



# **Puppy Adoption Handbook**



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# CONGRATULATIONS!

Dear Puppy Adopter,

Congratulations on your new puppy! Adopting a puppy is a great joy—and a big responsibility.

You may or may not have had a puppy before. If you did, you probably mostly remember how adorable your dog was as a puppy. Human memory often works that way. The challenges of mouthing and house-training fade away and what remains is the recollection of floppy ears and silly antics. We tend to forget just how much time and effort it takes to look after a puppy.

Think of it this way: a puppy reaches the same point of maturity in one swift year that it takes a human baby 13 years to get to.

For the first year or two, raising your puppy will mean a great deal of work for you and your family. During this period, you lay the foundation for a lifetime of good manners, sociability, and behavioral and physical health. You must socialize, exercise, train, and care for your new puppy. What's more, you must start right away.

The first four months of your puppy's life is known as his "critical socialization window," a time when experiences have the most dramatic effect on your puppy's development. Here, his brain is a sponge—the equivalent of a human child's first five years—and you want to fill it with as many positive experiences as possible. Introduce your puppy to all manner of people, animals, sounds, textures, and situations. Tired yet?

Fortunately, there's help to be had. We offer puppy classes, socialization guides, and training handouts, as well as help with any questions you might have. First, take some time to review this handbook; it will get you off to a good start.

Enjoy your puppy adventure!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JAS', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jennifer Scarlett, DVM  
*Chief Executive Officer*

# SET UP FOR SUCCESS

## Meeting Your Puppy's Needs

Adding any new family member, especially the four-legged kind, requires a certain amount of equipment and some adjustments to your home for everyone's safety and comfort.

Here's a list of must-have supplies for a great start with your new puppy:

### Basics

- ☐ Food
- ☐ Water bowl
- ☐ Bed, blanket, towels
- ☐ Crate and/or baby gate
- ☐ Long leash, short leash
- ☐ Flat collar w/ID tags (to be worn at all times)
- ☐ Head halter or anti-pull harness (for walking)
- ☐ Poop bags, potty pads

### Puppy Care

- ☐ Canine toothbrush, toothpaste
- ☐ Nail clippers
- ☐ Dog shampoo
- ☐ Grooming brush
- ☐ Flea control treatment\*

### Training and Mental Stimulation

- ☐ Food dispensing toys (puppy KONG toys, treat balls)
- ☐ Puzzle toys (hide-and-seek, puppy-sized treat wheels)
- ☐ Training treats (soft treats, freeze-dried meats)\*
- ☐ Plush toys (with or without squeakers), rope toys
- ☐ Edible chews (rawhide, bully sticks, pig ears)\*
- ☐ Puppy carrying pouch (for socialization outings)

\*Consult your vet for recommendations

## Setting Up Your Home

Tempting as it is to give your new puppy the run of the house right away, that's too much freedom too soon. Instead, create a safe, confined playpen—a puppy-proofed area—to allow your puppy to make a gradual transition to his new home. The playpen is where your puppy will stay when you can't supervise, i.e., whenever you can't keep your eyes on him the entire time. This prevents chewing accidents, potty accidents, and teaches your puppy to settle down while alone. Supervision is also crucial when giving your puppy a toy or chew. Keep an eye on him until you know what he does with such treats. Dissect them? Digest them?

Don't worry that using a playpen is too strict or in any way mean. Dogs are den animals who enjoy close quarters.

**Where?** The ideal playpen area is easy to clean and easy to close off with a door or baby gate. It should be mostly free of furniture. The best places for a playpen are the kitchen, laundry room, bathroom, or an empty spare room.

**What?** Furnish the playpen with a crate with soft bedding, a water bowl, a potty pad, and several toys, including a chew toy or a KONG stuffed with part of your puppy's meal.

## **For a Healthy and Well-Behaved Puppy**

### **Vaccinations**

The first step in safeguarding your puppy's physical and behavioral health is to vaccinate him. Your puppy needs a series of DA2PP/DHLPP/DHP vaccines: one every three to four weeks starting when he's six to eight weeks of age.

Until your puppy has had two vaccines, don't put him on the ground or floor where other dogs may have been. Carry him on all socialization and bathroom outings and only put him down in safe areas. After two vaccines, he can enroll in puppy classes, puppy socials, and puppy daycare. Before then, socialize him at home and on outings where you carry him.

