

# PUPPY CARE TRAINING & TIPS

BY SUZY RENWICK IN ASSOCIATION WITH  
BANDON CO-OP RETAIL CENTRES



## GENERAL PUPPY OVERVIEW

Virtually all natural dog behaviors—chewing, barking, rough play, chasing moving objects, eating food items within reach, jumping up to access faces, settling disputes with threat displays, establishing contact with strange dogs, guarding resources, leaning into steady pressure against their necks, urinating on porous surfaces like carpets, defending themselves from perceived threat—are considered by humans to be behavior problems.

The rules that seem so obvious to us make absolutely no sense to dogs. They are not humans in dog suits.

Regardless of breed and breeding, and regardless of your puppy's socialization and training prior to coming to your home, as of right now any change in your puppy's temperament, behavior, or manners is completely dependent on how you socialize and train him. Work with your puppy and he will get better. Don't work with your puppy and he will get worse. Your puppy's future is entirely in your hands.

Sadly, many outdated trainers, and hence many owners who have read outdated training books, tend to focus on punishing untrained dogs for getting it wrong, for breaking rules they never knew existed. Not the basis for a loving relationship. Avoid puppy classes that advocate the use of any metal collar or any means of physical punishment that frightens, harms, or causes pain to your pup.

Push-pull, leash-jerk, grab and-shake, alpha rollover, and domination techniques are now considered ineffective, besides being adversarial and unpleasant.

It is much more efficient and effective to teach your puppy the rules of the house—to show him what you want him to do and to reward him for doing it. Thus, your puppy learns to want to do what you want him to do.

If you let your dog play indiscriminately as a puppy, he will no doubt want to play indiscriminately as an adult. Your dog will be hyperactive and uncontrollable because you have taught him to act that way.

The most successful obedience competition dogs, agility dogs, search-and-rescue dogs, bomb-detection dogs, seeing-eye dogs, hearing-ear dogs, assistance dogs, and protection dogs are all trained using reward-based motivational methods, with few-if any-reprimands. Isn't it about time that we trained pet dogs the same way?

Positive training is not permissive. Treating with respect and gentleness is not permissive. Boundaries still need to be set, and guidance offered... you just do not need to be loud or scary when you reinforce them.

Training is a skill. Like all skills it takes practice. It does not take a special gift, a mysterious 'assertive energy' or strength. It takes a knowledge of the species you are working with, an understanding of how animals learn, careful communication and good timing.

Remember! All puppies are hard work, but different breeds will have different personality qualities. Choose a breed that fits into your lifestyle rather than on how it looks.

Things to watch out for - using your voice too much so that your command becomes meaningless, and timing. Reinforcement needs to be IMMEDIATE. Remember the bouncy ball exercise! (Reinforcement must be given in the short space between when the ball hits the ground and you catch it again)

**Be Kind:** gently and carefully consider the needs of your dog

**Be Aware:** do you know the body language of canine stress or how a dog learns?

**Be Happy:** Consider training as playtime, as fun and enjoy it. Look for your dog's personality and celebrate it, be happy.

**Be Generous:** Pay for services rendered. No dog will work for free!



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## TOILET TRAINING

Being able to accurately predict when your puppy needs to eliminate enables you to be there to teach her where to eliminate, and to reward the pup for doing the right thing in the right place at the right time.

The reward is reinforcement for making the right choices, and lets the dog know what he has done is what you wanted him to do.

When you are at home:

1. Keep your puppy closely confined to her doggy den, ( a safe puppy play space with bed, chew toys, and water) or on-leash by her bed or attached to yourself.
2. Every hour on the hour, release your pup from confinement and quickly run her (on-leash if necessary) to the toilet area. Instruct your pup to eliminate and give her three minutes to do so.
3. If she goes, enthusiastically praise your puppy, offer her three freeze-dried liver treats, and then play/train indoors or in the yard. (Once your puppy is over three months old, take her for a walk as a reward for eliminating in her toilet area.)

