

Frequently Asked Questions About Puppies and Puppy Training

In general, puppies need approximately 18 – 20 hours of sleep each day.

Many puppy issues can be remedied with the puppy getting enough sleep, being safely confined or supervised at all times, and a schedule.

The first life skills I teach puppies: where to potty, hanging out in the crate is good and wonderful, and that I am always safe. The first behaviors I teach puppies: touch, mat, and chin rest.

Potty Training

Schedule, schedule, schedule!* The younger the puppy, the more often you need to take puppy outside. Typically at first, puppy needs to go outside every hour puppy is awake and out of the crate and once or twice overnight. As puppy matures and starts to understand, you can space out the time to every 90 minutes, then every 2 hours, etc. Take puppy outside on a leash, wait 5 – 10 minutes. If puppy potties, praise, take the leash off the puppy (only if you have a secure area!) and play. If puppy does not potty, go back inside, put puppy in a crate or secure area and try again in 20 – 30 minutes. Do not scold for potty mistakes; just take puppy outside and clean thoroughly. Remember – it can take some puppies until they are physically mature to be fully potty trained. Don't wait for puppy to "tell" you s/he needs to go potty – this is a behavior some puppies develop and some puppies don't. (My personal preferred goal is for my dogs to understand they potty outside and to potty on cue.)

***Feeding Schedule**

Feeding puppies on a schedule makes many other things go better. What goes in on a schedule is more likely to come out on a schedule. It helps with your training if puppy can't just leave you to run off and eat out of the bowl. It allows us a lot of flexibility with using their regular food to train as well as mental stimulation puzzles and toys. We can adjust their food more easily and effectively as they grow for optimal weight and health. And most importantly, we can gauge how puppy is feeling by what they are eating (or not!). (Our schedule at my house is a 12-hour feeding schedule – the dogs eat at approximately 9:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. When there is a puppy in the house, we add a late afternoon full meal for puppy and feed a smaller meal/snack at 9:00 p.m. until the puppy no longer needs to eat three times/day.)

Crate Training

Scheduling time in the crate when you're at home (NOT overnight) goes a long way in teaching puppy that the crate is good and wonderful. No matter why/when you put puppy in the crate, always give them a treat, something safe to chew on, and a source of water (all in the crate). Some puppies like a bed, some don't, and some chew on it. It's okay for a puppy to be in a crate with no bedding – some puppies prefer it that way! If puppy is having trouble with the crate try feeding meals in the crate, playing

crate games (a super easy one is to toss a treat in the crate, when puppy comes out, toss another treat back into the crate – going into the crate/hanging out in the crate means treats), and/or having special chewies puppy only gets in the crate (at my house I give them bones, bully sticks, stuffed Kongs, Toppls, tracheas, etc. only in their crates. Make sure to crate at varied, random times during the day even when you are home, not just overnight or when you're leaving; puppies are smart and they will figure out this arrangement quickly!

Puppy Biting

Puppy biting is puppy trying to tell you something – most likely puppy is tired, frustrated, or needs space. Teething puppies will tend to chew on things that help their teeth and gums feel better – your hand does not meet that need! (So please don't excuse puppy biting thinking they are teething.) This is a behavior we need to extinguish because it is not appropriate or productive. By everyone involved with the puppy consistently following a 3-strike rule, puppy biting should go away quickly. Strike 1 – redirect to an appropriate toy or chewy. Stash these toys/chewies all over the area(s) where puppy hangs out. Try to grab something different than what is readily available on the floor. If puppy doesn't want the toy or chewy and continues to try to bite the human, that's Strike 2 – puppy goes into a safe, secure area (crate, ex-pen, gated area, etc. – a normal place for puppy to hang out) for a human time-out. **THIS IS NOT PUNISHMENT.** This is time-out for the human! So be neutral, take puppy to the safe, secure area and give puppy a treat, something to chew on, and water. Once puppy is calm, go ahead and let puppy back out with you (typically long enough for you to get a drink of water, check an email/text, grab a quick snack). If puppy is still intent on biting, Strike 3 – puppy goes to the crate for naptime. Again, with the treat, chewy, and water, but this time do what you normally do for puppy nap/bedtime (maybe you cover the crate, play music, run a fan, etc.). If there are children in the home, teach the children the following when the puppy starts biting them: stand up, fold your arms across your chest or put them in your pockets, and call for an adult (who will then follow the 3-strike protocol).

Freedom is Earned

A 10-week-old puppy has been on this planet for 70 days. Compare that to a small child. Would you leave that child alone when you leave the room (or the house) to experiment with electrical cords, random foods that have been left out, blind cords, potty wherever they want, etc.? You wouldn't – because small children don't understand how the world works, don't know the difference between safe and dangerous, and don't know how to make good choices. Neither do puppies. Until puppy is mentally mature and can handle being left alone (typically around 1 – 2 years old depending on the dog/breed), make sure puppy is safe at all times. For very young puppies (approximately 8 – 20 weeks), they are either in a safe, confined space (crate, pen, gated room) or where you can actually put your hands on them quickly to prevent them making a poor choice. Getting puppy used to being tethered offers a different kind of freedom – they can be with the family in many different environments

(tethering is using a regular flat collar or harness and a leash and attaching the leash to an adult human or a stable piece of furniture near the human(s)). For teenaged dogs (approximately 20 weeks – 1 year), still keep them confined to a safe place when you are not home, but increase their freedom in the house/yard when you are present to include other safe areas of the house and yard. Beyond 1 year is a judgement call based on how puppy is mentally maturing and handling the increased freedom. I personally always crate my dogs when I am not home. They love their crates (see crate training) and I don't worry about them getting hurt or making poor choices when I'm gone.

Familiarization

Our puppy classes are very different from other puppy classes in that we don't do off-leash puppy playtime (what many people refer to as "socialization"). Several reasons why – puppies already know how to be puppies! What they need to know is how to live in our human world. And that is different for each and every family. For example, I don't have young children in my family at this time (my children are grown, but no grandchildren yet), and I have no reason to take my puppies to kids' sports events. So that is not an item on my familiarization list. However, we like to travel with our dogs, so we focus on different things related to that (riding nicely in the car, staying in hotels, pottying in different places, etc.).

In class, we also want to focus on puppies learning most effectively as well as learning how to respond to their humans with other puppies and humans nearby. If puppies get to play in the classroom, they want to ALWAYS play in the classroom (because humans are confusing, but other puppies make sense) and we would rather spend the time in class helping you and your puppy learn together. By working on great puppy foundations, including attention and response to their humans, we can help you help your puppy be the best possible dog for you and your family!

