

PUPPY

TRANSLATING YOUR WORLD

BY MEL HEBER



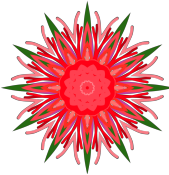
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Puppy:

Translating your World

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DEDICATION

*For all the dogs who've taught me so much and their owners who
looked for answers.*

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Chapter One: Introduction

You're getting a puppy—congratulations and good luck! Puppies are a lot of work and the challenge to raise that puppy up into a well-socialized and responsible adult dog who is a pleasure to be with can be daunting at times. There's a lot your puppy doesn't know yet, so you'll have to translate your world to your puppy so he understands it and can move through life with confidence.

Just remember, the work you put in now pays off a thousand times down the road. You'll have good days and you'll have bad days, but with consistency and work, those good days will be more numerous and even better, and the bad days will be less numerous and less bad.

There's a lot to do. Your puppy needs to learn socialization, manners, self control, how to inhibit his impulses (and be responsible for himself) and also some basic obedience. Too often people get caught up in the obedience work, and while it is useful, important, and can help teach your puppy the other things he needs to learn, you'll still face trouble if you don't also address the other aspects. After building a solid foundation to help a puppy understand your world, the rest of the training will be faster and easier for both puppy and owner, and puppyhood is hard enough!



The advice in this booklet is designed for puppies younger than six months. At around six months, puppies become adolescents and the teenage testing phase begins. While the information in this booklet will work to teach many adolescents the meaning of the words we use, they also need firm boundaries, and in some cases, this can be mildly stressful, with a little more

pressure put on them. Puppies who are just beginning to learn the ways of the world around them need gentle guidance, so in this booklet, only the gentlest of solutions are described. If you have an adolescent and the advice contained in here is not working, please consult a professional trainer or read my other book, *DOG as a Second Language*.

So read on, brave puppy owner, and learn how to mold that adorable puppy into a trustworthy adult dog who is adorable inside and out!

Chapter Two: What breed is best?

One of the most important decisions you can make about your new puppy is which one to bring home with you. Whether you've decided on a breeder or a shelter, a purebred or a mixed breed, you still have many decisions to make. Do you want a male, or a female? Do you want the biggest of the litter, or the runt? What breed are you going to decide on? And can you predict the adult personality from a puppy's temperament, or are they truly "blank slates?"

Let's start first of all with the question of breed. Different breeds were designed to suit different purposes. For instance, if you want a lap dog happy to lay at your feet the entire day with a single 30 minute stroll, you should not be considering a border collie. Likewise, a pug is not very well suited to driving cattle all day.

There are several different groups of breeds, according to the American Kennel Club. These groupings are supposed to reflect the dog's original type and purpose. They are: the Herding Group, the Hound Group, the Terrier Group, the Working Group, the Sporting Group, the Non-Sporting Group, the Toy Group, and the Miscellaneous Group. Sometimes by narrowing down what category might fit your lifestyle best, you can narrow down the breeds that best suit your needs.

The Sporting Group (or the Gun Dog Group) was designed to hunt alongside man for food and for sport. Sight and Scent hounds were originally both included in this group, along with terriers, until the Hound group and Terrier group were separated out. Examples of this group include the much loved Labrador Retriever and Golden Retriever, the Cocker Spaniel, and lesser known breeds such as the Sussex Spaniel, the Vizsla, the Spinone, and the Kooikerhondje from the Netherlands.

The Hound Group is often subdivided into sight-hounds and scent-hounds, with a third grouping of "primitive dogs." Some examples of this group include the Greyhound, the Afghan Hound, the Canaan dog, the New Guinea Singing dog, and the Bloodhound.



The Terrier Group was designed to "go to ground" after their prey—and this is how they got their name as "terriers." Dachshunds are traditionally classified as scent hounds, but as they were designed to go to ground after badgers, I think a terrier classification makes more sense. Most terriers originated in Britain, bred from various hounds. Some examples are: the Airedale terrier, the Yorkshire terrier, the Cairn terrier, the Jack Russell terrier, Scottish terrier, the Staffordshire Bull Terrier, and the West Highland White Terrier (the Westie).

The Toy Group was bred to be companions and pets as opposed to working dogs. Even so, many toy dogs also earned their keep as pest control and watch dogs (alerting with fearsome barking as opposed to physically stopping intruders most of the time). Examples of this group include the Pekingese, the Miniature Pinscher (which is not a derivative of the Doberman Pinscher, as Min Pins pre-date Dobies by some 200 years!), the Papillon, the Maltese, the Pomeranian, and the Chihuahua.

The Non-sporting Group (also known as the Utility Group) which was originally supposed to be a "catch-all" group for those breeds that didn't exactly fit the parameters of other groups. Obviously this ultimately failed, as we have the Miscellaneous group now, but it



shows the ever-changing nature of the classification of breeds. Some well-known members of this group are the Poodle, the Dalmatian, the Boston Terrier, the Bulldog, the French Bulldog, and the Lhasa Apso. Some rarer examples include the German Spitz, the Akita, the Schipperke, and the Tibetan Terrier.

The Working Group was designed to classify the breeds that worked for man in other ways than Hunting. The Herding Group was split off from the Working Group. Some examples of this category include: the Bernese Mountain Dog, the Newfoundland, the Rottweiler, the Husky, the Doberman, and the Boxer.

The Herding Group is the newest group to the AKC. This group includes those breeds bred to herd animals for man, and includes: the Border Collie, German Shepherd, Swedish Vallhund, Briard, and Australian Cattle Dog.

The Miscellaneous Group was designed to categorize breeds not fully recognized by the AKC and who have not yet been categorized into a group officially. Some examples of these breeds include: the Boerboel, American English Coonhound, Pumi, Finnish Lapphund, Rat Terrier, and Dogo Argentino.

What about a mutt, or “All American Dog?” These dogs are dogs with unknown heritage. Many times they exhibit tendencies similar to the breed(s) they most resemble, but this is also highly influenced by the owner’s perception of what breed(s) they are and what the shelter might have listed the dog as. Some shelters, as a result, have moved to being “breed-free” which means that if they don’t know what breed the dog is, they don’t guess, either. That helps to prevent preconceived notions about breed from cluttering up observations of the puppy’s behavior.

The best thing you can do if you’re narrowing down possible breeds to consider is to do your research on breed tendencies and origins. Keep an open mind—don’t get set on one particular breed, especially if it’s a rare one! Instead, try to narrow down

your breeds to ten or so acceptable choices. From there you can narrow down by individual, shelter, or breeder.

Keep in mind your wishes—would you like a dog that practically trains itself or one that challenges you a bit more? Do you want a dog who is stuck by your side all day or a dog who is more independent? How about grooming requirements? How protective would you like your dog to be, and how would you like the dog to perceive children?

If you're stuck, consider taking a quiz to help narrow down your choices. Something like <https://www.selectadogbreed.com> or <http://www.selectsmart.com/dog/> can help you come up with options or preferences that you might not have thought of before, but you'll still want to do some research on the breeds suggested to you by these quizzes.

Chapter Three: Breeders

The best way to ensure you're not purchasing from a puppy mill is to adopt from a shelter. There are many perfectly healthy, normal, young puppies (sometimes even purebreds!) who are waiting for their forever homes in a shelter. A shelter with a nonprofit status isn't going to be getting rich off of your adoption donation, the staff will genuinely care for the animals, and a puppy from a shelter is likely to be cheaper than a puppy from a breeder, especially considering that the neuter or spay surgery, first shots, and microchip are often included. Microchips provide you a way to permanently identify your puppy throughout their life, and even if you get your puppy from a breeder, I strongly advise getting them chipped.

You should ask as many questions as you can think of about the puppies and their history, but be aware that the shelter staff may not have all the answers. They may not have gotten any information from the person who bred them. This potential lack of information is often perfectly fine for the casual owner looking for a companion. However, this is also the reason why buying from a breeder is the only thing that fits the bill for other potential owners, particularly if it is imperative to the owner to know genetic details and facts about the lineage of the puppies, and to get some kinds of certifications and guarantees about the puppy.

When looking at a breeder, do your homework. Be prepared to wait for a puppy, as many excellent breeders do not even breed the parents until they have buyers for all the potential puppies. In addition to a possible waiting list, the breeder will likely ask you questions about your lifestyle, your home, and your needs for the puppy. Are you planning on a family pet? Working dog? Protection? Do you intend to do a particular sport with this dog? Some breeders will match you with a puppy, rather than letting you pick. Many good breeders will be happy to sit down with you and talk about the pros and cons of the breed to help

you decide whether that breed will work for you. They should be experts on their breed and be able to answer your questions. They will also be able to discuss the pros and cons of each individual puppy with you as you decide—if they don't know each of the puppies individually, that is a red flag.

Ask tons of questions. Is there a guarantee if there should be a genetic defect, so that you can return the puppy for another of like breeding or your money back if you needed to? If you found you could not care for the puppy, even after the puppy was grown, will the breeder take the pup back? What is the genetic history like, especially for things that the particular breed is known for: cancer in Golden Retrievers, hip and elbow dysplasia in German Shepherds, etc? If the breed has a known tendency toward joint problems, have the joints been x-rayed and certified by OFA? If the breed has a known tendency toward eye problems, have the eyes been checked and certified normal (CERF exam) by an ophthalmologist? Have the puppies been seen by a veterinarian, and do they have a clean bill of health? Have they been started on vaccinations and dewormed? Quality breeders will answer these questions easily with yes (and provide proof) for all of the above yes/no questions, and be willing and able to delve into the genetic history of their lines with you.

You want to be working with a breeder who will also ask you questions and interview you. A good breeder cares about their animals and will not sell to just anyone. They know that a high-strung dog bred for strenuous work is not going to make the best pet for someone who doesn't go outside much. They also know that a sensitive, shy dog who really just wants to lay around all day won't be the best companion for an active family with rambunctious children. Since a good breeder wants their puppies to be happy as well as for the customer to be happy, they will try to avoid those sorts of matches. The best breeders will do genetic tests on the parents (especially the mother) to be sure to minimize genetic defects, or they will have had the line for several

generations so as to know the risk of genetic defects. These breeders will be working hard to keep driving the risk of genetic defects down—a breeder with a high rate of congenital problems in their puppies is someone to avoid buying from.

Spend time with the mother. The mother should not be too old or too young. She should not be overbred, as a good breeder will ensure that she has time to recover from each litter. She should be in good health, and she should be involved in activities she enjoys, whether those are competitions, work of some type, or simply long strolls.

Insist on meeting the parents and seeing where the puppies spend most of the time. The parents should have a temperament agreeable to what you want in the puppy and the area where the puppies are raised should be part of the family home, clean and well kept. *This is imperative.* If you can't meet the parents (especially the mother), you should not buy from that breeder at that time. Pay attention to the parents' personalities. If you can't get close to them for fear of getting bitten, their puppies may not be suitable for an active family home with lots of visitors coming and going. Are the puppies well-fed and healthy, free of parasites? Have they been started on their socialization?

There should be plenty of enrichment opportunities for the puppies, including toys and sticks and outside play time. Do not buy from a breeder who urges you to meet them on the side of the road somewhere or who resists letting you meet the parents and see the puppies' room. Do not buy from a pet store, because you cannot be sure of the quality of the breeder, and may inadvertently be supporting a puppy mill. Do not buy from the internet and have the puppy shipped to you without checking out the breeder. If you don't want to spend much time in the puppies' room because of cleanliness issues, that is another red flag.

As hard as it is to resist "rescuing" a puppy from a puppy mill, do your best to walk away empty-handed. Owners of puppy mills

generally do not care about their pets. They don't care about the quality of the line or about the physical, emotional, and social health of the animals. Every puppy sold is another reason to continue the abuse and neglect and churn out dozens and dozens more puppies, some of whom will be resigned to a fate of walking on wires, wading in filth, and turning out litter after litter of puppies. Many puppy mill dogs end up having costly health or behavior problems stemming from their heritage.

Instead, if you suspect you have seen a puppy mill, notify your local Humane Society and Animal Control.

Chapter Four: Which individual is best?

Okay, so you've settled on a breed, and you've found a responsible breeder and/or shelter with a litter to choose from. You go to look, but you have several adorable individuals to choose from. How do you decide who to bring home?

Let's look first at gender. Is a male or a female the better fit for you? Many people already have a preference, and that is fine. Take a look at the breeds you've prioritized to see if there tends to be gender differences for that breed. For instance, some breeds have specific tendencies in temperament between adult males and adult females in terms of assertiveness, friendliness, and confidence. This can be influenced by training and socialization however. Females are thought to be easier to housebreak in general, but that's often because of the marking instinct of intact males. This means your neutered male may be just as easy to housebreak as your neighbor's female, and oh by the way, your intact female may also mark (and draw in intact males from the entire neighborhood when she's in heat).

One true gender trend is that males tend to be larger than females in almost every breed. Neutering (for males) is generally a little cheaper than spaying (for females), and males tend to recover much more quickly. In fact, I've known many males who don't even appear to notice that anything is missing after their neuter (though I've also seen a few females who spring back easily. A trend is, in fact, only a trend!)

