger Word' and use it consistently

When potty training, choose a word or phrase (called a 'trigger word') and repeat it quietly as you encourage Fido to 'do his business'. "Potty time" or "hurry up" work, just choose something you're comfortable with. Over time your puppy will come to associate this word or phrase with the action of emptying his bowels or bladder and will appear to 'go' on command. This aspect of potty training is something that will prove invaluable when it's 20F below and you don't want to stand outside for the next 45 minutes!

5. Make sure your puppy knows when he's succeeded

Always praise Fido when he 'goes' in the appropriate spot. Your puppy wants to please you and this is how he knows he's been successful.

6. Don't scold if he makes a mistake, because so have you!

Never scold your puppy for a potty training 'accident' unless you actually catch him in the act. Fido doesn't know a puddle on the carpet is wrong, and his memory is short. If he's

had the opportunity to have an 'accident' you've also failed somewhere. Maybe you didn't supervise enough, or forgot that he needed to go out after lunch or whatever. Your job is to make sure he's set up to succeed!

However, if he does squat right in front of you it's perfectly OK to say "No" or "Bad" in a loud, firm voice. It may even startle him into pausing mid-flow. Scoop him up immediately and take him straight to his potty spot and let him finish his 'business'. Then give him lots of praise. Even if he seems to have emptied his bladder or bowels onto the carpet, still take him outside and repeat the 'trigger word' so that he understands that *this* is where he's supposed to 'go'.

Obedience dog training and housebreaking are most successful when you are consistent, that way your little guy learns that the rules are always the same!

Basic Puppy Obedience Training

Basic puppy obedience training teaches your puppy good manners and makes him or her a better pet. With any kind of obedience training, the key things to remember are patience (yes, again), consistency and positive reinforcement (ie. lots of treats and praise).

Dogs are very intelligent and there's a huge range of commands (and even tricks) that you can teach your new puppy. For now we'll focus on what basic puppy training he needs to learn in order to become an enjoyable companion and family member.

- **Learn his name**

If you want to be able to get Fido's attention you first need to teach him his name. First do this by using his name whenever you talk to him, play with him, feed him etc. For example, tell him "*Good boy Fido*" when you're stroking him, or say "*Here you are, Fido*" when you give him his food. This will help him to realize that when you say the word 'Fido' it usually has something to do with him.

- **Recall or 'Come'**

'Come' is one of the most important commands Fido will ever learn! For you it means you won't need to run all over the yard trying to catch him (a game which you'll never actually win by the way), but more importantly, it could quite possibly save your puppy's life some day. If Fido happens to escape through the front door while you're talking to a neighbor for example, "COME" could mean the difference between him slinking back inside or running out into oncoming traffic.

- **Sit**

Teaching Fido to 'sit' on command is one of your easiest puppy training tasks. Most puppies take to this like ducks to water. First, get yourself a handful of treats then get Fido's attention. With him standing facing you, hold a treat in front of his nose (not close enough for him to grab it though) and then say "Sit" in a firm voice while slowly raising the treat up and away from you, as if to go over his head. Fido's puppy dog nose will

attempt to follow the treat up and in response his rear will go down. As soon as his rump hits the floor, give him the treat and say "good sit". Let him get up and then try it again. When you're practicing any puppy training exercises, 3 or 4 repeats per session is usually enough for his short attention span, and 3 or 4 sessions per day is ideal.

****** As well as the puppy training you do at home, there are several different options for formal obedience training. At the very least it's a good idea to take Fido to 'Puppy Training Class'. It will help you be sure you're doing things the right way, and is a great way to introduce Fido to other puppies in a safe environment.

It is important that you ensure Fido has had all the necessary shots before he starts puppy training school (most obedience schools insist on this) for his protection as well as the protection of the other pups.

Socialization

No puppy training advice would be complete with mentioning the importance of socializing your pup. If you want to have a well-rounded puppy who is comfortable in any situation and can accompany you anywhere it's vital that you begin socialization as soon as possible.

Socialization basically means getting your puppy used to different people, places and things. The more positive experiences Fido has the better.

Take your puppy with you whenever you can. Take him to the pet store when you buy his food; out in the car when you run errands (properly restrained and never leave him alone on an even slightly warm or sunny day); attend puppy classes, join a dog obedience class after that.

Really, socialization opportunities are everywhere. There is one important thing to remember when practicing this particular aspect of puppy training, and that is to keep your precious puppy away from areas where un-vaccinated dogs may roam.

Always remember to make each outing a pleasant experience for your puppy - puppy training should be fun (for both of you). Have strangers feed him treats (ones that you supply!), make a fuss of him when he is friendly but don't scold him if he's a little shy. He's just a baby and needs to get used to the big wide world. You will be rewarded for all your hard work by having a happy, friendly, well adjusted dog that you can take anywhere.

Now you know the basics of puppy training and are ready to help Fido be all that he can be.

Puppies are little sponges just waiting to soak up all that you teach them (good or bad) so make sure he learns the right stuff!