Keep careful track of whether the dog is “empty” vs. “full.” Freedom in limited dog-proofed areas of the house can be granted at empty periods: in other words, you have just witnessed and reinforced the dog for doing both functions outdoors so you know you’re safe for a short while.

When the dog is full, you have two choices: 1) he can be in his safe puppy area (being “stretched”) or 2) outside at the elimination area with you, liver in pocket in case the dog guesses right and performs.

You must time reinforcement precisely. In order to reinforce immediately, you must be present.

You may also reinforce the dog by taking him for a walk after he has eliminated in the toilet area. When he learns that the walk starts after he eliminates, he will tend to eliminate more quickly. We love this. Most people train it backwards: they walk the dog in hopes of stimulating him to eliminate and then end the walk, taking the dog directly home, as soon as he’s empty. The dog learns that eliminating ends walks and starts to delay going to the bathroom in order to extend the walk.

If toilet training goes wrong, you, the owner, are at fault. You did not get the timing right, observe your pup enough or reward and praise enough. Any mistake is a backward step as it sets precedence. If you do catch your pup making an error, please do not punish him for your mistake. Instead calmly lift him to the correct area whilst cheerfully saying ‘outside’. This will ensure he has no fear about eliminating around you, and so will not try hide when he does need to go.

If you must leave the dog alone all day, consider hiring a dog walker at lunchtime to break up the time. Eight or ten hours is a very long stretch, especially if you have limited time in the morning getting ready to go to work (dog walked, fast fetch and tug game, fed then ignored). I am aware that many dogs can hang onto bladder and bowels that long, just as many humans can hang on longer than they’d ideally like to on occasion. However, I do wonder about what it must be like for the dog those last couple of hours. Just because he can hold on is not justification that we should make him.



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## ALONE TIME



A dog is a highly social animal and therefore requires adequate preparation for spending some of his time in social isolation and solitary confinement.

Before leaving your puppy for long periods, you should teach him how to amuse himself appropriately when left alone, such as by chewing stuffed chewtoys, and learning how to enjoy his own company without becoming anxious or stressed.

Most importantly, when you are at home, make certain to familiarize your puppy with his long-term confinement area (safe puppy playroom - with bed, water and chew toys).

The first experience being locked in the space must be an overwhelmingly easy and good one. Let the puppy explore the area, which will be full of good things. Shut him in and release a minute later. Build this up timewise gradually.

Confining your pup at times when you're home enables you to monitor his behavior during confinement and check in on him at irregular intervals, quietly rewarding him for being quiet. Thus your pup will not necessarily associate his confinement area with your absence, but rather he will learn to look forward to time spent in his playroom with his special toys.

Give your puppy plenty of toys whenever leaving him on his own. Ideal chewtoys are indestructible and hollow (such as Kong products or sterilized longbones).

Additionally, leave a radio playing. The sound will provide white noise to mask outside disturbances



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## WHEN LEAVING HOME

Make sure to stuff a number of chewtoys with kibble and treats.

Make sure to stuff a piece of freeze-dried liver into the tiny hole of each Kong, or deep into the marrow cavity of each bone.

Place the tastily stuffed chewtoys in your puppy's long-term confinement area and shut the door . . . with your puppy on the outside!

When your puppy begs you to open the door, let him in and shut the door, turn on the radio or television, and leave quietly.

Your puppy's chewing will be regularly reinforced by each piece of kibble which falls out of the chewtoy. Your puppy will continue to chew in an attempt to extract the freeze-dried liver. Eventually your puppy will fall asleep.

## WHEN RETURNING HOME

Do not acknowledge your puppy's presence with praise or petting until he retrieves a chewtoy. Once he brings you a chewtoy, use a pen or pencil to push out the piece of freeze dried liver which your puppy has been unable to extract. This will impress your puppy to no end.