### **Training and Exercise**

Training and exercise are both essential to your puppy's development, manners, and health—as well as to your sanity. Tired puppies bark less, chew less, sleep more, and rest easier if left alone.

Here are some options for giving your puppy good, age-appropriate workouts:

- Carry your puppy on outings to meet new people, animals, and environments.
- Burn off mental and physical energy with puppy training classes.
- Take your puppy to puppy socials with other vaccinated pups.
- Host puppy socialization parties at home with fully vaccinated dogs.
- Have frequent puppy training and play sessions at home.
- Enroll your puppy in a puppy daycare to play with other vaccinated pups.
- After your puppy is fully vaccinated: hire a dog walker or enroll in a doggy daycare.

### **Mind Workouts**

Puppies are a lot like children. Unless you give them something fun to do, they will make their own fun. To puppies, that often means chewing on the furniture or attacking your shoelaces. Instead, give your puppy acceptable outlets for his playful energy by providing toys, puzzles, and other brainteasers.

Here are some options\* for exercising your puppy's mind:

- Brainteaser toys (Linkables® from Premier®, Seek-A-Treat, Canine Genius™ toys)
- Plush toys (hide-and-seek toys, squeaky toys)
- Edible chews (rawhide, bully stick, pig's ear)
- Obedience training sessions/puppy training classes
- Stuffed/frozen/hidden puppy KONG toys

\*Always choose size- and age-appropriate chews and toys. Check with your vet before introducing your puppy to a new product.

## ARRIVING HOME WITH YOUR PUPPY

### The First Hour

Tempting as it may be, it's important not to give your puppy the run of the house—or make him the center of attention all the time. Instead, prepare him for a normal routine from the beginning by introducing him to your home this way:

Step 1. When you arrive home, take your puppy out for a walk or bathroom break. Pick a spot not used by any other dogs (until your puppy is fully vaccinated).

Step 2. Introduce him on leash to his new home, including the puppy playpen.

Step 3. Give him a chew bone or stuffed KONG and leave him alone in the puppy playpen for about five minutes.

**Tip:** If your puppy begins to howl, whine, or bark, wait for him to be quiet for at least 10 seconds before you respond. Otherwise, he learns that whining summons you, and he'll cry for longer periods of time.

### The First Day

Throughout the day, set up the routine you plan to follow.

- Leave your puppy in his crate or playpen while you spend time in another part of the house.
- Vary the length of your absences, from 30 seconds to 20 minutes, and repeat them throughout the day. Put your puppy in his crate or playpen while you pay bills, talk on the phone, eat dinner, etc.
- Have a 10-minute play or cuddle session with your puppy, and then take him out to go to the bathroom (in a safe spot). Return him to his playpen afterwards.

### The Bedtime Routine

After a trip to your puppy's bathroom area, put your puppy in his crate or playpen with a chew toy. He may have trouble settling in at first, but should eventually relax and go to sleep. This can be especially difficult during the puppy's first night in the home. If he has previously slept with littermates, roommates, or his mother, the transition to sleeping alone can be even more difficult. It is completely normal puppy behavior to whine and cry before bedtime, and he will eventually outgrow it.

**Tip:** Harsh as it seems, don't respond if your puppy cries or barks. If he gets attention for barking, he'll keep it up longer next time.

## HOUSE-TRAINING AND CRATE TRAINING

To house-train your puppy, you need a puppy playpen and/or a crate. A crate is a terrific investment for a number of reasons.

A crate can help you with:

**House-training.** Teaches your puppy to hold it when he has to go to the bathroom.

**Chew training.** Stops your puppy from chewing anything except legitimate chew toys.

**Settling.** Encourages your puppy to settle down when he's alone.

**Kenneling.** Your puppy may need to stay in a crate during travel or a hospital visit.

If you decide to purchase a crate, get one large enough for your puppy to stand up, lie down, and turn around in—but no larger. Otherwise, he might be tempted to use one end as a bathroom and the other as a bed.

