

A NEW PUPPY - THE BEGINNING OF A RELATIONSHIP

by Martin Deeley and Pat Trichter

The moment you pick up your new puppy you are beginning to form a relationship which will be the basis of your life together. ***The bedrock of that relationship is respect, an affection for each other and understanding leadership from you.*** Your pup may become your companion, friend and member of the family but it will always be a dog and although we may anthropomorphise with our pets we must always recognize that very important fact - **it is a dog.**

Your pup is ***learning and being trained every minute of the day*** even when you are not formally 'training'. Habits and behavior patterns are being formed all the time and these first months of ownership are the formative ones. ***Lessons taught now will last a lifetime.*** It is easy for pup to learn good habits if we think about what we are doing but so often we owners teach bad habits without even realizing.

For example - owners and visitors encourage a pup to jump up to be petted, and they think it is so cute. They rub, pat and pet its head vigorously, tease it with an old sock or special toy, and play tug of war. They grab and catch it as it is running away or even coming towards them. They often wake up the pup when it is not necessary so that they can enjoy snuggling and petting it. Would you do that with a young baby? If the young pup has an accident and urinates indoors (usually because an owner has not been watching closely enough or doing 'puppy management' correctly), often they shout at it, chase it down and take it outside telling it what a bad dog it has been in a very stern voice. They may even rub its nose in the urine to 'show it' what a bad pup it has been and 'teach it a lesson', thinking someone somewhere said that was the thing to do. As pup grows up and 'learns' from these experiences it knows people enjoy them jumping up, that hands grab when you don't want them to, that humans disturb and irritate you when you are not in the mood, and it learns that hands and people sometimes must be avoided or warned off. It also learns that it is not pleasant to urinate when people are around (even in the yard!) or if you do hide so they cannot see you doing it.

These are just a few examples of how a pup learns and is taught the wrong behavior without owners even realizing. Most owners want four basic things from their dogs. Firstly to be clean in the house, secondly to come every time they are called, thirdly to walk nicely on a leash and fourthly to have good house manners such as greet guests nicely and chill out when required.

For some reason dog training is considered something that every owner can do. The dog will learn as it grows or in many cases the owner claims it will grow out of the bad habits it learns. Not so. ***The dog will learn and keep a***

behavior that you develop. Some of its behavior will come from natural instincts and inherited behavior but there is no doubt that what the owner does during the first four weeks of ownership shapes and builds permanent behavior.

THERE ARE TWO PRIMARY RULES TO DOG TRAINING,

1. ***Do not ask or tell your pup to do something it does not understand or can evade***
2. ***Reward your dog for the correct behavior. Do not reward (even inadvertently) for the incorrect behavior.***

Putting the pup in a position where it can always do right and be rewarded is a skill of training and timing which with some people is natural and with others, has to be learned. Training should always be done in small stages. Do not think that because pup comes when it is only six feet away from you that it will come when it is at the end of the yard and certainly not if it is playing with another dog. You have to 'work' at getting pup to University level.

In the early days you and your puppy are getting to know each other, so make sure that it associates you with pleasurable times, moments of enjoyment and interest. ***Your pup like a baby will need lots of sleep time*** and what better way to do it where there is less likely chance of disturbance such as in a crate. Pup's attention span is short. So have it out of the crate for brief periods and then put it back in the crate for a nap - like a baby. The short periods out can be quality time where you can concentrate on pup and teach the right behavior. During these periods you can enjoy not only training but also watching pup and learning yourself what makes pup 'tick'. By observing your pup you will be able to know a lot more about how it is thinking and can anticipate its actions and reactions. You will find that getting to know your dog and its behavior is a fascinating hobby in itself.

Make sure that your children and any grandchildren realize that pup ***is not*** a new toy and that they have to treat him correctly. Let them know what they can and cannot do with the pup. You cannot be around all the time, therefore it is a good idea to spend a little time educating and training your family to ensure that pup is handled correctly and consistently and learn good habits.

These early days are important and will help create a lasting relationship. If they are traumatic for you as well as the pup, you may never create the relationship which is so essential between a dog and its owner. The important thing is that you and the whole of your family are consistent. So

think through what you are going to do in the early days, ***it all starts the moment you pick pup up and builds from there.***

And remember your **veterinarian** and **Florida School for Dogs** are always there as your **first source of professional advice**

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