Dogs are crepuscular and quite happy to sleep all day and all night. They have two activity peaks, at dawn and dusk. Thus, most chewing and barking activity is likely to occur right after you leave your pup in the morning and just before you return in the evening. Leaving your puppy with freshly stuffed chewtoys and offering the unextracted treats when you return prompts your puppy to seek out his chewtoys at times of peak activity.



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## JEKYLL-AND-HYDE BEHAVIOR

During your puppy's first few weeks at home, frequent confinement with stuffed chewtoys is essential for your pup to develop confidence and independence. Smothering your puppy with attention and affection when you are home primes the pup to really miss you when you are gone. If you are constantly available and heaping attention on the dog, you are setting him up for a terrific letdown when normal life resumes.

A Jekyll-and-Hyde environment (lots of attention when you are there, and none when you are gone) quickly creates a Jeckylland-Hyde puppy which is completely confident when you are there, but falls apart and panics when you are gone.

If you allow your puppy to become dependent upon your presence, he will be anxious in your absence. Canine anxiety is bad news for you and bad news for your pup.

So, right off the bat, leave baby dog or newly adopted dog alone for brief durations, over and over. With dozens of trials, he will learn that: 1) people are not always going to be available and 2) when people leave, they always come back again.

Once your puppy is quite happy busying himself with his chewtoys whenever left alone, you may safely allow your now well behaved and confident pup to enjoy as much time with you as he likes, without the fear that he will become anxious in your absence.

**Chewing:** everything looks like a chew toy to a dog. You must divert dogs attention to what is appropriate to chew. Develop a chewtoy habit: this will also help you teach your dog to settle well.

The crème de la crème of chew objects are hollow bones, Kong toys, bully sticks and Greenies.

Hollow bones are made of actual cow bone and are available in various incarnations like smoked, sterilized and pre-stuffed with marrow. The great thing about them is that they are safe, relatively indestructible and hollow (knuckle bones are great too, though not stuffable).

To teach your puppy how to settle down calmly and quietly when you are absent, start by teaching him to settle down with a chewtoy at times when you are present. This is an invaluable skill in itself and will ensure your dog will be a civilized companion that will be welcome in many places.

For example, when you're watching television have your pup lie down on leash or in his crate, but release him for short play-training breaks during the commercials.

For a young puppy, you can't have too many rules.

When playing with your pup, have him settle down for frequent short interludes every one or two minutes. Initially have the pup lie still for a few seconds before letting him play again.

After a minute, interrupt the play session once more with a three-second settle-down. Then try for four seconds, then five, eight, ten, and so on. Although being yo-yoed between the commands "Settle down" and "Let's play" is difficult at first, the puppy soon learns to settle down quickly and happily.

Your puppy will learn that being asked to settle down is not the end of the world, nor is it necessarily the end of the play session, but instead that "Settle down" signals a short timeout and rewardbreak before he is allowed to resume playing.



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## SOCIALISATION: URGENT PRIORITY BY 12 WEEKS



Socialization is habituation, or getting used to environmental elements through exposure to them. An adult dog will not be phased if he has had a positive experience with whatever at a young age. The underlying trait of stability or “bounce-back” is developed. The puppy’s overall confidence grows. The more puppyhood experiences a dog has to draw on, the more resilient the character. The mild stresses of regular novelty in early life are like inoculations for later life.

Antisocial dogs are difficult, time-consuming, and potentially dangerous. Socialisation is an urgent priority as the window of learning is relatively small and often over by about 3 months of age.

To actively socialize means exposing the puppy to as wide a social sphere as possible in terms of human age groups, sexes, sizes, shapes, colors and gaits. The experiences should be positive (play, treats, nothing scary) and include a wide variety of patting, handling and movement by the humans. Make sure your puppy feels totally at ease when you handle and examine his ears, muzzle, teeth, and paws.

It also means getting the puppy used to anything it may have to encounter in later life, such as car rides, veterinary exams (make the first one or two fun rather than scary), cats, traffic, soccer games, elevators and pointy sticks.