Regardless of whether you choose male or female, you need to realize that there tend to be some changes if you do "fix" your dog. No, your spayed female or neutered male is not doomed to get fat (unless you over-feed and under-exercise), but neutering generally decreases aggression in males and spaying tends to reduce moodiness in females. Because of the pet overpopulation crisis, I highly recommend neutering and spaying any puppy who

is not a purebred bought specifically to continue the line (and even then they should be exceptional individuals of that breed, and in the hands of an experienced and super-responsible breeder). By fixing your dog, you also eliminate the chances of certain cancers and reduce the likelihood of some behavior problems (marking and running, for instance).

In choosing an individual, consider any dogs you already have at home, or dogs which the puppy will be playing with often. Choose a dog that is compatible with the dogs you already have. If you have a couple of rough and tumble dogs at home, think twice about bringing home that sweet but shy little one! If you can bring out the resident dogs to meet the new arrival so you can see if they hit it off, absolutely do so. It will give you invaluable information.

When looking at inter-dog relations, many people want to know what combination of dogs won't fight. In truth, males will fight males, females will fight females, and males and females will also fight. It all depends on the circumstances. In general, however, the fights between female and female tend to do the most damage and be the most serious.

In some cases, all the other pups will be chosen, and your choice is easy. In other cases, your choices seem endless. Rather than picking a puppy based on appearance, pick a puppy based on personality. Which pup's personality will work best in your home? Which will mesh best with your lifestyle and your personality?

Some people believe that the ideal puppy personality for an individual is a personality similar to their own. If you are a socially-sensitive person, you may want a socially-sensitive puppy. If you are confident and self-assertive, you may enjoy a similarly confident pup. It is rare for a nervous, shy puppy to enjoy a loud, boisterous home, and it can be hard for a shy, timid person to handle a loud, boisterous pup well.

I recommend temperament (or aptitude) testing your potential new puppy. The most important part of any aptitude test is to be careful not to hurt or scare the pup. Ideally, puppies should be tested around 7 weeks of age. Do not bring home a puppy younger than 8 weeks (9 weeks is better). If the breeder tries to send home a puppy younger than 7 weeks, that is a big red flag.

Perhaps the most popular aptitude test is the Volhard Aptitude test, which has been around for a long time. It was designed by Joachim and Wendy Volhard. This involves tests for sociability, will to follow, acceptance of restraint, social and elevation dominance, retrieving, touch, sight, and sound sensitivity, and also a startle test.

Be aware that temperament testing only *predicts* behavior. Since training and socialization also impact the later personality of the grown dog, there is no guarantee in temperament testing. It is only designed to be a tool to help you decide on an individual most likely to fit your needs and desires.

Chapter Five: The first days home

Congratulations! You have picked out an adorable little bundle of joy. Now, how are you going to take your puppy home with you? A very fortunate few live close enough to the breeder or shelter to carry the pup while they walk home. For most of us, we have to drive. I always recommend crating the puppy in the back seat when transporting him home for the first time. If you don't happen to have a crate yet, the puppy should be wrapped in a towel and held securely in a person's arms in the back seat. This way, the towel can be used for any upset stomach or vomit that may occur on the ride home, the puppy isn't bounding all over the car, and the puppy isn't as much at risk of serious injury should there be an accident causing the air bags to go off. For all these reasons and added security in the event of an accident, a crate is the safest place for your puppy to travel.

When you drive home for the first time, be aware that the puppy may never have been in a car before and very likely is not used to the motions of a vehicle. Therefore, while observing all traffic laws, go slowly and carefully when speeding up, slowing down, or changing directions. If the drive is longer than half an hour, consider stopping every ten minutes to let your puppy de-stress from the ride and reacclimatize to ground that is not moving beneath their feet. How often you need to stop depends on your puppy and the length of your ride, but it could be anywhere from every 5 minutes to every 25 minutes. If your puppy seems listless or like they have shut down, you probably need to stop and let them relax for a few (5 to 15) minutes. If your puppy begins to drool incessantly, they are likely feeling nauseous and need a break as soon as possible.

Many people want to show off their new puppy right away, but remember, your puppy is going through an enormous change right now. He has no idea yet that you are his owner and that many of the best things in his life are going to come from you.

Very likely, you have no relationship yet with your puppy. Take it easy on him and pace yourself. Before you take him out to meet the world (which you do want to do early on, just perhaps not the first day), have your vet check your puppy over. More on that in a bit.

Once you get home, rather than whisking your puppy right off to a friend's house or a pet store (or stopping at a store on the way home), take your pup for a short walk around the perimeter of his new yard. Establish a potty zone for him in your mind or with clear markers, and let him explore and also eliminate. If you have other dogs already, let them join you on a group walk around the perimeter. Walking can be a bonding activity, and it helps avoid face-to-face contact, which could lead to a disagreement between the dogs. Once you have an empty puppy, bring him inside on leash, and let him explore his home. Block off any rooms you do not want him to have access to, and be sure his crate is set up in the primary living center of your home—wherever you spend the most time. There's a lot to adjust to, so giving your puppy time will help ease the transition for him.

Teaching your puppy their name

What about teaching your new puppy her name? How best can you go about it—or for older puppies or puppies that already have names, how can you change her name? The good news is that it's super easy. Simply pair the new name with something meaningful to your puppy. This can be things like eating and going out and playing, but I also like to pair it with play. Call her name, and then start a game with her, such as tug or fetch or whatever she likes. If there's anyone else in the house, incorporate them, too. After a minute or two of playing, stop. Your puppy will usually try to get your attention. Have the other family member call her name and play for a minute or two before stopping. This will help her learn that "Josie" (or whatever you name her) not only means her, but also means her family likely has something fun to do.

Conditioned Relaxation

Most behavior problems in puppies are caused by a lack of knowledge of what to do, or a lack of self control, or a combination of both. We need to thoughtfully and carefully teach our puppy the rules, but we also need to help him build his self control.

Many people have trouble getting their puppies to calm down, and the world we live in can easily create puppies who grow up to be over-excited adult dogs bouncing from one event to the next. It's not healthy for our dogs to be in a constant state of emotional arousal, and this can cause many behavioral problems. Teaching your puppy at an early age to settle down on command will be doing both you and your puppy a huge favor! For a more in-depth look at this technique, check out Kayce Cover's manual *SATS and the Family Dog*. Kayce designed this approach and has used it successfully with a wide variety of animals.

You'll want to be able to help your puppy distinguish between a state of emotional arousal and one of calm. Therefore, you'll need words for both states. Typically people choose Relax, Easy, or Settle for the calm state and Alert or Excited for the state of arousal. Be consistent among your family in your terms so your puppy can easily and quickly learn what you mean.

We want to teach the puppy how it feels to be calm, what word we will use when we want him calm or excited, and how to move between those two states. Then, we'll ask him to use his self control to calm himself down in more and more exciting situations, until he becomes trustworthy to choose the right level of excitement for the situation..

Begin in a comfortable environment with your puppy. Sit down on the floor with him or hold him in your lap. Relax yourself to facilitate the process and say your chosen word clearly while you

pet your puppy in long, slow, deep strokes. Pay attention to how his muscles feel under your hand as you work. Talk to him while you pet him, asking him to relax (Easy, Relax, Chill, Settle, etc). Praise him for every little bit of relaxation you feel—you should be praising often. As soon as he tenses up a bit or gets interested in something else, name that your other word (Alert, Excited, etc).

It'll sounds something like this: "Buttons, can you Settle? Good, good Settle, good girl, good—oh, that's Alert, can you settle? Good girl, good Settle."

Continue working on any muscles or limbs that feel stiff, giving feedback constantly. You're done once your dog is completely settled: laying down, head on the floor, body relaxed, eyes partially closed.

The next day, do this again. The third day, when your puppy is fairly relaxed but not sleeping, use your Alert word and see if she perks up. Also, if she's somewhat excited but not bonkers, use your Easy word and see if she relaxes a bit. This is a great test to see if she knows those words—that's when the magic happens and you can use these words in every day life.

You can also be more detailed, naming parts of his body while helping him relax. Praise him frequently so he can pinpoint exactly when he made a mistake if he begins to get excited again.

So your session will be similar to this: Fido, can you be Easy? Easy Fido, g-g-g-g-g-g-g-good, that's Easy. Can you make your face easy? (petting the face) Make your face Easy. G-g-g-g-g-g-g-good Easy, Fido. Good Easy. Can you make your eyes easy? (gently brushing over the eyes) These are your Eyes. Give me Easy Eyes. G-g-g-g-g-g-g-good. Good easy eyes. Oh, your ears are alert. Can you give me easy ears? These are your ears. Easy ears, Fido. G-g-g-g-g-g-g-good. Oh, your ears are alert again. You have alert ears. Make them easy ears. G-g-g-g-g-g-g-good.

And so on. Your puppy gets practice relaxing slowly through different parts of his body until he is completely relaxed, and he gets to hear the new words often to learn what you mean. This system works even if you choose not to name body parts, but if you do choose to do this, it makes it all the more versatile. Typically this is a very quick process and only takes a couple days of practice. Don't worry about using full sentences with your puppy—in my experience, the puppy won't mind and it helps the owner stay relaxed, and you being relaxed is very important to teaching your puppy to relax.

In the Games chapter, there's a wonderful Switch-off game that helps with growing your puppy's self control and responsiveness to these commands.

Alright, so you've done a couple sessions and randomly through the day named Alert and Easy when your dog is playing and resting. You've tested and your puppy recognizes the words. Now you're ready to use them in real life!

So for instance, if the mail comes and your puppy gets excited, name it. "Fido, that's the mail. You're Alert, be Easy. G-g-g-g-good Easy Fido." With repetition, your puppy will learn what "Mail" means and you can pre-empt him. "Fido, the mail is coming, be Easy." And Fido will stay easy simply because you taught him the words, explained what's coming, asked him to do something he knows how to do, and because he trusts you. And trust is the key to such beautiful things.

First outings

Your first place to bring your puppy should be your vet. You want to make this experience enjoyable for your small, impressionable youngster, so bring some yummy treats, and turn it into a game. Hide treats in your small area of the waiting area for him to find, being sure to give other pets including dogs a wide berth. You want to make sure your puppy is healthy first

before beginning the all-important socialization, and you want his first few experiences with dogs and other pets to be with individuals who are forgiving and tolerant to help him form a positive impression. Ask the clinic's staff, especially vet techs and veterinarians, to offer your pup a small treat and some petting. Once your pup begins to view the vet as a fun place to go where he has lots of friends, you are much less likely to have to drag him in to appointments later on in life.

Once your vet affirms that your puppy is healthy, vaccinated, and approved to meet the world, it is time to begin the frenzy of socialization, sooner much rather than later, so read on in the next chapter!

Chapter Six: Socialization

In the dog training world, you hear about it all the time. As a trainer, I am talking about it constantly. For puppies and fearful dogs, it is all important. I am talking, of course, about socialization.

Socialization is crucial, and this is the reason that I do not recommend puppy classes that focus on obedience. Puppies have plenty of time to learn obedience skills, and time spent in an obedience class during this small window of their life would in many cases be much better spent ensuring they have a solid foundation of socialization.

From age 6 weeks to 16 weeks is a critical period in the puppy's life. Experiences that take place in this window have a stronger impact on the puppy's personality and outlook on life than if those same experiences took place a few weeks or even months later. This is why it's vital to get your puppies out into the world and expose them to life, while at the same time being careful to avoid high risk of exposure to diseases until their immune system is more mature. It is a tough tightrope to walk.

I am not a vet, and so I will advise you to talk to your vet about the risk of disease. However, I can tell you from a behavior standpoint, it is so much easier to prevent problems through socialization, especially when the puppy already has a fearful or nervous personality, than it is to try to remedially socialize an adult dog. It takes many times more exposures for an adult dog to approach the same effect that one single exposure has on a puppy inside the critical timeframe.

So what do you need to make sure your puppy is exposed to? Here are a few suggestions (you'll find this list on my website as well, linked in the Appendix, if you want to make copies to mark up). You'll want to expose your puppy at least seven times to each event or situation during the critical 10 week period. For exposure

to people and other dogs, the suggested number skyrockets to 100 times! That's a lot of work to properly socialize your dog, so prioritize it and do as much as you safely can.

Surfaces:

- Grass, cement, dirt, parking lots
- Stairs—hard, carpeted, open, spiral
- Carpet, tile, linoleum, rugs, and shiny indoor commercial flooring like at pet stores
- Manhole covers, metal flooring
- Surfaces that move a bit or wobble beneath their feet, like clanging sidewalk plates or swinging bridges

Environmental:

- Rain, snow, heat, and cold (being careful not to go to extremes and harm your pup)
- Dog-friendly events
- Car rides (shorter at first, then longer)
- Kong toys (lightly stuffed first)
- Crates
- Your vet's office and staff, groomer's office and staff, boarding kennel or pet sitter and staff
- Fireworks (secure, from a far distance), alarms, traffic, doorbells, jackhammers, and other noises
- Buses, motorcycles
- Planes, trains, sirens, etc
- Vacuum cleaner, broom, lawn mower, snow blower
- Forests, meadows, beaches, mountains/bluffs, rivers, ponds, large bodies of water, farms

Visual:

- Umbrellas (opened and closed), rain coats, jackets, winter coats, and costumes or unusual clothes
- Caps, baseball hats, wide-brimmed hats, helmets, hoodies, backpacks, large purses
- Canes, walking sticks, walkers

- Pots, pans, blankets, rugs, fans, balloons, items blowing in wind
- Sunglasses and regular glasses
- Direct eye contact, direct eye contact with forward movement, direct eye contact with smile and forward movement
- Bikes, trikes, wheelchairs, skateboards, rollerblades, scooters, and other wheeled non-motorized vehicles

People:

- Infants squealing, crawling, in stroller or carrier
- Children standing, walking, running, skipping, and jumping
- Children being quiet, saying hi to the puppy, and being loud and excited
- Teenagers
- Men, especially larger, taller men, men with beards, men with deep voices
- Women
- People of various ethnic backgrounds
- People with handicaps
- The mail carrier and delivery people
- People in uniforms

Other Animals:

- Other dogs, both small, large, male, and female
- Farm animals (if your puppy is at all likely to be exposed at a later date)
- Cats
- Small mammals
- Birds

Grooming:

- Leash, collar, harness, and other equipment you will use regularly
- Bathing, nail trims, teeth brushing, and other grooming rituals

With all of these, you need to be careful that these are good experiences. If you have an "oops", be sure you seek out that very same category of socialization for seven good experiences to every one bad experience as soon as possible.

