



Puppy Love and all that (important) stuff

Training your puppy can begin from the moment you bring it home but this doesn't need to be formal training. You can teach an old dog new tricks but you can't turn back the time when it comes to socialisation. 'Obedience' is not what your puppy needs in the first 6-8 weeks at home with you. Early training needs to concentrate on manners and social skills. This includes how to behave appropriately around adults, children, dogs and other animals. Training that you do should be based around building confidence and trust in you.

Socialisation is critical for any dog. In fact it is so important that (quality) puppy classes and early puppy training should be compulsory. A dog that is properly & safely socialised early is less likely to develop behaviour problems such as alarm barking and inappropriate aggression (towards, people, other animals and other dogs). And if that dog does develop behaviour problems at a later stage treatment is far more successful and results are generally achieved much faster.

I say properly socialised because just having another dog (or a big family) at home is not enough, and can often create other problems (such as a lack of independence to name just one). And some puppy training classes are not well run and so real benefits may not be obtained. Puppy classes need to be run by qualified staff & in a safe and controlled environment. Puppy classes should be small and closely monitored for safety of the puppy. Large classes can overwhelm & cause great fear in some puppies & the more confident puppies can learn bad habits in play & social skills if not closely monitored.

Puppy classes should start around 10 weeks of age, but allow your puppy 10 days to settle in before attending classes (a natural isolation period). Do not wait until 16 weeks; the critical period of socialisation is well and truly over by then and your dog is less likely to reach their full potential. The ideal period for socialisation is between 5 & 12 weeks (and yes the breeder plays a part in this as well!)

Priority to teach a puppy

- Teach your pup to like people! Especially children and men! The first 12 weeks of your puppy's life is critical for socializing with humans! Consider having people over for safe & controlled parties to meet your pup. Especially family & good friends. Take your pup out to safe areas (not dog parks or dog areas) and take treats for lots of hand feeding. If you have another dog at home its vital to take your new pup out separately for independence (otherwise the pup's confidence relies on the other dog's presence).
- Teach your pup it's ok to be home alone: start with short, frequent sessions. Even 5 minutes here and there is a good start. Ideally your pup should have a variety of toys, chew toys (kongtoys with food inside etc).
- Bite inhibition; do this via puppy classes mainly but also teach bite inhibition with biting and mouthing.



- Crate train; speak with your trainer about safe and effective crate training. Very useful for car travel but useful for future travel and outings. At home you can secure a kong in the crate (with the door open) so the pup chooses to be in the crate and gets enjoyment for being in there.
- Toilet training; the more accidents that occur the greater the problem to solve. 1 toileting accident = 10 more. 2 accidents = 100 more! Especially on carpet..... Upon waking, after play & after feeding move outside with puppy to the ideal area. Within 30 seconds to 2 minutes of waking up; trot outside! Keep the puppy moving until they get to grass etc then stop and allow them to sniff around. As soon as toileting occurs then praise (& can add the toilet word quietly as they are toileting). If you are having toileting problems with your pup then restrict access especially when unsupervised. It takes a bit more time but well worth the effort. Results can be seen very quickly with the right training. Results slow right down when the pup has 'accidents' inside. Avoid using puppy mats indoors. If you are having problems speak with your trainer.
- Condition your puppy to be relaxed in new environments or with different animals, objects & surfaces. Take along your puppy's breakfast or dinner, & with your puppy in your arms or at your feet (depending on the age of your pup and location) Reward your pup for calm behaviour in safe proximity to cars, trucks, motorbikes, bicycles, skateboards & horsesect.
- The first 16 weeks of a puppy's life is critical. Use this time wisely and get expert advice. If it's a busy time for you prioritize your puppy as it can save you time and money for the rest of your dog's life, but more importantly will improve the quality of your puppy's life, for life.

Training and socialisation needs to be ongoing as the dog develops. Don't just stop at puppy classes. Keep the socialisation experiences safe and positive. Build trust in your training. If you have an older dog or puppy you can socialise them but it needs to be done with more care. If your dog is showing anti-social behaviour seek help before just enrolling in dog training classes.

Remember to manage any behaviour or training issues as best as possible to prevent them from getting worse, and to set your dog up for success; put your puppy in environments that help build their confidence and at the same time have some level of control so they respond to you when its needed.