

Establishing a relationship and communicating with your pet

Household lessons for puppies

How to establish a healthy relationship with your puppy

Positive and consistent training, both in action and in attitude, are needed so that your puppy knows what is expected of it at any time. If the expectations are unclear for the puppy this may lead to a variety of problems, including unruly behavior, disobedience, and even aggression. Behaviors such as nipping, excessive mouthing, mounting, and jumping up should be discouraged by teaching appropriate or acceptable behaviors. These exercises will help you manage your pet, increase its dependability in responding to cues, provide structure and consistency, and help reduce impulsive behavior.

A. Be fair

1. Be consistent with rewards and interruptions. Set rules that everyone observes. This is the only way that the puppy can learn what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.
2. Don't take good behaviors for granted. Actively look for desirable behaviors and reward them with treats and praise.
3. Be generous with praise!
4. Never hit the puppy or use any type of physical punishment.

B. Make the puppy aware of your importance in its life

1. Walk your dog so your bond is stronger.
2. Provide a consistent schedule of social play and feeding so that life for the puppy is predictable.
3. Ask the puppy to say please by having it sit before all interactions (dinner, treats, toys, being picked up, walks, petting, play). Although sometimes referred to as "nothing in life is free" or "no free lunch," this rule structure is intended to provide clear and consistent communication for your dog so that it learns what behaviors will get rewards and what will not. In other words, if you are predictable and consistent, the pet will quickly learn what is desirable and anxiety and conflict will be reduced.
4. Once the pet learns to stay, ask it to stay for a second or two before following you around the home, in and out of rooms, and in and out of the home.

C. Teach desirable and prevent undesirable behaviors

1. Ignore attention soliciting and provide another outlet for your puppy. Nudging, whining, barking, mouthing, pushing, and leaning for attention should be ignored. Pull your hands in, lean away from the pet, and look away. Get up and walk away if the pet is exceptionally pushy and difficult to ignore. Once the behavior stops for 5–10 seconds, the pet can be given attention for responding to a cue such as sit.
2. Always respond to the puppy when the behavior is desirable (e.g., notifying you it has to go outdoors to eliminate).
3. Teach the puppy how to play appropriately with you.
4. Teach the puppy when it should bark and for how long (e.g., notify that someone is at the door). Then train and reward quiet behavior.

D. Be consistent

1. Train your puppy to respond to cues and do not expect it to be immediately responsive – your puppy is not a robot! If the puppy ignores you, wait a minute and ask again, quietly. If the puppy still does not respond, perhaps the puppy really does not know what is expected. Go back to basic reward training to better train the behaviors. Quiet and calm responses will encourage what is desirable, while angry or frustrated can lead to avoidance or uncertainty (conflict)