If your puppy is nervous, ask them to get relaxed a little ways from the thing making them nervous (maybe 10 or 20 feet). If it's safe, you can coax them up to it, asking in an excited tone "What is this? What is this?" and making a big deal over how interesting it is. When your puppy shows any curiosity at all, praise like crazy. Don't drag your puppy up to anything they're scared of and certainly don't let anything that makes them nervous charge right up to them. That'll only heighten their fear. Taking it slow and in small steps while rewarding curiosity is the best way to build your puppy's confidence. With repetition, your puppy will also learn that if you ask "What is this?" it's likely something that's harmless, and they will relax because that's the pattern we're building from.

Any time your puppy gets nervous and then relaxes or shows curiosity, that still counts as an overall positive exposure. Mark that item down as something to socialize your puppy to a little more, but some anxiety that is quickly bounced back from is not a bad experience.

So get your puppy out into the world, and spend as much time as you can socializing them to as many different and new things as you can think of. You can (and should) work on obedience skills at home, but socialization is crucial. After this critical period closes, that's when obedience classes have their real potential and you can (and in most cases should) enroll your dog in one of them to enhance his obedience skills and continue practicing his manners.

Handling

While you're socializing your puppy, be sure to get him used to being handled as well. You want to be able to handle your puppy all over his body and you want your puppy to accept being handled by strangers as well. Start briefly and gently and progress to longer, more firm handling as your puppy can tolerate it.

Some examples are:

- Handle the paws, including sweeping your finger around the paw pads and in between the toes—you'll have to do this to look for ticks and to sweep salt out from the paw pads in the winter time
- Pinch the toe nails to mimic nail trims
- Rub your finger on the teeth and gums to mimic brushing teeth
- Handle the ears, look inside them, and sniff them
- Move your dog's tail, gently pull on it, and rub the base of the tail
- Hug your dog, restraining him gently for a few seconds at a time
- Pat the top of your dog's head
- Gently tug on him, including on his tail, and pet him backwards (from tail to head)
- Look at the eyes and nose

Your puppy will find it easier to accept these handling exercises if you name the part of the body you're working on so you can warn your puppy beforehand. For instance, when I would handle my dog Boo's feet when she was a puppy, I would say to her "Pedicure! Good girl, good pedicure." Later, when I said

“Pedicure!” Boo knew that I was going to handle her feet, and would come over to me and accept it. Boo liked her paws handled much better when I was checking for ticks or sweeping salt out from her paw pads as opposed to when it was time for a nail trim, but even though she wasn’t not a huge fan of nail trims, she accepted them and that’s the whole point.

Part of this comes from being gentle with your puppy, translating what’s going to happen and what you expect from your puppy to him, and being careful not to betray his trust in you. If your puppy finds the handling to be difficult, use your Conditioned Relaxation skills. Ask him to Relax, and then tell him what you’ll do before you do it, praising constantly for relaxation. Keep handling short and easy at first, gradually increasing both the length of time (duration) and the intensity of the challenge, but also keep your praise high. If your puppy has trouble, drop the difficulty level back down to provide him with plenty of success and then increase it again to approach that trouble point with plenty of positive momentum.

It’s important to get your puppy used to all sorts of handling, especially those that he’s likely to encounter in his life. For instance, a puppy with floppy ears may be prone to ear infections. In that case, you’ll want to get him used to lots of handling of his ears so you can put medicine in without trouble. Also memorize the smell of his healthy ears—you’ll be able to smell an ear infection many times before you can see it.

If your puppy will be around kids or people with motor control issues, get him used to rough handling so it’s not scary. Be sure not to hurt your puppy, and go slow, first being very gentle and brief and building up to a greater intensity and length of time for the handling. Again, be sure not to hurt him while doing this! Head pats are another good one—people love to give head pats and dogs naturally hate it.

Don't forget to also get your puppy used to any grooming tools you might use in his adult life: dremel or nail trimmers, brush or comb, clipper, etc. Even if you choose to have someone else do these things, by preparing your puppy now, you will help your puppy have a good time instead of being stressed out, and your groomer's job will be easier.

There are lots of styles of brushes out there, and you want to focus on the style(s) of brush your dog will encounter most. Most dogs will need a brush with bristles and/or one with pins. Watch your dog to see if they have any ticklish spots, and don't go too fast, or your puppy will think it's playtime. If your puppy wants to play, have them relax, do a short session, and then go play. Go lightly on the ears and legs and other sensitive areas, and praise abundantly.

Nail Trimming: The handling exercises for the feet will help a lot for nail trimming, but you aren't done yet! Continue work by taking your nail trimmer and tapping each nail, then once that's easy, shave off the very tip of the nail, praise, and go play. Gradually work up to trimming more nails in a single session—don't try to do it all in the first session.

There are two types of nail trimmers: scissors type and guillotine type. Both can come with guards, but I don't use guards, personally. The scissors type tends to be stronger, so if your puppy has strong nails, get that and/or a dremel.

Your puppy will have black, brown, or white nails. If your puppy has white nails, you'll be able to see a pink part of the nail—that's the quick, where the blood vessels and nerves are. Don't hit that part when you're trimming, and you'll be ok. It's harder to see the quick in brown nails, but still possible. For black nails, you can't see the quick. Instead, shave off just a little at a time. Looking at the nail crosswise, you'll see a white circle that will get wider, and then a white dot will show up in the center. That's the quick—go no further! Alternatively, for black nails, you can look at it from

the side and just trim off the tip of the nail. The bulky part of the nail will hold the quick somewhere in there, so if you don't cut that part, you won't hit the quick.

Eventually, you're going to make a mistake and hit the quick. It happens. When I'm trimming nails, I always make sure to have a small bowl of flour, cornstarch, or styptic powder nearby for that reason, just in case. If you hit the quick, it'll hurt and your puppy will bleed. Gently press the bleeding nail into the small bowl of flour, corn starch, or styptic powder to help it stop bleeding quickly. Then toss out the remains in the bowl, and make up to your puppy with a game or bonding time. Go slower and easier next time you work on nail trimming to help bolster both your confidence and your puppy's.

Another option for nails is to use a dremel tool instead. Do not use your shop dremel—it's too powerful. Instead, use a pet-safe dremel, and make sure you keep it constantly moving, spending no more than 3 seconds per nail. The dremel produced friction, which makes heat. Keep it moving to avoid burning your dog. Your dog will repeatedly pull away before you hit the quick, and the dremel produces nice smooth edges instead of the sharp edges that result from cutting. Just like with a nail trimmer, get your puppy used to the sound and vibration of the dremel first, and then grind off just the tip of one nail, then go play. Gradually introduce longer and longer sessions.

How often you need to cut your puppy's nails depends on a variety of factors, including how hard the nails are and what surfaces the puppy tends to walk on. Surfaces like cement will wear down nails faster than grass.

Teeth brushing: You can use any toothbrush you want with your dog (just don't share, please) but do not use human toothpaste. Our toothpaste contains fluoride, which we spit out, but dogs can't spit it out. Use dog toothpaste, instead. It comes in delicious flavors like beef, chicken, liver, or peanut butter. (It also

comes in mint flavor, but dogs generally don't like mint—that's purely for people.) Put some dog toothpaste on their toothbrush and let them lick it off. Then, once your teeth handling exercise is going well, put some of their toothpaste on the toothbrush again, and brush just a little of their teeth. You aren't trying to get anything clean yet, you're only getting them used to it. Praise as you go, and then go play a game. As your puppy gets used to this, you can brush for longer, getting those back teeth, and then also open their mouth to get the insides of their teeth. If he has trouble with the toothbrush, put the toothpaste on your finger and rub their teeth and gums. Usually the puppy soon learns to tolerate the brush, especially if they like the toothpaste flavor.

Regular dental care will help keep your puppy healthier and happier, and he will need fewer dentals. How often you need to brush depends on your dog and what he eats. Dry food and lots of chew toys will decrease the need for brushing, while not chewing on things and eating wet food means he'll need his teeth brushed more frequently.

Frustration

It might surprise you to think you need to socialize your puppy to frustration, but it's true. This is even more vital if your puppy was from a small litter or was separated from mom and siblings too soon. In fact, there's something called "singleton syndrome" that reputable breeders know to watch out for when there's only one puppy in the litter for the mother to care for.

Normally, especially in a large litter, puppies are bumped and jostled and have to struggle a little to get what they need or want, whether it's warmth or milk or whatever. For a single puppy or for puppies where everything is easy, they don't get this, and it creates enormous problems. These puppies have no idea how to handle frustration and lash out at the slightest thing that doesn't go their way. This might seem cute in a 4-week-old puppy but is not so cute when that puppy is a year old (especially large) dog

and now needs behavioral work for aggression. I've handled 100 lb Rottweilers and 3 lb Yorkies who didn't get enough frustration early on, and believe me, life is easier all around when the dogs learn life doesn't always go their way.

Fortunately, frustration training is simple and easy. All you need to do is mildly frustrate your puppy. Note, this is not the same as picking on or bullying your puppy. This is simply getting them ready to deal with life's frustrations.

Singleton puppies and those from small litters should ideally have already experienced this in some form, often with the breeder using a soft towel to push the puppy away from their goal gently, just as if they had a brother or sister who blundered in front of them or crashed into them. Check with your breeder and see what they've already done. Puppies from medium sized or large litters likely have already been introduced to the frustrations life can throw at them and may not need this work (but some puppies don't read the rulebook, so watch your puppy to learn their individual needs).

When you bring your puppy home, it's common to want to spoil him. Deny yourself that impulse. Umbilical cord training, which you'll read more about in the Housebreaking chapter, will naturally frustrate your dog a little and will achieve other positive goals as well. In addition to that, ask your puppy to wait politely a short time for food, play, and/or walks. If he doesn't wait or he gets frustrated, simply walk away and try again in five or ten minutes. Praise him for positively managing his frustration and remaining calm.

As you've likely already guessed, the handling exercises above and the relaxation exercises are also going to naturally frustrate your dog. That's another reason to make sure you do them frequently and often. Keep up regular frustration for your dog for the first six months at least. There's a balance here, of course. Just like with a kid, you don't want to frustrate them too much or

frustrate them without direction. Make sure you praise your puppy and give them pointers to help them succeed if they're finding it difficult. But don't make things too easy, either, because life will frustrate your puppy, but it'll be less difficult if your puppy knows how to handle it.

So for instance, if your puppy doesn't want to let you handle her feet and is not calming down, first of all stay calm your self to help her. Pause what you're doing and help her to relax, praising the efforts she makes. Then try again. If it's especially hard, keep the session very short to make it easier, but don't give up. The last thing you want your puppy to learn is that if she throws enough of a tantrum, she gets what she wants.

If you have another dog in the house, you might have a helper in regards to frustration tolerance, but not always. Some dogs are pushovers and let the puppy do whatever they want. This is especially true before 4 months of age, when the puppy has their "puppy license," which is basically the ability to get away with almost anything. Some excellent teacher dogs will still lay down gentle boundaries during this time, but not every dog will.

If you remember, 4 months is that age by which your puppy needs to have their socialization foundation completed, and it's no accident that this is when puppy licenses expire, most often overnight. One day, the other dog in the house will be letting the puppy jump on their face without comment, and the next, will lay down the boundaries in a very loud manner. No harm should come to the puppy, of course—if you fear harm to the puppy contact a trainer immediately.

If your dog doesn't enforce boundaries even after your puppy is 4.5 months old, your task with frustration training is going to be a little more difficult, but enforcing boundaries for your dog will help teach your puppy manners and frustration tolerance while helping your pushover dog to relax.

If your puppy has trouble handling frustration, try things like bumping her lightly when she's awake or walking toward something. You're not trying to knock her down; you're mimicking a sibling crashing into her accidentally. If your puppy is very small or sensitive, use a soft towel for this. Praise your puppy for staying calm throughout! Start bumping and jostling your puppy now and then when she's sleepy as well, and then when she's sleeping. If she gets frustrated, ask her to relax and practice some more while she's awake, and then go back to practicing while she's tired or sleeping. Tired puppies can be cranky puppies, but they still need to handle frustration.

Note: Make sure you are still letting your puppy get plenty of sleep, of course! Only practice here and there sprinkled through the day, rather than setting out for a marathon of frustration for a half hour or whatnot! That'll do far more harm than good. Instead, a little bump and then nothing for an hour or so, and then another random bump in the road, sprinkled through the day in all rooms of the house and during all states of mind for your puppy. This, combined with tons of praise for good choices will help her grow into a confident, happy puppy who can easily handle the challenges life sends her way.