### Crate Training Your Puppy

Before you start using the crate, give your puppy a chance to get used to it. Don't just put him in there and hope he adjusts; that would be traumatic. The crate needs to be a comfy, safe place your puppy loves to spend time in. Here's how to get him used to it:

#### THE FIRST DAY

1. Throw tiny, yummy treats into the crate. When your puppy goes in to get them, praise him.
2. When your puppy is happily venturing into the crate, begin practicing closing the door for a few seconds while treating him through the opening. Then let him right back out. Repeat the exercise many times, building up to 10 seconds.

#### THE NEXT FEW DAYS

1. Repeat exercise 2 from above. Then stuff a puppy KONG with extra-special goodies. Put the KONG in the crate and close the door behind your puppy as he goes to eat it. Go about your business in the house, then let your puppy back out after five minutes. Do this without any fanfare whatsoever.
2. Repeat the exercise several times in the next couple of days using a yummy chew toy. Vary the absences from one to 20 minutes. Ignore your puppy if he whines or barks; always wait to let him out until he has been quiet for 10 seconds.

#### LEAVING THE HOUSE

1. Leave your puppy in the crate with something delicious in his KONG, then leave the house for brief errands such as collecting your mail or watering the garden.
2. Over the next few sessions, gradually extend the duration of your absences. Go from one minute to five minutes to 10, 15, or 30 minutes, depending on your puppy's age (see below). Don't just build your absences upward, though; throw in some shorter ones for variety.

#### A time guide to crating puppies:

8–10 weeks	up to one hour
11–12 weeks	up to two hours
13–16 weeks	up to three hours
Over four months	up to four hours

**Tip:** Never leave dogs at any age in the crate longer than three to four hours at a time, except for bedtime.

For more information, see *Crate Training Puppy* in the Behavior & Training section of our website.

## **House-Training Your Puppy**

Puppies become house-trained at different speeds, depending on size and anatomy, and on how diligently you stick to the house-training routine. Allow anywhere from a few weeks to several months for your puppy to be fully house-trained.

### **House-Training Schedule**

Take your puppy out:

- Very first thing in the morning
- After he eats
- After he wakes from a nap
- After he is done with a play session
- Last thing before bed

Young puppies (eight to 10 weeks old) usually need to go out at least once an hour.

### **Four Golden Rules of House-Training**

1. Until your puppy is perfectly house-trained, never leave him alone unless he's in the puppy playpen or crate. Supervise your puppy at all times in the house.
2. Take your puppy out on leash often, starting with half-hour intervals. Go to the same spot (or at least the same kind of surface) every time. Until your puppy is fully vaccinated, be sure to pick a spot other dogs haven't used!
3. If you see your puppy sniffing and circling in the house, take him out immediately.
4. Praise and reward with a treat when he goes outdoors. Keep this up for at least the first few weeks, then you can switch to just praising.

### **If Your Puppy Has an Accident**

**If you catch your puppy making a mistake**, interrupt your puppy without being too harsh ("Ah! Ah! Let's go outside!"), then hustle him to his bathroom area to finish. If he finishes there, praise and reward this. The important thing is to interrupt, not punish. Punishing your puppy for accidents can make him afraid to go in front of you, so he hides his mistakes by going behind couches or beds or in closets. He would also become less likely to go in front of you outside, making it impossible to praise him and make him understand what you want him to do.

**If your puppy makes a mistake while you are not there**, don't scold or punish him. He won't make the connection with his accident—smacking him or rubbing his face in his own mess will just make him afraid of you. Only if you catch him in the act should you interrupt your puppy.

**Tip:** Clean all accidents thoroughly with an enzymatic cleanser (e.g. Nature's Miracle®, Anti-Icky-Poo®, Petastic®).



**Going Forward**

After two or three weeks with no accidents, give your puppy access to one extra room of the house and supervise closely. If your puppy is successful, add another room every two or three weeks.

Starting at three months of age, gradually extend the duration between bathroom break outings—add one half hour every week or two. If your puppy starts having accidents, back off and do more frequent outings for a couple of weeks, then try again.

For more information, see *House-Training a Puppy* in the Behavior & Training section of our website.

If you are having trouble, call our adoption line at 415.522.3500 or visit [www.sfspca.org](http://www.sfspca.org) for our dog trainer referral list.

## ALONE-TIME TRAINING

### Being Alone Doesn't Come Naturally

You'll probably want to spend every moment with your puppy when you first bring him home. However, that can cause you problems if you ever hope to leave your puppy home alone. Dogs are intensely social, and your puppy has spent his life so far in the constant company of his mom and littermates. Being alone doesn't come naturally. Allow your puppy to adjust gradually by training alone time while you are actually home.