As a rule of thumb, your puppy needs to meet at least a hundred people before he is three months old. Perhaps you could organize a puppy party? Invited guests can dress up in moustaches, beards, hats, sunglasses etc. let there be noise and the activity of children.

Make sure your puppy’s first meetings with people are pleasant and enjoyable. Happy and voluntary compliance is the only type of compliance that is effective and safe

Teach your children how to act around the pup, and teach your pup how to act around children. Invite over only well-trained children. Supervise the children at all times. I repeat, supervise the children at all times.

Your puppy needs to be handled by familiar people before unfamiliar people, adults before children, women before men, and girls before boys.

One single person can have a dramatic impact on your puppy’s personality-for better or worse. Insist that nobody-nobody-interact or play with your puppy until they demonstrate they can get him to come eagerly, sit promptly, and lie down calmly.

Untrained visitors, especially children and adult male friends and relatives, are renowned for ruining good puppies in short order. If your visitors won’t listen and wise up, put your puppy in his long-term confinement area, or ask the visitors to leave.

If the puppy ever refuses a treat, you have stressed him. So stop being silly for while until you have handfeed the pup half a dozen treats in a non-threatening situation

There is a simple test to determine whether or not the puppy finds teasing to be enjoyable. Stop the game, back up, and ask the puppy to come and sit. If the puppy comes promptly with a wagging tail and sits with his head held high, he is probably enjoying the game as much as you are. You may continue playing. If the pup approaches with a wiggly body, lowered head and tail, makes excessive licking motions with his tongue, and lies down or rolls over when asked to sit, you have pushed the puppy too far and he no longer trusts you. Stop playing and rebuild the puppy’s confidence by repeatedly backing up and asking the pup to come and sit for a piece of kibble. If the puppy is slow to approach or doesn’t come when called, he doesn’t like you any more than he likes the evil game you’re playing. Stop playing immediately. Take a long look in a mirror. Reflect on what you’ve done. Then go back and repair the damage by tossing food treats to the puppy until you can get him to confidently and happily come and sit three times in a row.

Please allow the puppy to set his own pace. This means the handler must find whatever Zen-like mood is necessary to make him abstain from ever forcing the puppy to socialize, as is many people’s inclination.

It’s critically important when working with timid puppies (or dogs) that it be puppy’s choice whether to approach and at what speed. If the puppy wants to keep his distance for a few minutes or half an hour, this must be respected.

Rushing the puppy or forcing him to make contact with people or things that frighten him can exacerbate the existing fear.

Socialization is a continual and ongoing. The same old faces day in day out will not do. It is important to get out more!

In order to get your puppy to respond here, there, and everywhere, she needs be trained here, there, and everywhere.

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## BITE INHIBITION: PRIORITY—BY 18 WEEKS OF AGE



Learning Bite Inhibition will develop a soft mouth. Your puppy needs to play with other puppies to learn this social skill. Adult dogs and humans are not enough.

You can also train in precisely what you want your pup to think: that he needs to be extremely careful and gentle when playing with people.

It is not necessary to reprimand the pup, and certainly physical punishments are not called for. But it is essential to let your puppy know that bites can hurt. A simple "Ouch!" is usually sufficient. When the puppy backs off, take a short time out to "lick your wounds," instruct your pup to come, sit, and lie down to apologize and make up. Then resume playing. If your puppy does not respond to your yelp by easing up or backing off, an effective technique is to call the puppy a "Bully!" and then leave the room and shut the door for a few moments. This mimics natural dog behavior.

When played intelligently, physical games, such as playfighting and tug-of-war, are effective bite inhibition and control exercises, and are wonderful for motivating adult dogs. In order to be effective and not produce out-of-control dogs, however, these games must be played according to strict rules, the most important being that you are in control at all times. That is, at any time you are able to get your puppy to stop playing and lie down calmly with a single down command. If you do not have this level of control, do not roughhouse with your puppy; you'll ruin him.