Between the Conditioned Relaxation, handling exercises, frustration exercises, and basic obedience exercises you'll find later in this book (basic obedience training has a ton of built-in frustration especially as you ramp up the difficulty!), you'll have plenty of opportunities to teach your puppy how to stay calm through challenges. Then, when life frustrates her, she'll already have lots of practice in how to deal with it: calming down.

If you find you're having trouble with this, be sure to contact a reputable trainer in your area.

Chapter Seven: Crating and confinement

Rarely are our anthropomorphic tendencies so apparent as when discussing the topic of confinement. Your puppy is a wonder at getting into places he shouldn't! He has natural talent for discovering potentially harmful things to chew on, and he will happily show you all the places of your "puppy-proofed house" that aren't so puppy proof after all. For his safety, if your eyes can not be on him, he needs to be confined in a relatively small area which you *can* completely puppy-proof. For most puppies, this means a crate.

Crates come in two main types—wire or plastic. Either is fine, although you may discover that your puppy has a strong preference for one or the other. If you have a wire crate and your puppy isn't liking it despite training (as we will discuss further on in this chapter), try draping a blanket or sheet over the crate to close it in further, or if you already have it covered, try leaving it uncovered.

Some puppies simply aren't comfortable in wire crates though, so for them, plastic is the way to go. Don't think that plastic crates are a free ride, however—some puppies hate the plastic crates and prefer wire ones. How do you tell before you spend this potentially large investment, especially if you have a large breed puppy? Unless you know someone willing and able to let you borrow their kennel, you'll just have to make a decision and try it to find out.

The idea behind a crate is to tap into the dog's natural den instinct. Dogs tend to like smaller, enclosed spaces, especially with a roof of sorts above their heads. This is why they are so often found lying under dining tables or coffee tables or end tables, or squeezing between the couch and the coffee table. The natural instinct is to keep the den area clean. They do not want to soil

where they sleep or eat, so crating also helps with housebreaking, as you will see in the next chapter.

However, since dogs are also social creatures, they also like to be with their family, so the crate should be in the room of your house where you spend the majority of your time. For best results, your crate should be small—just big enough for your pup to stand up fully, turn around in a circle, and lay back down. This will help with housebreaking and with any escape attempts (which are generally due to either a lack of training to accept the confining aspects of crating, or due to a separation anxiety problem). Puppies who are confined in crates that are too large often try to pee or poop in the front and then lay down in the back. However, when you return and your puppy is happy to see you, he ends up dancing and wiggling in his own mess!

Crate bedding needs to be given thought too, and you want to be careful here. Some puppies will tear up their bedding, some will soil it (bedding is absorbent, and puppies like to eliminate on absorbent material particularly if there's enough room to then get away from it), some will try to eat it, and some just hang out on it. Supervise your puppy carefully at first to determine what is safe for him. If he tries eating or tearing up his bedding, a simple towel on the crate's bottom may be safer. If he still tries to chew on it or eliminates on it, it's better to crate him with no bedding for safety. He can still have puppy-safe toys in there to enjoy.

Training your puppy to accept confinement will take a little education, but once your puppy understands that being locked in the kennel isn't the end of the world, you can rest easy knowing that your puppy is safe in your absence and not doing something like chewing on an electrical cord, soiling the house, or even breaking through a window. This training is simple and easy, but it does require patience.

Begin by hanging out near the crate with the door of the crate wide open. Check out the inside yourself and make a fuss over

how nice it is. When your puppy comes to investigate, praise him and make a fuss over him too. Every time your pup enters the crate, praise him, but at this stage, do not close the door or lock him in. If the door of the crate likes to swing shut on its own, tie it or block it open. If your pup needs a little help being brave enough to investigate the crate, try tossing a couple pieces of kibble or small treats inside the crate every time you pass by it, and when you feed your pup meals, place the food bowl inside the crate. You can also put his water bowl in the crate to encourage him to go in and out, but this can get messy with water splashes, so I like to keep the water bowl elsewhere.

Keep the crate an interesting, rewarding place. Surprise your puppy by throwing food treats and toys into his crate when he isn't looking so that he investigates often to see what goodies have popped up unexpectedly in the crate.

Once your puppy begins to investigate the crate on his own and starts spending time in there, maybe even going in to lay down, you're ready to progress to the next stage, which is to shut the door for a second (don't latch it), and then open the door again. If your pup seems concerned, try praising him while the door is shut and ignoring him when he leaves the crate (supervise him out of the corner of your eye and withhold attention for a couple minutes). If your pup doesn't care and continues to hang out in the crate, just let him!

Let your puppy be for about half an hour between trials (don't keep closing the door, opening it, then closing it again on him, even if he seems unconcerned, because it could cause him to become concerned). Once your puppy hasn't cared about the door closing on the crate for the last two or three trials (two if your pup is reliably unconcerned, three if your pup has shown signs of concern or had trouble being brave around the crate) you can start latching the door. Only leave the door latched for five to ten seconds before opening the door and letting him be. If your puppy is concerned, try throwing some food into the crate

beforehand to distract him, but if he is unconcerned and doesn't care, that is great!

Gradually increase the amount of time you are asking him to stay in the crate with the door latched, but try to stay in the vicinity during this phase. Don't let your puppy out of the crate while they are whining and crying—wait for them to take a breath at least, because it is super easy for them to learn that throwing a fit gets them let out of confinement. Focus on teaching him that calm, quiet behavior is what gets him out of the crate. Many people are able to complete crate training in one or two days provided they do not have other obligations and are able to focus on the crate training during those days. This puts you ahead of the game when it comes to bedtime, when it's more common for puppies to have trouble.

Many puppies cry during the night. It is normal and almost every owner goes through this during the initial transition phase. It is very unlikely to last, and you will be able to sleep again! Just remember that a lot has changed for your puppy lately, and he used to sleep in a giant puppy pile with his siblings and mother. If you are choosing to have him sleep in his crate, be aware that this is a very big change.

You can help by providing him with lots of warm snuggly things for him to comfort himself with, along with an old article of clothing from you (sleep in the clothes or wear them while you exercise first so they smell like you) and maybe even a ticking clock to help mimic heartbeats. Some puppies find this comforting and are able to sleep then (by the way this also works a lot of the time for when you leave the house, along with leaving a radio on). Many puppies are comforted by even simple things such as a soft towel wrapped around a warm water bottle. Having the crate in your room during the night also helps, although it is easier to transport a small crate from the living area of the house during the day to the bedroom at night and back. You can put

your fingers through the holes in the crate to help, too, so your puppy can reassure himself that you're right there.

Take a look at the crate environment. The place where you have the crate needs to be dark and calm without a lot of noise, and ideally near you. That means don't put your puppy to bed and then watch a loud show on the TV, for instance. Many puppies find it helpful to calm down if they can see their owners going to bed at the same time they are. If your puppy whines or barks in the crate at night, let him be for a few minutes and see if he just needs some time. With an appropriately set up crate and your continued calm presence nearby, many puppies will settle after a few minutes of crying. Sometimes they will wake up in the middle of the night and cry, but if you ignore it and the puppy is crying for attention (not to go out), your pup will probably quiet and go back to sleep.

If your puppy continues to have trouble, you can try giving him a potty break, but be sure not to interact with him in any other way—no play time, for instance, because young puppies are easily confused into thinking that it's perfectly ok to have a rambunctious play session at midnight if you encourage this. Take him out on leash, give him ten minutes to do his business, and take him right back inside and into his crate. Keep the contact to a minimum. Give him another fifteen minutes in the crate to settle back down with you next to him (calm and quiet) before trying anything else.

If this still doesn't quiet the puppy, you may have some problems with the environment, or your puppy may have crating issues. Your puppy should not be allowed to nap within a couple hours of bedtime, and you need to be sure he is getting plenty of exercise and play time and snuggle time during the day. If your puppy is home alone most of the day, you need to be even more careful to make certain he gets his social interaction fulfilled. An hour of interaction a day is not enough for most adult dogs, and

certainly nowhere near enough for a puppy! If your puppy isn't tired at night, that could be a reason for night time noise.

It's pretty apparent when a puppy has crating trouble. This is a puppy who tries to escape or bites at the crate or even throws himself at the crate walls repeatedly, regardless of the time of day or what is going on around him. He may poop and/or pee in the crate more often than not, even if the crate is appropriately sized and even if the crate is bare with nothing soft to soak up the mess. This is a puppy who does not enjoy going into his crate, and often refuses to go in voluntarily. Many times, this is a puppy mill puppy. In this case, you need to use an alternative form of confinement to protect your dog. While confining your dog in an alternative way, you can work on very slowly introducing him to the crate in a positive manner to get him used to it and change his opinion of the crate. How do you appropriately confine your dog without using a crate?

If you have a small room of your house that you can easily puppy proof (no wires within puppy reach even if he jumps, no furniture to chew on, no harmful substances, etc), you can use a baby gate securely installed in each entrance to use as your confinement area. Many people use a laundry room or kitchen for this purpose. Otherwise, you can get a pet play yard or X-pen, which creates an area with fenced in sides that is easily puppy proofed.

Regardless of how you go about it, once you have chosen your confinement area, the setup is the same. Place a crate at one end and puppy pads at the other to help continue the housebreaking process. Inside or near the crate can be blankets or a bed and toys (unless he chews them up). This is a great way to reintroduce the crate, to confine a puppy who hates closed spaces, and/or to confine a puppy who has lost his instinct to keep himself clean while at the same time reinstating that cleanliness instinct (along with grooming).

How long is too long in the crate? Generally, the quality of the time outside the crate outweighs the quantity but the rule of thumb for length of time in one stretch is your puppy's age in months plus 1 in hours, up to 8 hours. So if your puppy is 3 months old, you can expect him to last 4 hours at a stretch. After that, there's no guaranteeing your puppy can hold his bladder.

Now, this is a general rule of thumb. Some puppies can do longer, some can't. If you have to be away longer than your puppy can handle, it's a good idea to ask someone to let him out halfway through the day, whether that's a neighbor, family member, friend, pet sitter, or dog walker. Have them let him out to potty, and then also spend some time with him before putting him back in his crate. Try to keep the length of time in the crate low when you can, and if you have to crate him a lot (for instance, 8 hours during the day while you work and 8 hours at night while you sleep), make sure you fill the intervening hours with lots of interaction, exercise, and mental stimulation.

Some puppies simply need professional help, so if you are worried about your puppy not liking his crate, call a professional trainer for advice.

You probably won't need to confine your puppy for his whole life. Most people are able to stop around the time their puppy turns into an adult at around 2 to 3 years old. However, your puppy will likely enjoy having a spot all his own for the entirety of his life, and the crate will be a special place for him where he feels secure and can get away from everything for a while. Even if you stop locking him in the crate, he will probably continue to go in on his own. In fact, for much of my dogs' lives, their crate's door was completely taken off, and Boo and Lenny would still go in there and cuddle while we were gone or at bedtime, or any time they just needed to get away.

Chapter Eight: Housebreaking

Housebreaking is a time of high stress for many owners. There are a few guidelines to follow to make the housebreaking process as smooth and easy as possible. Different dogs begin to understand the process at different rates, as each dog is an individual. Dogs who are closely monitored and allowed to make few (if any) uncaught (right away) mistakes tend to “get it” faster than dogs who are allowed to make many mistakes without the owner’s knowledge. The general rule of thumb is that a dog is housebroken after they have gone for a month without a single accident.

Constant Supervision- On Leash or In the Crate

Your puppy needs to be under supervision at all times. If you cannot keep an eye on him, he needs to be in a crate or in a puppy proof area with appropriate elimination areas (puppy pads). Otherwise, what often happens is that the puppy wanders away and pees in another room, unbeknownst to the owner. He then goes back into the room that the owner is in, and the owner (happy to see the puppy) praises him, and the puppy gets praised for peeing in another room.

Umbilical cord training is one of the best ways to teach your puppy how to live in your home, and it really helps in situations where the owner finds it hard to keep an eye on their dog. Restricting rooms he has access to is a great idea, too. Your puppy doesn’t know what’s safe and what’s dangerous, what to eat or chew and what not to, or even where to go to the bathroom, until you teach them.

Simply clip a leash to your puppy’s collar and loop the handle around your wrist, through your belt loops, or even just around your ankle. Your puppy’s size and strength will determine the best place to hold the leash.



“Dirty” Puppies

A “dirty” puppy is one who has lost his instinct to keep his den clean. This is most common with puppy mill puppies and creates issues with housebreaking and crate-training. You can help give your puppy his desire to be clean back to him though! First: a thorough bath. Get him super clean and dried well. Make sure all his bedding is super clean as well. Keep the bottom of his crate empty—no bedding in his crate at all for about a week. You want the only absorbent thing for him to eliminate on to be outside.

Some “dirty” puppies can’t be crated at first because they’ll simply soil themselves. A play pen on a hard flooring with food and water, towels, and toys at one end and puppy pads way at the opposite end helps visually show your puppy he now has a choice. He can keep his towels clean because there’s somewhere else away from him to eliminate on if he needs to. Be sure to wash the towels frequently, never leaving anything soiled inside the playpen or crate. Any time your puppy soils himself, be sure to clean him thoroughly.

Once your puppy no longer eliminates inside his confinement, you can start adding bedding, but watch to make sure he doesn’t forget and go back to old habits.

