

The Adjustment Period

As soon as a dog reaches 7 or 8 weeks of age, you want it to go out and experience the outside world. Pet owners have a tendency to protect the puppy and not take it out

. There is a fine line! Use common sense. Make sure if you are taking puppy out s/he had had at least 2 vaccines. Look for a puppy socialization class.

Socialize, then desensitize

If a dog spends its early life in an environment with older dogs, it will be well acquainted with dogs, but not properly exposed to people. A well-rounded puppy has to get out of the house and be around people and strange sights and sounds. A puppy must be desensitized to the world. This desensitization is often improperly referred to as socialization. You can't socialize a pup to a garbage truck or jackhammer. Socialization refers to the interaction with people, dogs and other animals.

We must prepare our dogs for the 21st century. They not only must relate well to people, but also must be able to adjust to new experiences. I frequently advise people to send their dog to a daycare or boarding kennel from time to time, even if it's not necessary. Everyone swears they'll never board their dog until the one day they have no choice. At some point in its life, a dog will wind up in a kennel or veterinary hospital. This can be traumatic to a dog if it hasn't been exposed to this situation early on.

With the evolution of dog parks and daycare facilities, it is easy to do. It is just as important to socialize your pup, as it is your children. You will be grateful for it later.

BUILDING THE PERFECT DOG

Dogs, like the rest of the world, are continually changing. It's the breeder's responsibility to breed the dog, but the dog's owner and trainer are responsible for its ultimate development. The wise owner will constantly monitor the dog's progress and behavior. Don't make the excuses for improper behavior. Instead, get on top of it and correct it. If you think your dog "will grow out of it", you are only kidding yourself.

SINK OR SWIM TIME

Most people who have dogs with shyness problem want to know how to solve it. The solution is to totally immerse your dog in the outside world-perhaps in the bustle of a big city. Cross your fingers and don't look back. After three months of training in every type of environment, your dog won't be fully ready, but you will see a marked change in its temperament. Figure on another three months for significant improvement. Total immersion Sink or Swim.

The critical period for socialization of a puppy is prior to the 4th month of age. Here is a brief recap of the four stages in a dog's life, as outlined in two excellent books on the

subject, "New Knowledge in Dog Behavior" by Clarence Pfaffenberger and "Genetics and the Social Behavior of the Dog", by John L Fuller:

The first 2 to 3 weeks of a dog's life are a vegetative state.

From 3 to 8 weeks is for socialization with other puppies and dogs.

From 8 weeks to 4 months is for socialization with people.

From 4 months onward, the dog's temperament is fixed.

The last item is not 100 per cent true. You do, however, have to start your work early. Expand your dog's worldview at a young age. The truth is no one will ever have the time to desensitize a dog to every sight and sound, but giving it a shot is worth the effort.

I AM YOUR PUPPY

I am your Puppy, and I will love you until the end of the Earth, but

please know a few things about me.

I am a Puppy, this means that my intelligence and capacity for learning are the same as an 8-month-old child. I am a Puppy; I will chew EVERYTHING I can get my teeth on. This is how I explore and learn about the world. Even HUMAN children put things in their mouths. It's up to you to guide me to what is mine to chew and what is not.

I am a Puppy; I cannot hold my bladder for longer than 1 - 2 hours. I

cannot "feel" that I need to poop until it is actually beginning to

come out. I cannot vocalize nor tell you that I need to go, and I cannot

have "bladder and bowel control" until 6 - 9 months. Do not punish me if you have not let me out for 3 hours and I tinkle. It is your fault. As a Puppy, it is wise to remember that I NEED to go potty after: Eating, Sleeping, playing, Drinking and around every 2 - 3

hours in addition. If you want me to sleep through the night, then do not give me water after 7 or 8 p.m. A crate will help me learn to housebreak easier, and will avoid you being mad at me. I am a Puppy, accidents WILL happen, please be patient with me! In time I will learn.

I am a Puppy, I like to play. I will run around, and chase imaginary

monsters, and chase your feet and your toes and 'attack' you, and chase fuzz balls, other pets, and small kids. It is play; it's what I do. Do not be mad at me or expect me to be sedate, mellow and sleep all day. If my high energy level is too much for you, maybe you could consider an older rescue from a shelter or Rescue group. My play is beneficial, use your wisdom to guide me in my play with appropriate toys, and activities like chasing a rolling ball, or gentle tug games, or plenty of chew toys for me. If I nip you too hard, talk to me in "dog talk", by giving a loud YELP, I will usually get the message, as this is how dogs communicate with one another. If I get too rough, simply ignore me for a few moments, or put me in my crate with an appropriate chew toy.

I am a Puppy; hopefully you would not yell, hit, strike, kick or beat a 6-month-old human infant, so please do not do the same to me. I am delicate, and also very impressionable. If you treat me harshly now, I will grow up learning to fear being hit, spanked, kicked or beat.

Instead, please guide me with encouragement and wisdom. For instance, if I am chewing something wrong, say, "No chew!" and hand me a toy I CAN chew. Better yet, pick up ANYTHING that you do not want me to get into. I can't tell the difference between your old sock and your new sock, or an old sneaker and your \$200 Nikes.

I Am Your Puppy

I am a Puppy, and I am a creature with feelings and drives much like your own, but yet also very different. Although I am NOT a human in a dog suit, neither am I an unfeeling robot who can instantly obey your every whim. I truly DO want to please you, and be a part of your family, and your life. You got me (I hope) because you want a loving partner and companion, so do not relegate me to the backyard when I get bigger, do not judge me harshly but instead mold me with gentleness and guidelines and training into the kind of family member you want me to be.

I am a Puppy and I am not perfect, and I know you are not perfect either. I love you anyway. So please, learn all you can about training, and puppy behaviors and caring for me from your Veterinarian, books on dog care and even researching on the computer! Learn about my particular breed and it's "characteristics", it will give you understanding and insight into WHY I do all the things I do. Please teach me with love, patience, the right way to behave and socialize me with training in a puppy class or obedience class, we will BOTH

have a lot of fun together.

I am a Puppy and I want more than anything to love you, to be with you, and to please you. Won't you please take time to understand how I work? We are the same you and I, in that we both feel hunger, pain, thirst, discomfort, fear, but yet we are also very different and must work to understand one another's language, body signals, wants and

needs. Some day I will be a handsome dog, hopefully one you can be proud of and one that you will love as much as I love you.

Love,

Your Puppy