- Begin with short sessions where your puppy is in his crate or playpen and has a stuffed KONG to keep him busy.
- Busy yourself around the house. Build from a few minutes to half an hour.
- Progress to mini-errands outside the house, such as retrieving the mail.

General alone-time guidelines:

- Walk or play with your puppy before leaving him alone. Make sure he has gone outside for a bathroom break just before you leave.
- Arrange for your puppy to get bathroom breaks every half hour to begin with, then once an hour until he's accident-free.
- Provide plenty of puppy-friendly toys, puzzles, brainteasers, and other alone-time activities.
- Feed your puppy all his meals using food-dispensing toys like KONG.

### KONG-Stuffing Pointers

Using a stuffed KONG is both a great way to occupy your puppy during alone time and a terrific mind workout for him. Start at kindergarten level with an easy KONG stuffing, and then gradually make the task harder as your puppy gets older and more adept at problem solving.

**For easy KONG stuffing**, use small, easy-to-fall-out pieces and pack them loosely.

**For more difficult KONG stuffing**, use some big pieces that take concerted effort to get in (and thus will be difficult to extract) and pack the pieces tighter.

- Use peanut butter, cream cheese, canned food, or baby food to hold the smaller bits in.
- Stuff meat, mashed potatoes etc., in the KONG and freeze it. Alternatively, plug the small hole with peanut butter and fill the cavity with broth, then freeze this to make a "Kongsicle." (This can be messy; best to give it to your puppy outside.)
- Stuff cheese cubes in the KONG, then briefly microwave it to coat the insides.

**Tip:** Clean your KONG toys regularly with a bottlebrush or in the dishwasher.

### A KONG-Stuffing Recipe

**Layer 1:** Roasted unsalted cashews, freeze-dried liver bits.

**Layer 2:** Dog kibble, cookies or liver biscotti, Cheerios®, sugar-free/salt-free peanut butter, dried banana chips.

**Layer 3:** Baby carrot stick(s), turkey, dried apples, dried apricots.

Pack everything as tightly as possible. The last item in should be a dried apricot or piece of ravioli, presenting a smooth finish under the main hole. Bon appétit!

# PUPPY SOCIALIZATION

## What Is Socialization

Socialization is the process by which your puppy learns to be comfortable with all the things in the environment. If this sounds like a big project, it is. A puppy needs to get used to people of all ages, sizes, and ethnicities; the sights, sounds, smells, and surfaces of many different environments; as well as to dogs and other animal species.

## Why Puppy Socialization Is Urgent

A puppy is more accepting of new experiences between 3-12 weeks of age than at any other point in life. Socialization can extend up to 16-20 weeks in certain breeds and individuals. These early experiences, both good and bad, will have profound and lasting effects on the behavior of the adult dog. If a puppy is not well socialized, they are at greater risk of developing problems such as fears, anxiety or even aggression in adulthood. By contrast, well-socialized puppies usually blossom into relaxed, confident, and enjoyable canine companions. The risk of permanent behavior problems resulting from lack of socialization is greater than the risk of becoming seriously ill or dying from a contagious disease contracted while correctly pursuing socialization. The benefits of a safely socialized puppy outweigh the risk of financial and emotional hardship pet guardians incur if that important window is missed.

## What About Vaccinations?

After your puppy has received at least one DA2PP vaccine from their veterinarian, you can start socializing your puppy outside of home. Parvovirus is much more common in certain neighborhoods than in others. If you are adopting a dog that has not had all of their vaccines, we urge you to discuss the risk of parvovirus in your neighborhood with your veterinarian. Puppies that have received a DA2PP vaccine will be adequately protected from the situations listed below. Socialization is your puppy's 'behavioral vaccination'. It is important to choose appropriate situations that you can bring a puppy into safely. Choosing wisely can help avoid infection with a life-threatening illness such as with the parvovirus. **Parvovirus** is a virus that is spread by exposure to an infected dog's stool. It can cause severe vomiting, diarrhea, anorexia, and death if not treated timely and appropriately. This virus is the most important component of the **DA2PP vaccine series** your puppy receives every 3-4 weeks during their puppy visit at the veterinary clinic. Puppies will not be fully vaccinated until 16+ weeks of age. Due to the severity of this disease, **your puppy should avoid public spaces such as parks, beaches and high dog-traffic sidewalks until they have completed their puppy DA2PP series.** The SF SPCA hospitals and surrounding area are a "high traffic area" for dogs, so you must carry your not-fully-vaccinated puppies when on or around both SF SPCA campuses.