Now your puppy can't sneak off and get into any trouble, and since you two are so close, you have lots of opportunities to catch her doing good things and praise her accordingly. This also helps her learn to signal you and you to learn her signals and develop a sense about when she's likely to need to go out.

Before you know it, you can stop leashing her to you—it's only a temporary measure. As your puppy learns more and grows more trustworthy, you can give her more freedom. Instead of leashing her to you, you'll be able to let her drag the leash behind her as she wanders along (with supervision, of course, to make sure she doesn't get tangled up). Soon enough, she'll be so trustworthy, you'll be able to take the leash off entirely and let her be loose in the same room as you. And eventually, room by room, you'll open up the house to her and have a confident companion who you don't have to worry about tearing something up or potting where she shouldn't.

Young puppies are really only "safe" (you don't need to watch them quite as much) for about half an hour after they go potty. You want to take her out to her potty spot in the yard at every hour or sooner.

Go Outside With Your Dog

If you think about it, a lot of owners take the easy way out. In the winter, they send their puppy out into the cold to do their business while they stay inside where it's warm. When it's raining, they stay in the doorway or the cozy inside and wait for their pup to hurry up and go. While this makes sense and is understandable, it is not the best way to housebreak a dog.

Take your puppy outside with you, on leash, to a particular area of the yard where you want him to eliminate. Use the same

area every time—this way, it begins to smell like the bathroom to your puppy and helps him figure out what you want. When you get to your potty area in your yard, give your puppy a cue to go to the bathroom (things like “Go potty”, “Hurry up”, and “Do your business” are common). This way he’ll be on cue to eliminate, and you can choose where to have him eliminate, even if you aren’t at home.

As soon as your puppy begins to do his business, praise him gently. You don’t want to get your puppy so excited that he stops in the middle, but you do want to let him know right away that this is what you came out here to do. This is one reason not to wait at the door for your puppy—in that case, he gets a treat not for going to the bathroom, but for coming back inside. Some pups learn this and only partially do their business so they can come inside—then they finish on the floor.

If your puppy delays going, be patient. Keep him on the leash so that he has a circular area of about a 6 foot radius to go about it, and don’t engage in play with him and don’t let him get too interested in sniffing around. This is potty time. You want it to be boring. Play time can happen inside. Otherwise, if the puppy plays and plays and plays outside, they can forget that they needed to potty. Then when they come back inside and it’s boring because their owner has other things to do, they remember “Oh yeah! I had to potty. Hey, this spot looks good!” and you end up with a mess (this is another reason you want to go outside with your puppy—you can make sure he’s empty, and you can keep outside boring for him until he’s housetrained).

If after ten to fifteen minutes, your puppy still hasn’t gone and you are pretty sure he needs to go, bring him back inside but put him right into his crate for ten to fifteen minutes. After that, put the leash back on and take him right back outside to his potty area and cue to go potty. Repeat as necessary until he has pottied. This can help you avoid some accidents.

Catch Them In the Act

Your puppy will have no idea what's happening if you try to punish him after you find a mess in the house that has been sitting there for minutes (or hours). If you do find such a mess, take a moment to resolve to supervise him better and clean it up. At some point however, your puppy is likely to make a mistake—and it's your job to be watching so you can catch him in the act.

If you see your puppy acting suspicious, whisk him right outside as in Rule #2. If you miss this, and see your puppy squatting, act now! Give a loud "No!" to startle him, and run over to him (this will stop most puppies mid-stream). Pick him up, regardless of whether he's stopped or not—remember, this is a lesson that needs to be taught—and get him right outside. Bring him right to the potty area and give him his cue. You really want him to finish outside so you can praise him, so try to relax and not be scary or intimidating. We don't want him thinking that going to the bathroom in your presence is a bad thing. It's just that this sort of thing needs to happen outside. The last thing you want is for your puppy to not want to potty in front of you—that's a recipe for accidents!

Whether or not he finishes outside (and if he does, praise him warmly) when you bring him back inside, put him in his crate while you clean up the mess. Then, let him out and remember to closely supervise him.

Clean Up Thoroughly

You and your puppy will both make mistakes during the housebreaking process and it's important to clean up these messes thoroughly. It is not enough to simply use 409 or Resolve or vinegar and water (never use ammonia and water because your puppy will think that he's supposed to potty there because of the ammonia smell), etc, to clean up accidents. You want to clean up as you normally do, and then follow up with an

enzymatic cleaner. These cleaners have enzymes in them that stay in the surface and eat away all the particles of urine or feces that your dog can smell but we cannot. Without these cleaners, your house begins to smell like a potty area to your dog (even though your relatively puny nose can't smell anything) and entice him to return to that area to pee or poop again.

We want to erase these smells as thoroughly as possible so that the only area that smells like the dog's bathroom is outside. A good enzymatic cleaner is Nature's Miracle (<http://www.naturemakesitwork.com/home/index.php>), available at most pet stores.

Feed on a Schedule

Most puppies are fine being fed two to three times a day (three times daily for younger puppies, while older puppies can be dropped down to twice daily), but it's best to feed on a set schedule. Rather than simply letting your puppy graze throughout the day (free-feeding), pick up the bowl after about 15 minutes. Your puppy will very quickly adjust having a limited amount of time to eat. As a bonus, you will be able to predict when your puppy needs to eliminate—approximately 30 to 60 minutes after they've eaten, depending on the puppy. If you are free-feeding, you have a much more difficult time determining when your puppy needs to go out. Also, you can use feeding time to help your puppy learn commands like sit and down—just ask for that command (once your puppy knows it) before setting down the food.

If your puppy eats too quickly, don't feed him from a bowl. Bowls are really for humans anyway. Many dogs are happy to graze from a feeder mat or to eat out of a Kong. If your puppy's been having trouble with nipping, feed him by hand, only releasing kibble when he's gentle, to give him more practice.

Use the tracking guide on the next page to help you find any patterns in your puppy's mistakes so you can correct them. Remember, your puppy is not considered housebroken until they've gone a month with no accidents. Investing your time and energy into making the mistakes as few as possible will help you and your puppy lead your best lives, without fear of lingering housebreaking issues.

If you're having trouble, there's an additional tracker on my site (linked in the Appendix). You can make copies of that for your own use. If you have to use more than one copy or are having trouble finding patterns, contact a trainer for help.

Chapter Nine: Chewing

If you can't keep watch over your puppy, he needs to be contained in a crate or puppy proof area to avoid the chance of him practicing bad behavior such as chewing inappropriately.

When you are watching him, act immediately. As soon as your dog's teeth touch something inappropriate for him to chew on, tell him "No" and take him away from the object. Offer him an alternative that he can chew on and praise him for any interest in it. Any time he shows interest in something he can chew on, give him plenty of praise—you don't want him misbehaving for attention.

It's very important that you avoid accidentally confusing your dog. For instance, you cannot expect a puppy or dog to know the difference between an old shoe he can chew on, and your new, expensive dress shoes. Only give him things to chew on that don't resemble (by touch, sight, or smell) things you don't want him to chew on. This means choosing your dog's toys carefully.

I love the Kong chew toys. They make wonderful puzzle toys as well as the original Kong, and the toys are fun whether stuffed with treats and peanut butter or not. For safety, always inspect them for any cracks before you give them to your dog to chew on, and be sure the Kong is sized appropriately (a Pitbull should not be chewing on a Kong sized for a Rat Terrier, for instance). For the puppy who is teething, the puppy Kongs have a lot of give to them and provide a nice resistance to soothe teething pains.

Many dogs desire a variety of chew toys: something soft, something with give (like rubber), something hard, and something that gives them food. Cow femurs and yak cheese sticks are great hard items that also give food, and Kongs also fulfill multiple requirements. If your puppy likes to de-stuff stuffed animals and this becomes a problem, you can get soft toys that

are already de-stuffed. Great rubber type toys include the Kong toys (the Kong jump'n jack is a favorite among my dogs) as well as Jive balls.

After teaching your dog what is and is not appropriate for him to set his teeth on, you can play a game with him. Set out three toys he can chew on and two things he shouldn't chew on, and sit on one side of the items with your dog on the other. Wait and see what he chooses. If he chooses something appropriate, praise, praise, praise and play with him! And if not, give him that "No!" and grab something appropriate to replace it with. Take the forbidden object and sit on it so that your puppy has one less wrong option.

Play as long as your dog is interested, and when he tires, grab the last toy he appropriately selected and take a break for a game with that toy. Congratulate your dog for being so clever!

Other than keeping a variety of chew toys and playing the above game, the best way to help your puppy learn what is and is not there for them to chew on is that umbilical cord training. You can try the spray deterrents that are on the market but in my experience they're really hit and miss as far as success. Consistently supervising and giving your puppy feedback is an investment that will pay off in the long run.

Chapter Ten: Inappropriate greetings

Jumping up is one of those behaviors that is not only socially unacceptable to humans but can also be dangerous. It has its roots in a socially proper (in dog world) greeting behavior between dogs—sniff the face, sniff the rear. Our job as dog owners is to teach our dogs a human acceptable greeting behavior instead and to give them the impulse control to help them succeed rather than succumbing to instinct. If you're having jumping problems, try some of these helpful games. Mix and match from the below suggestions according to your needs and situation.

For this game, you will need a helper as well as your puppy on a leash. Ask your dog for a sit or a down and have your helper approach normally. The moment your dog jumps up, your helper needs to turn tail and run away as if from a scary dog. For most puppies, this will be punishment enough; all they want is to greet the person, not drive them away. Reset your dog and try again, supporting your puppy with praise until they succeed!

What about with kids? Here's my favorite game, and even better, kids and puppies love it too! Put your puppy on leash and be prepared with some treats. Ask your puppy to Relax, and praise him frequently to help him stay settled while a kid walks by about 10 feet to the side from you. If he stays settled, give him a treat once the kid has passed and tons more praise. Repeat, with the child walking past at closer and closer distances until they are walking right past him from inches away. Then, repeat at a distance again, with the child or children jogging past, then jumping around, then running, and finally, sprinting past with arms flailing, screaming and shouting.

Each time, you're going step by step so your puppy can succeed, and you're telling your puppy exactly what's required of them—to stay Relaxed. If they get excited, simply give them a No

and name it (“No, that’s Excited. Get Relaxed”) and then try again at a little more distance or a little less intensity to make it easier. Most puppies get this game with children within half an hour, and most kids are happy to play.

By the way, this is a great way to handle anything that your puppy is over-excited by or scared of. Don’t have the scary or exciting thing approach him right away. Have it go past maybe 10 feet or so to the side, and then go past again a little closer and a little closer. The whole time, you’re preparing the puppy with his job and cheering him through the challenge with supporting praise. Once your puppy is handling the scary thing fine, go back and try the “What is this?” that I mentioned in the Socialization chapter.

If you’re having company, you can also use distance to help your dog succeed, as long as your dog has developed some self-control and is doing well with his obedience commands. Put him in a sit or a down–stay away from the door and have him hold that command while you invite your guests in and get them settled. Once they are settled and your dog is calm, your dog can say hi, just as above. If your puppy hasn’t yet mastered his obedience, you can help him out by having one person give the commands and stay next to him, praising and rewarding often, while another person answers the door. If the puppy gets up before being released, the visitors need to immediately leave before he can greet them–this practice will help increase your puppy’s self control.

What if you’re expecting guests and don’t have a helper and your puppy isn’t very good at self-control yet? Well, you can put your puppy in his crate or puppy-proof room while you let people in and then bring the puppy out on leash, but that’s a band-aid situation. Another band-aid that also does a bit of teaching is to use your leash. With your puppy on a leash, set your foot on the leash where it hits the floor, so the leash is slightly relaxed while the dog is standing still, but will go tight when he jumps up. As

your guests arrive one by one, invite them in and let them pet your dog while you help him keep his feet on the ground. Once everyone is settled and your puppy is calm, you can let him greet your visitors one by one if he wishes.

You can help your dog while out and about is by setting your foot on the leash as described above whenever someone wants to meet your dog. This prevents him from being rewarded by someone petting him while he's jumping up. By putting your foot on the point where the leash hits the ground, your puppy won't get enough momentum to hurt themselves when they hit the end of the leash. If your puppy's good at self-control skills, it's a great idea to ask him for a sit or a down or even just to Relax (but many puppies find it easier to hold a sit or a down than the more general Relax because the structure helps with self-control). Soon enough, your puppy's manners will grow to the point where he knows precisely what to do when he sees someone he wants to greet.

Your goal should always be to help your puppy increase his self control so you can stop using your helpful tools (like your foot on the leash) as quickly as possible so your pup doesn't begin to rely on it. Just don't be in such a rush that you remove a helpful tool before your puppy can be successful without it.

What about if your dog is jumping on you? Most dogs respond well if their owner ignores them while they jump up. Don't look at your dog or talk to him—simply walk right through him as if he wasn't there. (Try not to step on any toes though.) This will put him slightly off balance, which he won't like. As soon as he has all four feet on the ground, praise your dog. As soon as you begin to pay attention to him, your dog will likely jump up again, so be prepared to go back to ignoring him at a split second's notice. After a little while, your dog will spend less and less time airborne, and you will be able to praise him more and more.

