

Survival Tips for Puppy's 1st Year

Key Concepts:

1. **Provide for the pet's needs:** Besides health and nutritional care, puppies require adequate amounts of exercise, mental stimulation, and social interaction.
2. **Set the pet up to succeed:** Most puppies engage in predictable behaviors (i.e. they are active, curious, get into everything, and like to chew on stuff). It is up to their human family to prevent mistakes by moving things out of reach ("puppy proofing") and providing training. Close supervision or appropriate confinement may be needed for some pets up to 2 years of age.
3. **Don't take good behaviors for granted.** The best way to teach pets what you want them to do is to reward good behavior. Family members should actively look for desired behaviors and reward them.
4. **Be consistent:** The whole family should agree which behaviors are acceptable and which are not. For example, should the pet be allowed on the couch? Different families have different rules. All family members must respond to specific behaviors in the same way to avoid confusing the pet.
5. **Avoid harsh, inappropriate punishment:** Harsh punishment of the pet can damage your bond with them and may result in anxiety, fear, and aggression. Avoid swatting, scruffing, rolling, or rubbing the pet's face in a mess. A loud, abrupt, short, semi-startling noise (e.g. loud "no", air horn, shake can, whistle, etc) is usually adequate to interrupt an undesirable behavior. The correction must be given **during** the behavior, every time the behavior occurs, and stop when the behavior stops. Devices can be used to interrupt bad behavior when owners are not present. Examples include Scraminal, Scatmat, Spray Barrier, and AutoTrainer.

Rules of the House:

1. **Nothing in life is free:** Use for all pups. Pet must sit and quietly look at owner before getting **anything** they want (food, treats, attention, opening door, allowing on furniture, beginning play, etc).
2. **Don't tell me what to do:** Use for pushy, independent pups. Do not allow the pet to solicit attention or be "pushy". All interactions must be initiated by the owner, not the dog. Any nudge, whine, bark, push, etc for attention must be ignored. Pull hands in, lean away, and look away from pet when they are trying to solicit attention. If they are really pushy, get up and walk away. Do not scold, push away or say anything as this counts as attention. Once the pet stops being pushy for 10 seconds, ask it to sit and then give it attention. Another strategy is to ask the pet to sit as it walks up, but before it attempts to be pushy for attention.
3. **Don't move without permission:** Use for very pushy, unruly pups or dogs with emerging social problems. Any time a family member begins to move from one area to another, the pet should be asked to sit/stay and wait for a release command to follow. Request a sit/stay before going up or down stairs as well as in or out of the house. The pet need only stay for 1-2 seconds and the family member does not need to walk away from the pet during the stay. It is not as necessary to be as rigid about this rule as the previous two. It may be difficult or impractical to have the pet sit/stay before all movements.

Other tips:

Avoid rough play, such as tug-of-war or teasing. Use puzzle toys to deliver meals instead of food bowls to provide exercise and mental stimulation. Do not encourage play biting or mouthing of hands—yell "OUCH!" and stop play if this occurs. Encourage chewing on appropriate toys by tossing treats when pup plays with them.

Other Resources: "Perfect Puppy in Seven Days" by Sophia Yin available on Amazon (Adapted from "Help My Puppy is Driving Me Crazy" paper by Wayne Hunthausen, DVM, Animal Behavior Consultations)

TLC ANIMAL HOSPITAL

1851 N Lee Trevino
El Paso, TX 79936
(915) 592-6200
www.tlcvetelpaso.com