



# PUPPY

## SURVIVAL GUIDE



Crucial routines to implement early, and mistakes to avoid, to get your puppy off to a great start



### Simple, effective systems for...

- Potty Training
- Socialization
- Alone Training
- Crate Training
- Chewing and Biting
- Energy Management

...and more!!!



# PALS

Dog Training

# Puppy Survival Guide

A training guide for puppy owners, by



Congratulations!

Good news - **puppies are highly trainable!** Most serious behavior issues can be prevented or reversed during puppyhood at a minimal cost of time and effort. Below you'll find guidelines for preventing or reversing common problems that are especially hard to deal with if they persist into adulthood.

Truly getting your puppy off to a great start requires time and attention, but will save you the much greater hassle of trying to reverse behavior issues at an adolescent or adult age.

Disclaimer: Before you dive in, remember that it is crucial to approach your dog's training with respect for their health, safety, and emotional well-being. If you have any questions or concerns about implementing any of the below measures with your dog, contact a qualified veterinarian/behaviorist/positive-reinforcement trainer for help.

## Designate Mealtimes



Designating limited mealtimes has numerous benefits including stress reduction and helping you to predict your dog's potty schedule. It also helps to maintain your dog's interest in his food (so he doesn't get 'bored' of it) and protects the value of food to your dog - which is helpful to the training process overall.

**If your puppy doesn't finish his meals, pick up what he hasn't eaten within twenty minutes of putting it down.** Offer the next meal at the regular time without adding any amount left from the previous meal.

## Crate and Pen Training



Using a crate or pen to create a puppy-safe-zone gives you a place to put your puppy where:

- your puppy only has approved items to build chewing habits with and
- she is unlikely to eliminate (urinate or defecate).

It also sets your dog up to be comfortable with confinement, in case they need to be boarded or transported in some kind of enclosure in the future.

**Make the crate or pen a GREAT place to be as early as possible.** Feed meals in it. Deliver presents like treats, chews, and toys inside it. Hang out inside of it with your puppy if the space permits.

Once your dog is comfortable being closed in a crate or pen, put your dog in there (with something enjoyable to do) at least occasionally when you are home, so it isn't always associated with you leaving.

## Potty Training



Dogs don't know where they are "supposed" to go unless they are taught. They may see one area as a place to sleep or play, but an unused corner of the living room or the space underneath a table could make a fine potty area as far as your dog is concerned.

Pick a quick, convenient place for your dog to potty and give her plenty of chances to "go" there. Likely times for your dog to potty are: right after waking up, after running around, after drinking a lot of water, 15-30 minutes after a meal, and after being in a crate or pen for a while. With your dog in the right place, say "go potty" just once, then stand boringly (don't distract your dog by repeating "go potty, go potty" or otherwise interacting with her).

**Give your dog an extra yummy treat every time she goes potty in the right place. Keep some of these treats handy by the door or in a jar outside so you can feed it to your puppy quickly and consistently after she potties in the right place.** If possible, make other good things happen after she potties in the right place too, like playtime or a walk. Be careful not to end good things (like a walk) or start less desired things (like you leaving the house) right after your dog potties, or else she might try to hold her bladder and bowels to avoid those consequences (and end up in the wrong place when she can't hold it any more).

If you catch your dog pottying in the wrong place, interrupt her without scaring her and get her to where she is supposed to go. Reward if she finishes in the correct place.

**Never punish your dog for going in the wrong place,** whether you catch her in the act or after the fact - she will just avoid you and potty in the wrong place when you aren't around, which is a more difficult problem to solve!

If your puppy continually soils an unwanted area, be sure to clean it with a dog-stain specific odor eliminator, then once it is clean and dry spend time doing something else there with your puppy, e.g. play, train, practice handling (see Socialization section), etc.

## Alone Training



Dogs, especially puppies, are predisposed to prefer having our presence and attention. Separation anxiety is not an easy behavior problem for dogs or owners to live with, so teach your puppy early on that being alone is not something to worry about.

Occasionally expose your dog to stress-free forms of separation, like being in another room or leaving briefly while your dog is busy with something else. If your dog can tolerate these short amounts of separation, begin to make them gradually longer.

Practice calm entrances and exits. **When you enter the house, wait for your dog to calm down (for most dogs, this takes anywhere between 15 seconds and 3 minutes) before greeting him or giving him attention whatsoever.** Try to allow your dog to settle before you leave the house and do so nonchalantly.

**Continually give your dog positive experiences with you being inattentive or away.** Chews or interactive treat toys, once determined to be safe for your dog, can help give your dog sustained positive experiences while you are gone.

## Interactive Treat Toys



An interactive treat toy is a toy that you can fill with food, and makes your dog do some kind of work to get it out. They are a great tool to help with crate/pen training, alone training, chewing appropriate items training, and to add extra stimulation to your dog's day. **If your dog spends even a few minutes per day trying to chew, knock, roll, nudge, or paw treats out of an interactive treat toy, he is much less likely to practice undesirable, boredom-motivated behaviors.**

You can feed treats or your dog's normal food from interactive treat toys. Start with food that will be easy to get out. If your dog is successful getting the food, you can begin to make the food gradually harder to get (e.g. use larger pieces, seal with peanut butter, or pack more tightly) to make the fun last longer.

Different designs will teach your dog different skills and better satisfy your dog's curiosity. Like everything else your dog chews, ensure that your dog interacts with any treat toy safely before leaving him with one unsupervised.