Chapter Eleven: Nipping

Puppies nip, and their sharp little puppy teeth can hurt! While nipping is a natural behavior, they need to learn that teeth on human skin is not appropriate. They also need to learn to have control over how much force they exert—that way if the worst was to happen and your now-adult dog feels the need to defend himself with his teeth, he’s much less likely to do damage than a dog without control over how hard he bites (this control is known as bite inhibition). How do we reconcile these two needs?

I like to teach bite inhibition by having the puppy play with as many friendly dogs of a variety of sizes, breeds, and ages as possible. They will teach the puppy a lot of the bite inhibition for me, but it’s up to a human to finish the training because human skin seems to break more easily than dog skin.



To that end, ignore all puppy nips that don’t hurt while addressing all puppy nips that do hurt—even if it’s only a little. If your puppy’s having trouble, try hand-feeding him all his food. That’ll give tons of opportunity to practice, reinforcing this skill as you only release the kibble when he’s gentle. If his teeth hurt, no kibble. Simply measure out his food for the meal into a bowl or bag to avoid feeding him too much during these practice sessions.

This way we quickly weed out all damaging bites, and then once the puppy is reliably not hurting us when nipping, we up our standards and address all tooth contact on skin. This second

phase typically goes swiftly because by then, the puppy already has learned a lot of self control and has a strong relationship with you.

Be sure to be consistent. Between everyday life, handling exercises (which are designed to elicit nipping, as well as to socialize your puppy to handling and frustration), and playing, you're likely to get a lot of practice in addressing puppy nipping. Consistency will speed everything along and keep stress low, so come into this with a plan ready.

There are three methods of addressing nipping that I like, and I always like to start off with the one which creates the least stress. It's always good to try to minimize the stress on your dog or puppy, as long as the methods are also effective.

The first method is called the Ouch and Stare. When dogs are playing and one bites down too hard, the other dog responds with a short, sharp, loud, high-pitched sound: a yelp. Typically, they also look at the offender and all play stops for at least a few seconds (longer if the offender has taken up biting as a habit). This method mimics this natural interaction. When your puppy nips you and it hurts, even just a little bit, respond with your own short, sharp, loud, high-pitched noise. Some people yelp, others choose to say "Ouch!". What you say doesn't matter—how you say it does. Combine this with a stern look directly at your dog for a few seconds. Your pup should respond by wiggling and adopting submissive behavior, trying to get back in your good graces. Some even lick their owners in response. Most nips happen because the puppy is excited and trying to play, so once your puppy is a little calmer, you can go back to playing with your puppy.

This method works for the majority of puppies, but some puppies don't respond well to the Ouch and Stare. If your puppy hears your Ouch and comes back at you with a flurry of sharp little puppy teeth as if to say "Game on!" you'd better try another

method. Don't turn and walk away from your puppy, as this can cause some pups, especially herding breeds, to nip at your heels more, because they get so excited by the power to move you.

Unless your puppy is biting more in response to your Ouch, give your puppy a week to show a lessening in number of bites that hurt before giving up on this method.

Some puppies nip to ask you to play with them. The best way to handle this situation is to teach them to relax on cue, then ask them for relaxation when they try to initiate play. Once they've relaxed a bit (no longer biting), then you can play with them! Be sure to be on the look out for your puppy to politely ask for play too, so that your puppy learns the nipping is wholly unnecessary and not a part of the ritual at all.

If your puppy is nipping because of a temper tantrum, or you're having trouble getting it under control with the previous two methods, it's time to limit the damage as calmly and gently as possible: it's time to limit freedom.

If your puppy is not on leash, put them on leash. If they are already, pick up the leash. If you have the leash in hand already, try standing on it, and if your puppy nips your feet (wearing shoes works best because then you can ignore it, but drop a blanket on your feet if you're barefoot), simply walk up the leash slowly until your puppy calms down. Almost always, your puppy will calm down when they run out of room, and it's very important to praise it when they do calm down, regardless of how they might have pushed your buttons before that point! You don't want to go fast or be loud, because you don't want your puppy to panic. Stay calm and matter of fact.

Give your puppy some extra freedom, and see if they can handle it. If so, great! If not, restrict the freedom again just as much as is necessary. Obviously, you want to watch your puppy to make sure they aren't panicking—a small amount of puppies will



Ways to handle puppy nipping:

- ✱ Hand-feeding (very low stress)
 - ✱ Ouch and Stare (very low stress)
 - ✱ Relax, then Play (very low stress)
 - ✱ Restriction of Freedom (mild stress)
 - ✱ Walking up the Leash (medium stress)
-
- ✱ Time out (varying stress, but doesn't teach as much as the other methods, so should be last resort)
-

tantrum until they have no room and then panic. If you're praising the moment they calm down and giving them extra freedom in response to relaxation, your puppy will quickly learn that being calm gets them what they want, without panicking or harsh punishments.

For example, I had a Goldendoodle in class once that was a ferocious nipper. She was leaving holes in her people's clothes and marking up their skin, but to her it was all good fun. Saying "Ouch" only riled her up more. She responded well to being asked for relaxation but had trouble applying that to learning not to nip. So we kept her on leash and when she nipped, we firmly but gently told her "No" and stepped on the leash. She nipped again and we moved up the leash one step. She nipped again and we repeated the movement. Soon she just lay down, panting to calm herself down because we were not joining her game, and we praised her and backed off the leash. She only needed a couple more trials to really get it and soon progressed to where if she was dragging the leash and nipped, her owners just needed

to pick up the leash and she would lay down and calm herself, and soon enough she would interrupt herself in the process of going to nip and calm herself again—to tons of praise of course! That's what we're looking for, a puppy who learns to control their impulses and therefore is a wonderful companion.

If nothing is working, it may help to think of the nipping as a request for alone time. It's imperative that you stay calm and matter of fact as you gently guide your puppy into his kennel for a ten or fifteen minute Time out, until he's calmer. If you stay calm and matter of fact, he will likely have no negative associations with his crate, and if you remain consistent, the nipping should improve steadily.

What about with other people? Children in the household can use the Ouch and Stare and the Relax, then Play methods. You can combine this with the Relaxation game in the chapter on appropriate greetings, too. Adults in the household should try the Ouch first and then the Relax, then Play. If necessary, move to the Time out. If the puppy is not respecting the children's Ouch, the adults in the home should support the children by separating the puppy from the children briefly every time he ignores their Ouch—this can be removing him to another room, or leashing the puppy to the adult, or putting the puppy in his crate or puppy proof room.

Any supporting action should be done calmly but firmly, and as gently as is effective. Typically, once your puppy has learned not to nip you, he will be less likely to nip others except when very excited. So monitor his excitement level and only let him interact with the public when he is demonstrating self control.

Praise him like crazy when he is polite, and remove him immediately from public when he begins mouthing. If others will reliably use the Ouch and Stare with him, go ahead and let them, but be careful about letting others use the Walking up the Leash,

as too often well-meaning people will go too fast and cause the puppy to panic.

Dealing with puppy nipping can be stressful because those teeth are so sharp and we don't want our puppy biting as an adult. I urge you to have patience with your puppy—they're still learning! Also remember that your puppy will be likely to actually increase the frequency of nipping when they're teething (the teething period can last from 3 to 6 months). Human skin seems to be a great consistency to soothe those puppy gums.

Since the puppy teeth are so much sharper than adult teeth, it's ideal to get as much of the bite inhibition training done by 3 months as possible, while those teeth are still needle sharp. Then, while your puppy's teething, stay calm and patient, continuing on with the training however far you managed to get before they started teething. Look in the Chewing chapter for some ideas of more appropriate toys for the teething period.

One more thing to be aware of: when your puppy is teething, those teeth can come out all over the place—during handling exercises, play (especially tug), and all sorts of times. Seeing teeth come out can startle people (especially if your puppy loses a tooth during handling) but these exercises are designed to be gentle, and teething is a natural process. You might never see your puppy's teeth come out, too—some puppies swallow their puppy teeth.



Since stopping puppy nipping depends on both the puppy and the owner, if you are having trouble with curbing your puppy's nips, call a professional for help. Also, if you feel your puppy's nipping is aggressive or frustrated rather than in play, contact a professional!

Chapter Twelve: Zoomies

There is an interesting puppy phenomenon that it's good for puppy owners to know about so it doesn't catch you by surprise. It's called "zoomies" and it's prevalent among almost all puppies. Generally somewhere around 8 o'clock at night, give or take an hour or so, your puppy will suddenly get a burst of manic energy and simultaneously lose their brain for a bit.

While zoomies can be hilarious, they can also cause issues, especially if your puppy accidentally causes damage or begins to nip uncontrollably. So how do you handle this in the best way possible?

First of all, understanding that this is perfectly normal puppy behavior and that you're not alone can go a long way toward helping you contain the chaos, so to speak. Secondly, most puppies will grow out of it if zoomies are not encouraged, generally around about a year of age. Be aware though, if you encourage your puppy's zoomies, they may never grow out of it, and this can cause significant trouble for you and your dog! Third, training can't be done when your puppy has lost his mind, so training your puppy out of it isn't likely to work without enormous punishments (and we don't want that).

So how to handle this? First off, zoomies are timed on your puppy's internal clock, so they generally happen approximately the same time every day. This means you can predict them, which means you can prepare.

One thing that helps is to tire your puppy out. Note, this may not stop the zoomies; it may only mute and shorten them. Be sure to tire your puppy out both mentally and physically: a good obedience or tricks training session and then a fast walk or run half an hour beforehand goes a long way toward helping and may delay zoomies until the end of the walk. Plus, it strengthens

your bond and teaches all those wonderfully important things, so I highly recommend this.

When you come back inside, *keep your puppy on the leash!* If you come back in and unclip the leash, chances are your puppy's excitement will turn to zoomies. If your puppy is still working on housebreaking, you are hopefully still umbilical cord training anyway, and therefore your puppy stays on leash. If you're farther along in the process, you probably need to back up on the freedoms you allow your puppy by a few steps, so that means closing some rooms off or keeping the leash on even if your puppy normally has it off.

If your puppy is having trouble thinking, try to engage him in a game. There's a chapter in this book on fantastic games to play with your puppy: try one of those. If that doesn't work or your puppy's energy is problematic even while he's on leash and you're holding it, you'll need to restrict his freedom some until you reach the point at which nothing and no-one (including your puppy) will be hurt by the zoomies and wait it out.

In rare occasions, you may need to crate your puppy during this time. This is ok as a stop gap measure so long as you are calm and collected while you put your puppy in the crate. If you display frustration or anger while crating your puppy, your puppy may no longer like their crate and we don't want that. This isn't a punishment, it's a band-aid. It's simply to avoid anyone and anything getting hurt.

However, the more time your puppy spends learning self-control, the shorter and milder the zoomies will be and the more quickly your puppy will grow into a trusted companion you can be at ease with. Time in the crate is not the best for developing self-control, so use that umbilical cord training and the Freedom in Stages section that comes next as much as you possibly can. These will grow your puppy's self control far faster with positive interactions and natural consequences for their behavior.

Freedom in Stages

Once you're ready to give your puppy more freedom from umbilical cord training, be sure to do so in stages. Don't give him all the freedom all at once! First, go from holding the leash to letting him drag the leash. If the handle becomes an issue, you can use a rope as a drag line, but make certain you're watching your puppy at all times to avoid him getting caught in something. Then, once that's going well, your puppy can be loose in the same room you're in. Once your puppy is handling that freedom reliably, you can open up the rest of the house to him gradually, room by room.

Whenever you encounter an issue or mistake—housebreaking, chewing, or any other behavior—simply back up on the freedom. Close down some rooms, or put the drag line back on, or go back to holding the leash. Lay that foundation so it's strong and solid, and then test your puppy again. You'll either be right and he'll be ready for the freedom, or you'll be wrong and you back up again, ready to try again later.

Sometimes, we encounter issues where nothing is working. This may be simply a bad day or it might be zoomies or something else. If you've backed up along the freedom stages all the way to umbilical cord again and your puppy is still wild, try simply stepping on the leash and ignoring your puppy until he calms down (be aware of your puppy though to avoid him panicking). If your puppy is nipping at you and continues, you may need to walk up the leash little by little, giving more leash to him any time he's calm and walking back up it if he's nipping. In rare occasions you might have to stand on the leash buckle for a few seconds until your puppy calms down, as described in the Nipping section.



Freedom in Stages:

- ✱ Umbilical Cord (leash on, other end attached to a responsible human who's watching the puppy)
- ✱ Dragging leash or rope (always supervised by responsible human in the same room as the puppy)
- ✱ No leash, but in the same room as a responsible human who's watching.
- ✱ Then, gradually, room by room, open up the rest of the house to the puppy.

This also works for adult dogs who are new to your house or family.

Whenever your puppy is calm, praise him with soothing gentle praise and try giving them more leash (more freedom) again. Your puppy will grow in self control in this way without you having to be combative or over-assertive and without getting hurt by sharp puppy teeth if your puppy is nipping a lot. As always, if you're having trouble, contact a reputable trainer in your area.

But here's a very important part, the "ready to try again later." Don't give up on your puppy! Keep working with her and keep testing her, teaching her how to live in your world.

Chapter Thirteen: Fun & Games

There are so many wonderful games to play with your puppy. Following are some common ones, but think of this as a launching platform: you and your puppy can and should think up your own games or variants as well!

Tug - Tug is a fantastic game with a bad reputation. Properly played, it's a cooperative, social game that can teach your dog self control and increase bonding. It actually comes from wild packs working together to tear up a carcass into edible chunks—contrary to popular belief, it's not about dominance.

