

# Dog: Handling Your Puppy



## Benefit

Teaching your puppy to enjoy being handled is essential to a happy, safe, and convenient life with her now and as she grows. Think of all the situations where you need her to relax and accept handling: Veterinarian exams, grooming, removing a tick or burr, brushing her teeth, cleaning her ears, clipping her nails, lifting her into a car or travel crate, etc.

Fortunately, puppyhood is the best time to do this and the process is both easy and fun.

## What You Need

- High-value treats like chicken or cheese.
- A clicker, if you use one. Otherwise, say “yes!” to mark the behavior.
- A quiet area without distractions for practicing.

## How to Train It

Go through the 5 steps below to cover different areas of your puppy's body. For each step, use this approach:

Level 1: Start by touching lightly in a place your dog likes to be touched.

Level 2: Then hold on longer (but not too long too quickly!).

Level 3: Then apply a bit more pressure (but not to the point of discomfort).

Level 4: Then finally, apply restraint, e.g. hold your puppy as you would for lifting her.

Only move on to the next level when your puppy is completely comfortable with the current one. Remember the letters TCT: Touch gently. Click. Treat.

**Step 1.** TCT all over your puppy's body. Look for any trouble spots where she seems uncomfortable or upset.

**Step 2.** TCT her ears outside and gently inside.

**Step 3.** TCT her muzzle, then inside her mouth, gently rubbing teeth and gums.

**Step 4.** TCT her paws. When your puppy is enjoying levels 1–4, probe around and between her toes as well.

**Step 5.** Get family and friends in on the fun, and have them TCT your puppy. Teach them to go slowly and to stay at your puppy's comfort level.

## Tips

- If, in step 1, you identify trouble spots, be sure to deal with these carefully. First warm up your puppy with lots of TCT in spots she enjoys, and then work on trouble spots in short intervals. Proceed slower with these areas than you otherwise would.
- Try not to stop when your puppy struggles a little bit. If your puppy however seems really scared or bothered you should stop and start by doing less and rewarding more often.