## The risk of contracting parvovirus is low if you follow these guidelines:

1. Walk your dog in places where there are no stray, sick or unvaccinated dogs.
2. Parvovirus is killed by sunlight, so the risk of contracting parvovirus by walking your puppy on a clean, dry pavement is lower.
3. Avoid dog feces contaminated areas with your puppy. If this is difficult in your area, consider putting smaller pups (especially before 12 weeks of age) into a sling or stroller.
4. Avoid dog parks and beaches until 1-2 weeks after your puppy has received the final vaccine at 16+ weeks of age.
5. Playdates with healthy vaccinated dogs in your home, your back-yard, or your friend's backyard (as long as there is no history of exposure to parvovirus) are encouraged. Early and frequent positive and playful exposure to other dogs and people is recommended.
6. Taking your puppy on car rides is a low risk activity.
7. If you're in a park, only allow your puppy to play on a clean blanket spread over the grass or ground, or let your puppy sit beside you on a blanket on a park bench

### **Additional Socialization Tips for Puppies:**

- Puppy class as well as puppy socials are a must. Sign up as early as possible. A puppy does not need to have all their vaccines to start puppy classes, in fact, that's too late.
- Pack every day of puppyhood with new positive socialization experiences. It is crucial that the puppy is enjoying the outings and interactions with people and other fully vaccinated friendly dogs.
- Be mindful that you are guiding and cheerleading your puppy to enjoy new situations. Give them extra yummy treats or a preferred toy when the pup meets new people, dogs, objects and situations. This helps your puppy form a positive association and they are more likely to have increased confidence the next time with a similar experience.
- Manage every situation carefully to make sure your puppy is not frightened. If the situation is overwhelming, remove the puppy from the situation. Give them a chance to relax away from that situation. Once your puppy has calmed down, then reintroduce a similar experience with some tasty treats and plenty of attention from you.
- Don't ever force your puppy to interact with someone or something if they seem fearful or even just reluctant.
- Always give them the option to approach at their own pace, or put some space between your puppy and the thing scaring them. If they are nervous about meeting a person or child, give that person some treats or toys to toss for your puppy a few times at a distance before they slowly move closer.
- Take short walks during the day and night in different neighborhoods.
- Teach your puppy to walk up and down the stairs. Take your puppy on elevator rides.
- Introduce your puppy to various places such as a playground, children's soccer game, car rides, car wash, Home Depot store, department store, flea market, skateboard park, etc.
- Make sure your puppy meets all types of people and children. This includes people in uniforms, with crutches or in wheelchairs, with a beard or wearing a hat, carrying boxes, and so on.
- Introduce your puppy to friends who have healthy, fully vaccinated social dogs that are tolerant of your puppy.

### **Additional Information:**

[SF SPCA resources on socialization](#)

[The AVSAB position statement on puppy socialization](#)

### **Puppy Socialization Reading List:**

1. Perfect Puppy in 7 Days: How to Start Your Puppy Off Right by Sophia Yin
2. Puppy Start Right: Foundation Training for the Companion Dog by Kenneth Martin and Debbie Martin

### **Tying Dogs Out**

While it is important to include your puppy in your daily routine, it is not safe to leave him tied up unattended and outside during errands.

Tying dogs out can lead to:

- Stress
- Accidents with other dogs and pedestrians
- Aggression towards other dogs and pedestrians
- Theft of your dog
- Complaints from the public

For more information, see *Avoid Tying Dogs* in the Behavior & Training section of our website.

## **Puppy Handling**

A dog's life involves a lot of physical handling. Vet examinations, trips to the groomer, being lifted into and out of cars, and having burrs or ticks removed all require your dog to accept being touched. Puppyhood is the time to teach this.