To have an enjoyable game, follow these simple rules:

- ✿ You, the human, always begin the game. None of this dog-biting-and-tugging-at-your-clothes-to-start-the-game business. This also prevents random objects being the tug item (like homework and socks) rather than the tug toy.
- ✿ You, the human, always end the game. Teach your puppy that once you signal the game is over, they should drop the item, rather than continuing to engage in play. Relaxation exercises really help here!
- ✿ Anytime teeth touch skin, the game is immediately over for at least 5 minutes. This teaches your puppy self control and prevents them from switching to nipping at you. It keeps everyone safe.

Other than that, play on! To avoid your puppy getting bored, simply end the game a little before you think she's tiring of it, to keep her wanting more.

Fetch - Fetch is the classic dog game! Remember to play at first in a confined space until your puppy has reliable recall. To teach fetch, take two identical toys. Toss one a little ways away

and praise your puppy as they chase it. Give lots of praise if they pick it up and even more praise if they begin to bring it to you. Some puppies will naturally retrieve, while others need to be taught.

If your puppy drops the toy or won't let go of it when you take it, show them the identical toy and toss it in the other direction. Your puppy will gradually begin to bring the toy all the way to you and drop it looking for something else to chase. Only play for a little bit at first, to keep them wanting more.

Find the treat - This game is perfect for inclement weather! Confine your puppy outside of the room you'll play in. Scatter some treats or treat-scented kibble in the room. Start with easy to find places first, and then as your puppy gets better at the game, let them hunt longer for the treats with more challenging hiding places. Once the treats are hidden, let your puppy into the room and cheer them on as they let that powerful nose work.

Be sure to clean up afterwards to prevent treats from lingering in their hiding places. It's ok to let your puppy join in on this cleaning effort, as it can help them learn to find more difficult hiding places.

Hide and seek - This game is fantastic for helping to teach a reliable recall. For puppy hide and seek, you are always the hider and your puppy is always the seeker. Have one person hold the puppy back while everyone else in the family hides. As with the Find the treat game, start with easy hiding places and gradually make it harder for your puppy as they improve. One person at a time calls the puppy. Keep calling to let them home in on where you are using their ears (they can also use their nose, and might if you've done a lot of Find the treat games, but calling them will help with training them to come when called). Once they find the first person, give them a huge party and then go with them to find the next person, so that gradually the puppy is gathering his family and everyone is with him finding the next person.

Switch-off Games - These are fantastic for the puppy who needs to grow impulse control or, like tug, needs to learn to take care with their teeth. Using your Relax word, stay still and quiet. Once your puppy is relaxed, ask them to get Excited again and play! Move and be silly with your puppy, and then ask them to get Relaxed again.

As you play, make it more challenging by asking your puppy to stay relaxed for longer, by getting more relaxed, or by using their impulse control skills as you get wilder and wilder bit by bit so that even in times of really high excitement, they can still calm down on cue.

Catch - Much like fetch, but requiring more coordination. Take a treat or piece of kibble or favorite toy and toss it gently underhand toward your dog's face. Praise any attempts to catch it. Many puppies find it helpful if you ask them to "Catch!" before you toss the item. As with everything, your puppy will get better with time and practice!

Trick training - There are wonderful trick training books and descriptions on websites out there. I love the ones by Kyra Sundance. Whatever you use, make it fun. Trick training should be enjoyable to both of you, not stressful. It's ok if you hit some roadblocks—remember that frustration training we talked about? These things happen. End with something easy and go play something else, then try again later.

One thing I enjoy is to keep a record of all the tricks my dogs know. It's astounding how much you can teach them, and every one of my dogs has loved learning new tricks. Rewarding your puppy for completing a trick successfully can be as easy as a treat, or you can reward them with praise or another game or anything else they enjoy.



If you find yourself giving too many treats or worrying about giving too many treats, here's a great way to get all the benefits of treats without the candy-aspect. Take a scoop of your puppy's food and subtract it from their daily ration. Add some smelly liver treats to the food and close it all up together in a zip-top bag. Within a couple hours, the smell of the soft smelly treats will infuse the kibble and make it taste and smell like the treats while still giving the nutritional value that treats lack.

Games to Avoid

Some games are not advisable because they carry some danger or teach behaviors that we usually don't want.

Chase the puppy - While your puppy chasing you is fine, you chasing your puppy is a fun game that can cause serious trouble with teaching your puppy to come when called. Too many puppies hear "Come!" and, in a bid to win more free time, try to instigate a game of Chase me, which, if encouraged, erodes your Come training.

Wrestle - proceed with caution! - Some puppies and humans can play a game of wrestle with no issues whatsoever. If it causes no trouble and it strengthens your bond, great! Just make sure you have a clear signal to begin and end the game, as with Tug.

For many families, wrestle is a game that causes trouble. If you're struggling with puppy nipping or frustration training, or if

you have young children around often, or if your puppy's manners greeting people are lacking, this is likely not the game for you, as wrestling encourages jumping up and nipping in the context of the game. Making sure no family members (especially kids, who tend to squeal which can encourage the nipping) or the puppy themselves are hurt by wrestling is paramount!

Think carefully over your training thus far and what you're planning to achieve. If wrestling is not for you, tug accomplishes much the same positive effects (self control with teeth, frustration tolerance, emotional control, and bonding) with a more structured environment that therefore is safer for many families.

Chapter Fourteen: Obedience training

Giving your puppy a solid foundation in obedience is one of the best things you can do for him. You can begin this foundation while socializing, but don't worry too much about the skills until after the socialization period has closed. Simply lay a solid foundation first.

Not only will obedience skills help him continue developing self control, but he will continue to learn the ways of the human world, appropriate ways to behave around humans, and some English words so that he has a clue what's going on around him. Be clear and consistent, and keep challenging your puppy to get even better.

Before you get started, you should give a thought to vocabulary for clarity and consistency's sake. You need to choose a word or short phrase to use when your puppy does something you like (most people choose "Good", "Good girl!", etc) and you need a word for when your puppy does something you don't want (most people choose "No"). Your puppy will learn these words by associating them with their actions and your body language. Note: your commands do not need to be one word commands, but they do need to be consistent, or you will confuse your puppy.

For the stationary commands (Sit and Down), you should also choose a word to serve as your release word—a word that lets your dog know he can now move and go back to being a normal, well-behaved dog. It's like a recess bell for your puppy: school's out for now, but playground rules still apply. Some common release words are "Release", "Break", "Free", "Free Dog", etc. Your dog won't care what it is so long as you are consistent and remember to release him when he is free to move.

Your release word should not be a word you commonly use in everyday language for clarity's sake, but it should be something you can remember. If your dog gets up from a command before you released him, simply tell him "No" and give him the command he broke and gently put him right back in the same spot he was in before.

There are three important ways to make stationary obedience commands more difficult. These are distance (from you), duration (how long they have to stay put for), and distraction (what's going on around them). Distance from a distraction is also important—the farther away from a distraction, the easier it is to obey a command. Increase the difficulty by asking more from your dog in each category separately.

Once your dog is solid in a command with each category, you can combine them, making sure to lower your expectations. For instance, if Fluffy can sit for 30 seconds while her owner is right next to her and she can also sit while her owner walks 10 steps away and back to her, she's off to a great start, but she shouldn't be asked to sit while her owner goes 10 steps away, pauses there for 30 seconds, and then returns. That combination is too difficult yet.

What her owner could do is see if Fluffy can hold a sit while he walks 5 feet away and pauses there for 10 seconds before returning. Then increase the challenge of the duration or the distance while the other criteria remains stable.

Eventually, your dog will be able to hold a Down while you are 30 feet away for 10 minutes with other dogs jumping over her, if you work on it!

Sit

Sit is one of the easiest commands to teach and also the most common. There are so many uses for Sit, and once your dog knows it, you should practice this command all over the place to

really ingrain it into your puppy. The puppy who greets people by sitting automatically is typically a favorite, so why not make your puppy that puppy?

One of the easiest ways to teach Sit is to take a small piece of food, show it to your puppy and raise it over your dog's head just about an inch or so above the nose and backwards towards your dog's tail. Your lure should be high enough that he looks toward the sky for the treat but not so high that he jumps. Most puppies will easily Sit with this lure, so you can begin saying "Sit" and rewarding. Don't forget to release your dog and slowly increase your expectations.

If your puppy backs up instead of sitting, simply position your pup in front of a wall before luring so that he backs up into the wall. Most puppies will then Sit once they find they can no longer back up. Once your dog learns the word Sit with success, you can start asking them to Sit without the help of a handy wall. If there are no walls around, crouch down and hook your foot behind his back legs so when he backs up he encounters the low wall of your foot. (Your foot will be stationary—no tripping your puppy.) He will then very likely Sit on top of your foot and again, once he has successes you can gradually stop using your foot to help him.

Remember to fade any help (wall, foot, or lure) before you begin to make it more challenging with distance, duration, and distraction.

Down

Many people train Sit but not Down, and in fact Down isn't strictly necessary for everyone. Still, if I am planning to have my dog stay in one spot for a long time, Down is my go-to command. I like to teach Down from a standing position, because often I find that if a puppy is taught Down from a sitting position, they will not understand how to Down from a standing position.

Down is not difficult to teach, but you need to have patience. I like to start out by placing a piece of food in my loosely-closed hand and then placing my hand near the floor with my fingers down and the back of my hand up. With the food loosely held in your hand, your puppy will likely try to put his nose between your hand and the floor and try to take the food from your hand. Wait until his elbows and hindquarters are on the floor before feeding him and releasing him. Once he follows the lure without trouble, name the position "Down".

You can also start fading the lure by raising your hand a little higher off the ground each time until you can give the command while standing up straight and he will still understand. Once the lure is no longer needed, make it harder with distance, duration, and distraction, and remember to use your release command.

If your puppy is having trouble following the lure, you can sit down with your knees bent to make a sort of tunnel and lure your dog through the tunnel. Your knees (forming the top of the tunnel) should be low enough that your puppy has to sort of crawl in and therefore will be in the Down position when you stop the lure. Be careful not to have your knees so low that your dog is claustrophobic. Most puppies, once they get the idea of Down-in-a-tunnel, very quickly understand Down-with-a-lure like previously described.

Come

Puppies younger than 4 months tend to naturally want to come to and be near their owners. By taking advantage of this fact, we can teach the puppy what Come means quite easily. Remember, what you do during this time in your puppy's life affects your relationship with your puppy for their entire lifetime.

So, since your puppy likely already has a decent Come impulse (though some independent breeds may have trouble even as puppies), it's your job to shape this into a solid Come

command and avoid shaping it into a terrible Come command (that is, having a dog who refuses to come when called).

To help with this, try following these simple rules:

✳️ Never call your puppy to punish him—including doing anything to him that he doesn't like. This could be giving medicine, putting him in his crate, bringing him in from outside, etc. Instead, when you need to do these things, simply go get your puppy (which is very simple if you are using umbilical cord training).

✳️ Most of the time, after you call your puppy and he comes to you, make a fuss over him and then let him go back to what he was doing. That way, the world around becomes less distracting because he knows he's likely to get to investigate it after coming to you.

✳️ Praise him while he is on his way to you. This will encourage him to keep coming.

✳️ Slowly build up distance and the distractions around you.

✳️ If your puppy ignores you after 3 or more calls, calmly go get your puppy. Walk in a curve without eye contact to avoid a Chase me game.

There are many activities you can do to help train the Come command further. One thing you can do is when your puppy is distracted by something but in a safe environment, try disappearing from his sight for a while and then make a fuss when he finds you. Teach him he needs to keep an eye on his slippery owner.

You can also play a game with two or more people, where you take turns calling your puppy to you. If the puppy goes to the wrong person, that person will simply stand there and ignore him.

Pretty soon your puppy will be enthusiastically bounding to your side.

Another favorite is hide-and-seek, especially among kids. Read more about the rules in the Games section.

Chapter Fifteen: Important Life Skills

Some skills are important simply to ease your relationship with your dog and make your puppy easier and more enjoyable to live with. Below are two of my favorites.

Walking on a Loose Leash

To facilitate proper socialization, your puppy needs to be allowed to sniff, so I don't advise doing any long Heel work with puppies. Instead, simply teach them that pulling is not acceptable. Help your puppy learn self control when faced with something they want to get to with this Attention Game.

Begin with your puppy on leash about 20 feet away from something they want to get to: a pile of treats, a favorite toy, or a favorite person or dog on leash—anything that will stay fairly still. Your puppy will likely pull at first to get to what they want. Simply stand still and wait for your puppy to stop pulling and look at you with the leash loose.

If you need to, in the beginning, you can help your puppy out by clucking your tongue or whistling or stepping away, but you want to stop helping your puppy out as soon as you can. Let him do this on his own.

As soon as your puppy looks at you with the leash loose, mark that with your reward word ("Good!") and take one big step forward. Be sure to take only one step at a time so your pup has plenty of opportunity to practice before it gets too hard. Remember, the closer your puppy is to a distraction, the more distracting it is, so you want to work at a distance first.

Then, wait for your puppy to look at you again with the leash loose. Take another one big step forward. Continue until you are so close to your target that your puppy has a hard time focusing on you instead of the target. Ask for one more eye contact and

then run back to the starting point, praising your puppy all the way. Throw him a big party once you get back to your starting point, and then begin all over again.

