

Introduction

The best time to train your new dog is as a puppy. At this age they will learn quickly and eagerly, and the things you teach them now will last a lifetime. By following a few simple principles, you will have a happy, well trained pet for life.

Training times

Puppies have short attention spans, so training sessions for your puppy should be kept to a maximum of five minutes to ensure that the training session remains fun for both of you. Training for longer periods of time will do more harm than good by losing the puppy's attention, resulting in both you and your puppy becoming frustrated. Puppy training sessions should become a daily routine.

Use of voice

Training must be enjoyable for both you and your puppy for it to be successful. You should use a happy high-pitched voice, not loud or intimidating commands.

Focus

It is nearly impossible for you to teach your puppy any form of obedience if the puppy isn't focused. Focus training is as simple as calling your puppy's name and immediately rewarding with praise.

Poker machine principle

Remember the poker machine principal with food rewards. Don't give a treat every time your puppy performs the task you have asked. The idea is that your puppy will obey commands in the hope they will hit the jackpot this time and get the food reward!

Punishment

There is never any reason to use punishment in training unless it involves the removal of something good. Positive reinforcement gets results without the need for negative punishment.

Sin bin / time out

Removing the puppy from the environment when there is unacceptable behaviour occurring is an effective means of control. Puppies want to be with you, so rejection and separation are great ways to get the message across. Have a small area where the puppy can be left for about five minutes. Upon release from time out, ignore the puppy for a further 2 minutes.

Socialisation

Socialization can be described as learning to take part in friendly interchange and is a very important attribute. The critical socialization period for dogs is between 6 and 16 weeks of age. It is vital that the correct knowledge is used to shape a puppy's behaviour and attitude while in this particular phase of development.

Lack of socialization is the reason dogs become frightened by other dogs, people and places. This fearfulness can turn into aggressive behaviour. A well-socialized puppy is comfortable in their environment and would rather play than bite. Therefore it is most important that you expose your pup to everything it is expected to face in its adult life.

Pecking order / household rules

The domestic dog is just like its ancestor, the wolf, and belongs in a pack. Dogs do not immediately see us as masters, but as another animal. When your puppy is first taken home, it needs to find its own position in the pecking order. You must take control of the situation and become pack leader.

When a set of rules are set up for your puppy, make sure every family member is following the same guidelines. Consistency is the key to success! Listed below are some situations you can use at home to assert your pack leader status.

- Make your puppy sit before giving meals.
- Eat before your puppy eats.
- Make sure you walk through doorways and gates first.
- Make sure you walk up or down stairways first.
- Do not let your puppy sleep on beds or couches unless asked.
- Make your puppy earn privileges. Before they are given a treat or patted, give a command such as SIT.

Food bowl handling

It is natural for dogs to feel protective around their possessions, such as a food bowl. For this reason it is important to take the time to show your puppy there is no reason to be defensive, growling, or protective over the bowl or bone when you approach at dinner time.

While your puppy is eating, you should place your hand in the bowl and hand feed the puppy. Take the bowl away and put a treat in and give it back to the puppy again. By doing food bowl handling exercises, your puppy soon learns not to feel threatened with your presence near the food bowl.

New skills

During our time together over the next four weeks you and your puppy will be learning new skills and making lots of new friends.

On completion of the classes, your puppy will be able to do the commands sit, down, stay and come, and will walk on a lead using voice and hand signals. As an owner, you will acquire the right tools to make the transition of your puppy into your home as smooth as possible and be able to deal with any problems in a positive manner.

BUT most of all, have lots of fun!