## Socialization



Socialization is typically regarded as the most important task for a new puppy owner and for good reason - puppies have biologically programmed periods where they can more easily learn what kinds of things are good and safe. Once that window closes, a dog is much more likely to regard new types of things with suspicion and apprehension. **Socialization is all about giving your puppy positive experiences with all of the types of things that you'll want him to be comfortable with as an adult**, for example:

- **people** (including family and friends but also strangers, people of different sizes and ages, men and women, people with beards, people with various complexions, people with medical equipment, etc.)
- **dogs and other animals** (including other family animals, new dogs, dogs of varying sizes, breeds, and ages, etc.)
- **handling** (including ears, paws, face, tail, legs, hindquarters, mouth, being picked up, etc.)
- **environments** (including cars, confinement areas, veterinary offices, outdoor and indoor areas, different types of flooring, etc.)
- **sounds** (including knocking, doorbell, fireworks, thunderstorms, mail trucks, vacuum cleaners, motorcycles, falling objects, etc.)
- **long, large, and moving objects** (including umbrellas, brooms, bicycles, roller blades, cars, wheel chairs, canes, walkers, furniture that may need to be moved, carts, etc.)

One of the easiest ways to add positive experiences to new situations for your puppy is by feeding extra-yummy food (like real meat). Consider taking your puppy to clean, busy environments and feeding a piece of food every time something new, strange, or highly noticeable (in your puppy's opinion) happens. **If at any time your puppy seems stressed, shy, or uncomfortable (or if she won't take food that she normally loves) try to decrease the intensity of the triggering stimulus** (e.g. by moving further away from it, or decreasing it's speed or volume). Always allow your puppy to move further away to a comfortable distance if she wants to - forcing her into uncomfortable situations won't effectively socialize her, and may make her more sensitive to the trigger.

## Chewing (and Trading!)



**Manage your dog's environment so that she does not have access to things you don't want her to develop a chewing habit with.** For furniture or items that are hard to move back and forth each time you let your puppy into the room, you can use a taste deterrent like a bitter spray to make the object or area less inviting to chew. (Note that in rare cases, some dogs actually enjoy the taste of bitter sprays, so don't just spray it and assume it will work!)

**If your puppy does get a hold of something she isn't supposed to chew**, try not to chase her. Instead, **trade her for something more valuable that she is allowed to have**, like a treat or fun toy. **Show your puppy right from the beginning that when she trades with you, she gets a great deal** – this not only makes it easy to get back stolen items, but also helps to prevent resource aggression.

**Build a habit of chewing acceptable toys by making them fun and interesting.** To do this, introduce new toys with a play session, give her synthetic bones, etc. to chew that have scent or flavor built in, stuff interactive treat toys with yummy food, and give your puppy a variety of textures to chew (e.g. plush toy, rope, harder chew, crinkle toy, etc.). "Catch" your dog playing with appropriate toys and add to the fun by joining in or tossing it for your puppy to chase.

## Mouthing and Biting



Teaching your dog to use his mouth softly and to keep it off of people are two more important goals that should be taken in order.

**Set yourself up for success by handling your puppy at the right time.** When your puppy is excited he will want to put his mouth on something – so if you want to play excitedly, focus that play on a toy that he can put his mouth on. Pet and practice other handling when your dog is calm.

At first, allow and encourage your puppy to nibble on your hand softly. Hold your puppy's food or a treat in your closed hand and only release it when your puppy interacts with you gently (e.g. licking, sniffing, or waiting). Withhold or remove the food if your puppy tries "pushy" behaviors to get it from you, including biting with pressure.

Say "ouch!" every time your puppy bites down on you with force or otherwise plays too roughly with you. **Every time you say "ouch!" stop any petting, playing, treating, or even looking at your puppy and stand boringly.** Only go back to play, petting, etc. if your puppy has stopped the nuisance behavior and is waiting for you. If your puppy does not stop what he is doing, separate spaces immediately.

Once your puppy only uses his mouth very softly, you can begin to say "ouch!" (and become boring) if he mouths you at all.

## Energy Management



Managing your dog's physical and mental energy is one of the most important strategies for preventing bad habits from forming. There is a great amount of truth to the saying "**A tired dog is a good dog!**"

**Allow your puppy to burn excess physical energy by running around off leash regularly, and before she encounters exciting triggers** like seeing other dogs on walks, going on a socialization outing, or accepting visitors to the house. (Be sure to limit off-leash running to appropriate areas, and within your vet's safety recommendations).

Some puppies with high mental energy don't see the point in ever relaxing, so after your puppy has played with her toys a few times, she might decide that it could be fun to eat the drywall, chew the couch cushions, steal anything that can get you to chase her, etc. **Prevent problematic boredom behaviors by giving your dog regular opportunities for mental stimulation** (like puzzle toys, chewing projects, or positive training) **and building value into calm behaviors**, like simply laying around. You can increase calmness during down-times by simply dropping some treats below your dog's nose when you 'catch' her lying and relaxing all on her own. If she gets excited or stands up before you get the treat to her, simply withhold it.

### Happy Training!

We hope you will put the above guidelines to use with your puppy to get him off to a great start in life! Remember that your puppy's early routines and experiences play an especially important role in developing his behavior and personality for many years to come! **Cherish this special time with your puppy and remember that your time, effort, and care go a long way in building an incredible, life-long friendship with your pup!**



We're  
here to  
**Help!**

For more dog training resources, please visit [palsdogtraining.com](http://palsdogtraining.com). If you would like in-person help in the south Denver area, please give us a call at **720-285-9978** or email us at [contact@palsdogtraining.com](mailto:contact@palsdogtraining.com).