This game teaches your puppy that the way to get to what he wants is by focusing on you and bringing you with him, not by trying to get there on his own. Since you don't always let him interact with the target (in fact, rarely let him interact, and only if he can maintain self control the entire way), he will learn that some things he just won't be able to interact with, but he can still investigate from a distance with his favorite human.

When you are out for a walk with your puppy, let him sniff and explore his environment as long as he can keep the leash loose. Anytime the leash goes tight, simply counter his leash pressure with some of your own, just enough to stop him from going any farther. As soon as he stops pulling and the leash goes loose again, praise and give him some extra leash.

Do not use retractable leashes! They only encourage pulling behaviors.

If your puppy repeatedly pulls in one direction, turn around and head in the opposite direction. Your walks in the beginning will be pretty chaotic and all over the place, but soon enough your puppy's favorite place will be near you.

If your puppy is having trouble not pulling on the leash and the Attention Game is not helping enough, try taking him to a large open area with few distractions and clip a 20 foot leash or rope to him. You can go up to 100 ft in rope length if you're sure your puppy won't hit the end of the rope with any real speed. We want to be safe while working, after all.

Whenever your puppy goes off on his own and isn't paying attention to your whereabouts but BEFORE he gets to the end of his leash, you will turn in the opposite direction of him and start heading off at a gentle pace. If he realizes his mistake and hurries

to catch up, praise him. Keep your pace gentle at first though so that if he doesn't pay attention, he won't get hurt when he hits the end of the leash, but just get a tap on the collar from reality. A shout of "No" or his name can help alert him that he's nearing the end of the leash, too, to keep him safe. Be sure to only use it when necessary, to keep him learning to focus on you himself instead of relying on you to warn him.

Soon enough, your puppy will be hanging out near you, and you can simply shorten your leash to make it more difficult, until you are using a normal six-foot lead again. Then it's time to try your walks again, with the Attention Game as necessary, and tons of praise to support your puppy in keeping the leash loose.

Be patient. Your puppy is learning a very important life skill—how to keep track of your whereabouts even when life is distracting. This is difficult, so give him time to master it and tons of praise to support him when he's got it right.

Even while he's learning, don't let him pull you anywhere. If pulling never works, he'll be far less likely to try it, and that'll set you up nicely for the future, especially if he's a large breed dog.

Leave It

Leave it is a wonderful command for helping your puppy learn self control and also communicating to her that an item is off limits. Leave it means "don't look at it, don't touch it, don't think about it, it's not yours." This is a long-term command, so don't let your dog interact with a leave it item once you give the command. If you're practicing with one of your puppy's toys, that toy needs to go up on a shelf for at least half an hour before your puppy can play with it, and all leave it items must go through your hand before your puppy is allowed to interact with it. For instance, if you're using food as a leave it item, you need to pick it up in your hand before feeding it to your puppy if you choose to give it to her. Don't let her clean it up off the floor for you.

To teach Leave it, have one large food treat and several smaller ones that your puppy likes just as well or better than the large one. The large one is your leave it item and the smaller ones are your rewards. Place the large treat under your foot and say "Leave it" and then step on it so your puppy can't grab it (it's best to do this with shoes). Let him try to get to it, and wait for him to stop trying to dig under your foot. Once he stops actively trying to get to the Leave it item, begin to praise. As soon as he looks at you, you can reward him with a food treat from your hand.



A note on treat size

Most treats you can buy are way, way too big! When your puppy gets something right, all he needs is a taste, not a meal. An elephant at a zoo gets a tablespoon of peanut butter, so your puppy only needs a pinch of a soft treat or large crumb of a biscuit type.

I like soft treats or lickable treats (Lickety Sticks or Leanlix) for training, but if you're using biscuit types, you can make them smaller by putting them in a zip-top bag and hammering them. Cheese, hot dogs, chicken, peanut butter, and cheerios may also work, if your puppy will work for them. Keep treat size small to avoid your puppy getting full, thirsty, sick, or overweight.

The eye contact is important because when you tell your puppy to leave something alone in the real world, you want him to orient back to you. Continue this until your puppy is reliably leaving the leave it item alone even when you aren't stepping on it (be ready to step on it again if your puppy tries to go for it, and be careful because some puppies are quick and you need to beat him to it!).

Once he's reliable, you can begin moving around the treat a little and slowly adding distance and then distraction around you. With time and practice, you'll find that when you say Leave it, your puppy will go to great lengths to avoid the Leave it item and avoid the temptation. Eventually you'll be able to walk right over the top of food and your puppy won't care because you told him to Leave it.

What can you use this for? The sky's the limit, as long as you remember that this is a long term command. Don't tell him to leave a group of children and then let them pet him ten minutes later—that's not fair.

Leave it applies to anything your puppy can't interact with, and you need to be on your puppy's side by making sure that the Leave it item can't interact with him either! Leave it applies to food, toys, homework, people, telephone poles, fire hydrants, other pets, etc—anything that he can't interact with for a fairly long time.



Poisons and Household Hazards

Many common household items can be dangerous to your puppy. Foods like raisins, grapes, onions, garlic, and chocolate are toxic. Some household plants can also be poisonous to dogs. The ASPCA has a fantastic website with details on dangers of various common items including plants, foods, and household items, as well as a helpful Poison Hotline if your dog does get into something they shouldn't.

To help protect your dog, train a strong Leave It command. Teach them not to steal food from the table or counter. Practice with safe items at first, just in case, but still don't let them successfully take it. As your dog forms a habit of not taking all food-like items, they will be a lot safer. Training a strong sit-stay or down-stay can help you keep them out of danger while you clean, as well, and confining them away from tempting plants while you're gone can keep them safe.

Chapter Sixteen: The Beginning

We've arrived at the end of this puppy primer, but it's only the beginning of your adventure with your puppy. There will be hard days and there will be delightful days. Sometimes raising a puppy will be hard work, but remember that the time you put in now will absolutely pay off later on. Don't give up!

Remember, your puppy is young and curious and does not know the way of the world. It will take some time to teach him. However, the more clear and consistent you are, the more quickly he will learn the rules. That's what training is all about.

Once your puppy has been well-socialized, is well mannered and knows basic obedience commands, it's tempting to stop there. And you can—once your puppy is where you want him to be behavior-wise, you can throw out the books and play with your puppy. You put in the time and effort to teach your puppy; now you get to enjoy him.

Just remember that behavior is dynamic, so your puppy will have good days and bad days and sometimes as an adult he will relapse. Simply pay more attention to your clarity and consistency and your puppy's behavior will likely soon meet your expectations again. Take a look at your relationship with your puppy and be sure you are meeting his needs. Sometimes, all your puppy needs is a bit more exercise or some more playtime with you, rather than stringent training.

If you want to go further with your puppy, the opportunities are there for you! You can continue your training and work toward getting your AKC Canine Good Citizen. The test is a simple standardized test that is tough enough to be a good goal to shoot for, yet easy enough that with training almost every dog should be able to meet the standards. I believe every dog who is out and about in public (for more than just a daily walk) should have their

CGC. Even if your puppy won't be interacting much with the public there is nothing wrong with getting your CGC! And if you want to go even further, the next test is the AKC Community Canine, which is sort of like the CGC but more advanced and applied, and after that, the CGC Urban Canine, which is even more advanced.

Many puppies look forward to training with their owners because of the challenge involved in working together toward a common goal. If your puppy is very athletic, there are numerous dog sports you can investigate together. Try them out and see which ones your puppy seems to be drawn toward and enjoy the most. Agility is basically a directed obstacle course. The owner is told the order the obstacles should be taken in and has the job of communicating that to the dog. Together, you try to run the course in the fastest time possible with the least number of mistakes.

Flyball is like a relay race chasing tennis balls. You'll compete on a team with other dogs against other teams of dogs. Speaking of teams, there's also sledding or carting. Dogs alone or in teams pull a vehicle behind them (a sled on snow of course or a wagon or cart on dry land). If your dog is super strong, there are competitions to see which dog can pull the heaviest weight.

There's also Rally-Obedience, which is like an obstacle course made up of obedience commands. In Rally-O, you run the course with your dog, giving your dog the commands he needs to follow in order to complete the course with the quickest time and the fewest mistakes.

There are also competitions, of course, in obedience, conformation, and schutzhund. If your dog has a strong nose, he can compete in tracking (following the steps the target took), trailing (following the air scent of the target which may or may not correspond to the exact steps taken by the target), or nose work (finding a specific scent among decoys).

If your puppy is incredibly social, maybe therapy work is the right fit for him. Therapy dogs go into nursing homes, hospitals, and other places to interact with the elderly, children, the sick, and the disabled. You and your dog can specialize. For instance, some therapy teams only go to libraries or schools, where children pet the dog and read to them to improve their reading skills. Other dogs only visit hospitals, to give comfort to the sick and dying. And others exclusively visit nursing homes, bringing cheer and companionship to the elderly and disabled. There are many ways to try this out and see if it's a good fit for you and your dog, but your puppy must be well-behaved and pass a test and/or a specialized class for therapy animals before becoming a therapy dog.

The sky's the limit for you and your puppy. Just remember to grow your relationship with your dog and keep finding new adventures to tackle together.

Appendix:

Finding a reputable dog trainer

Recommended Reading

About the author

Find online at www.pawhand.com:

Housebreaking Mistakes Tracker

Socialization Checklist

Basic obedience tracker

Finding a Reputable Dog Trainer

A book is limited in that it can only give general information. Even the best author can't use a book to dynamically respond to an owner's actions with his dog. As such, you may find it helpful to enlist the help of someone who can watch you work with your dog and tweak things as needed to help produce the best in both you and your dog.

The most important thing I have noticed in my years as a trainer is that the owner agree with the methods used by the trainer (obviously, assuming those methods are humane). If there exists a difference in philosophy between owner and trainer, the owner will likely not follow through with the trainer's recommendations and the training will not work. It will be a waste of money and a source of frustration for all involved, including the dog.

Therefore, call up the local trainers in your area and talk to your veterinarian about what trainers they recommend. Have a conversation with the trainers about their philosophy. Observe them working a dog (typically in a class situation). Do you agree with their philosophy and how they handle the dog? Do their words and actions match? Would you feel comfortable if your dog was handled that way? Talk to your friends and see who they recommend. Talk to past clients of trainers whenever possible and see what they think.

Continue until you find a trainer you agree with and feel comfortable with—then learn from them all you can. It is okay to question a trainer, and many good trainers welcome questions. It helps prevent misunderstandings down the road.

If you are having trouble finding a trainer and a Google search of "dog trainers [your city]" doesn't help, or if you want more recommendations from a professional source, look online at trainer organizations. Just remember that there are a variety of

trainers out there and organizational membership is not the be-all-end-all. Take a look at some of these organizations:

The Association of Professional Dog Trainers (apdt.com)

The International Association of Canine Professionals (canineprofessionals.com)

The International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants (iaabc.org).

If you are interested in someone who has been certified by an outside organization, you want to look at the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers (ccpdt.org). Or, if you're looking for someone who's studied academically for years, try looking at the Animal Behavior Society (animalbehaviorsociety.org), although there are not very many members as the standards for joining are exceedingly high.

Regardless of who you choose, be sure you agree with their philosophy. Ask plenty of questions. Make sure you understand them. This is an investment that could bring you joy for years to come by teaching you how to communicate appropriately with your dog, to strengthen your relationship. If you don't understand their philosophy, methods, or even simply what they are asking you to do, that investment will not work out.

Don't let fear of failure stop you, because a trainer and an owner who are on the same page and working toward bettering the relationship between owner and dog are a powerful force for good in the life of the dog.

Recommended Reading

The Other End of the Leash by Patricia McConnell

For the Love of a Dog by Patricia McConnell

The Emotional Lives of Dogs by Patricia McConnell

Inside of a Dog by Alexandra Horowitz

SATS & the Family Dog: Daily Living Skills by Kayce Cover

How to Be Your Dog's Best Friend (revised edition) by The Monks of New Skete

Dog Sense by John Bradshaw

How to Behave So Your Dog Behaves by Dr. Sophia Yin

Culture Clash by Jean Donaldson

The Dog Listener by Jan Fennell

51 Puppy Tricks by Kyra Sundance

101 Dog Tricks by Kyra Sundance

Introduction to Bridge & Target Training by Kayce Cover

Fired Up, Frantic, and Freaked Out by Laura VanArendonk Baugh

Bones Would Rain from the Sky by Suzanne Clothier

The Rosetta Bone by Cheryl S. Smith

On Talking Terms with Dogs by Turid Rugaas

"The Language of Dogs" by Sarah Kalnajs (DVD)

DOG As a Second Language by Mel Heber

About the Author



Mel Heber is the owner of Paw In Hand, with over ten years of professional training experience. She began her training journey while working with the Dubuque Humane Society, and soon found patterns in the troubles new adopters would see, or behaviors owners would struggle with. She has designed, created, and led training classes helping thousands of dogs and their owners learn to communicate

more effectively, and has worked individually with owners to help dogs plagued by fear, reactivity, and impulse control problems.

She's a member of the IACP and has been certified CPDT-KA (membership since lapsed). She's an ABC Mentor trainer and an AKC CGC evaluator as well as an evaluator for K9to5 National Therapy Dog Registry.

If you're struggling with your dog, there's a better way. Contact Mel or a trainer in your area today.

Also by Mel: [DOG As a Second Language](#)