The "tug might make him more dominant" argument is extremely lame. The implication is that dogs or wolves ascertain rank by grabbing the ends of an object and tugging to see who "wins." If anything, the best description of tug is that it is cooperative behavior. It's not you vs. the dog, it's you and the dog vs. the tug-of-war toy. When you're playing tug-of-war with a dog and he "wins," i.e., you let go, a tug-addicted dog will try to get you to re-engage in the game rather than leaving and hoarding. You have control of the supreme, ultimate reinforcer here: the ability to make the toy appear to resist, to feel like living prey. The dog learns this.

When dogs do leave and hoard, it's often because the owner has made simple tactical errors. With a dog who tends to run the other way after getting control of the tug object, playing hard to get is an infinitely smarter owner strategy than chasing the dog. Avoid battles with dogs involving speed and agility—you cannot win. Psych-outs are much better. Pretend you couldn't care less and usually the object will be brought back much more quickly. Once the dog learns that playing with the toy with you makes it come to life, you gain this extra leverage.

### Tug-of-War Rules

1. Dog "Outs" on Cue
2. Dog May Not Take or Retake Until Invited to Do So
3. Frequent Obedience Breaks
4. Zero Tolerance of Accidents

#### 1. Dog "Outs" on Cue

This rule means the dog must let go immediately when cued.

Here's how to teach it:

Decide on a release cue such as "out," "give" or "let go." Before revving the dog up to pull on the object for the first time, practice some low-key exchanges with him. The sequence is 1) give your cue to out, 2) the dog releases, 3) a food reinforcer is delivered from your pocket and 4) give your cue to retake.

If the dog doesn't take the object in his mouth in the first place, practice the exchanges anyway, simply by giving the object to the dog.



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## PREVENTING ADOLESCENT PROBLEMS - BY FIVE MONTHS OF AGE

Teach your puppy to enjoy being grabbed by the collar.

First, prevent your pup from forming negative associations to human hands, and second, teach your pup that being taken by the collar has only positive consequences.

If you let your puppy play without interruption, and then take him by the collar to end the play session, of course he will come to dislike your reaching for his collar because a collar grab signals the end of the play session.

Starting in the house and later in the park, frequently interrupt puppy play sessions by taking your puppy by the collar, asking him to sit, praising him, offering a piece of kibble, and then letting him go play again. The puppy thus learns that being taken by the collar is not necessarily the end of the play session.

Puppy needs to find out, through repeated experience, that your presence around his food and dish is not a threat. Feed him some meals in small installments to pound in the repeated association between your hand approaching the dish and good news: another helping.

Practice taking the bowl away in mid-meal and sprucing it up by adding something tastier. This can be a spoonful of canned food, cottage cheese, a piece of freeze-dried liver or anything tasty you're comfortable giving.

Remember: onions, garlic, grapes, raisins, chocolate, macademia nuts and corn on the cob are potentially life threatening to dogs!

Also practice walking up to the dog while he's eating and dropping some nice morsel in. The goal is that your approach or removal of the bowl reliably predicts something good for the dog. This is to counteract his natural inclination to guard his food.

Dogs naturally pull on leash. There are a couple of reasons for this. One is that most dogs naturally ambulate faster than most people and the pulling reflects this discrepancy. The other reason is that the pulling so elicited is then reinforced by the owner in the form of forward movement. The dog continues to pull because pulling works.

The other reason that has been put forward for pulling in dogs, even to the point of gasping for breath in obvious discomfort, is what's called an opposition reflex. As soon as they feel pressure against their necks or chests, they reflexively lean into it. An opposition reflex beefed up by selective breeding results in dogs like huskies and malamutes who really, really love pulling in harness.

The main pull prevention exercise, for puppies or dogs who do not already have a strong habit, is the red light/green light game. The rule of this game is that, while on a walk with the dog, you may only move forward if the leash is loose and jangly. As soon as the dog tightens the leash, you freeze dead in your tracks. The loose leash is the green light-handler moves forward; the tight leash is the red light-handler stops. Moving in the direction the dog wants to go is a potent reinforcer, which you must never give for pulling on leash.

DO alternate short periods of 15 to 30 seconds, when your dog walks by your side, with longer periods of a minute or so, when your dog is allowed to range and sniff at the end of the leash. This motivates your dog to walk by your side, as walking side-by-side is regularly reinforced by permission to range and sniff.

Forcing a dog to walk beside you without letting them sniff stuff is like taking a group of school kids on a trip, handcuffing them altogether, and blindfolding them so they cannot see things. Not so fun.





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## ENRICHMENT



- We need rest and recuperation but your dogs need exercise and enrichment. Many behavioural problems extinguish when these are given in adequate quantities.
- Like physical activity is an exercise for the body, enrichment is an exercise for the brain. And if you want a tired, happy family dog, then you must address both the body and the brain. Luckily, enrichment is not tricky to add to your dog's life.
- The easiest way to enrich your dog's life is to get him playing. Play ticks off both the exercise and enrichment boxes at the same time so is efficient if your time is short. Do you have a dog park nearby? Even a few trips to the dog park every week can have a noticeable effect on your dog. Or perhaps you have a neighbor with both friendly dogs and a fenced yard, and you can pop over there a couple of times a week.
- Another fantastic source of canine enrichment comes from food toys. There are many types of food toys available now, so pop over to your local pet store and grab a few to try. Puzzles, stuff-able types, you name it.
- Nose work is fun & rewarding
- I often use carrots, snap peas, popcorn or some of my dogs favorite toys.

While your dog is watching you go place a bit of food or his favorite toy at the other end of the room. When you give the cue to release your dog tell him to "find it." After a few repetitions he'll know what you're expecting him to do.

Once your dog seems to know "find it" you can step it up a notch. While your dog is in the stay position put the treat or toy out of his line of sight. Gradually build up to new distances and areas.



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## PLAY GAMES WITH YOUR DOG

The shell game is a simple problem solving game for dogs. To play the shell game with your dog let your dog watch as you place a treat under one of three cups. You then shuffle the cups around and encourage them to 'find the treat.' The shell game gives your dog plenty of mental stimulation, and helps them work on their problem solving skills.

I love the simple muffin tin game - if you have a muffin tin and some tennis balls you're ready to play. Place some treats in the muffin tin and hide them by placing the tennis balls over them. A Tea towel stack with treats inbetween is another favourite brain exercise my dog loves.

You can either buy your dog a new toy to get their enthusiasm going or you can rotate their toys. Instead of giving your dog access to all of their toys all the time give them a couple. If you rotate one of their old toys back into the mix after awhile they'll have some of that original enthusiasm back.

Some dogs love doing dissections, i.e., tearing things apart rather than simply gnawing on them. Others hang onto the same stuffed animals for years. For the dissecting types, it can become expensive to keep the dog supplied so it's worth developing collections of used old socks and clean rags that can be nested inside each other. If you want him to find treasure, nest a cookie or piece of liver in the very center. If he's a really industrial dissector, tie many knots as tightly as you can to make it tougher. Present it to the dog and behold a predator in action. Witness the first few dissections to be sure your dog doesn't ingest the non-edible parts, as the occasional dog might. If he's an ingester, he can't do dissections.

All of these games are enriching for your dog. They increase confidence, give your dog a job to do and are an easy way to bond with your dog.

## RECOMMENDED READING

How to Teach a New Dog Old Tricks - Ian Dunbar  
James & Kenneth Publishers, 1991.

The Culture Clash - Jean Donaldson  
James & Kenneth Publishers, 1996.

Don't Shoot the Dog - Karen Pryor  
Bantam Books, 1985. (CAPPDT #2, APDT #7)