Have everyone in your home and any guests (supervise children at all times) practice handling your puppy. Cut up soft treats like cheese or Natural Balance® into tiny bits and have them ready. Go through these handling exercises several times a day:

- Hold a paw. Give a treat.
- Look in one ear. Give a treat.
- Lift your puppy's lip exposing his teeth. Give a treat.
- Tug his tail. Give a treat.
- Pick him up. Give a treat. Put him back down.
- Pick him up and give him a hug. Give a treat. Put him back down.
- Nudge him gently while he's sleeping. Give a treat.
- Grab his collar. Give a treat.
- Look him directly in the eye. Give a treat.

Handle every part of your puppy's body this way. Over time, handle and examine each area more thoroughly. Remember to touch first and then give the treat. This will teach your puppy that handling means something good is coming.

Is there a body part or type of handling your puppy does not enjoy? Touch this area more gently, but more frequently, and offer super tasty treats until he loves it.

For more information, see *Handling Your Puppy* in the Behavior & Training section of our website.

## Puppy Socialization Chart

Check off each completed encounter in the appropriate box. Mark as many encounters as possible. Notice if there is any fear associated with any of these situations or persons.

To further help your puppy cope with new situations, add environmental enrichment in your home as well. Give treats to your puppy intermittently during all socialization and let others give treats, too.

	8-9 wks	9-10 wks	10-11 wks	11-12 wks	12-13 wks	3-6 mths	6-10 mths
<b>People</b>							
Young adults							
Middle aged adults							
Elderly							
Disabled; odd gaits							
Loud							
Looming							
Uniformed							
with hats							
with beards							
with glasses							
with helmets							
with gloves							
with umbrellas							
Babies							
Toddlers							
Juniors							
Teens							
<b>Animals</b>							
Puppies							
Adult dogs							
Cats/kittens							
Small pets							
Livestock							
Horses							
<b>Places</b>							
Beach/ocean							
Shopping malls							
Friends homes							
Parks							
Near a schoolyard							
In a car							
City streets							
Slippery floors							
Party							
Vet's office							
Groomer							
Places with stairs							
Places with elevators (don't use escalators)							
<b>Vehicles</b>							
Bicycles							
Motorcycles							
Buses							
Trucks							
Shopping carts							
Skateboards/rollerblades							

# **PUPPY TRAINING AND HOW TO TRAIN**

## **Why Puppy Training?**

Much like socialization, training is essential for your puppy—and the earlier you begin, the better.

Puppy training:

- Instills good manners in your puppy before he learns bad habits
- Takes advantage of the critical socialization period to get your puppy used to unfamiliar people and dogs
- Creates a “learning to learn” effect, stimulating your puppy’s brain and paving the way for later training
- Allows you to troubleshoot common puppy problems like play biting, house-training, and alone-time training

Just as importantly, puppy training is fun and can be done by all family members, including children.

## **Practice Positive Reinforcement**

Training your puppy through positive reinforcement means using his natural motivations to teach him which behaviors you like and which you don’t. You can use anything your puppy wants: praise, toys, treats, a belly rub, a leash walk, or a thrown ball.

This type of training is based on the fundamental truth that all animals are more likely to repeat a behavior that is reinforced—and less likely to repeat one that isn’t. Just like we humans are much more likely to show up for work if we get a steady paycheck, dogs will do exactly what we want them to do if we provide motivation.

## **Why It Works So Well**

1. Tapping into your puppy’s innate motivations makes training fun for him—and it helps make you his favorite person on the planet.
2. Making training a game means your puppy relaxes and learns faster, whereas fear blocks learning.

One caveat: Knowledge acquisition centers in your puppy’s brain slow down or shut off completely when he’s afraid—risk-avoidance takes the place of problem-solving. So, if your puppy is scared or uncomfortable, he can’t learn. Find a way to make him comfortable first, and then try again.

## **A Word on Punishment**

Never use physical punishment. It comes with serious side effects like aggression, fear, and erosion of the trust between you and your puppy.

## Unwanted Behaviors

Using positive reinforcement methods doesn't mean you never set any boundaries or can't say "no" to your puppy. You just say it in a way he understands instead of using human language.

Either:

**Ignore the behavior.** Don't reinforce or inadvertently reward unwanted behavior.

**Avoid the situation.** Restrict your puppy's access to a place, person, or object.

**Redirect him to an alternative behavior,** for example sitting instead of jumping up.

## Dog Training Principles

These simple principles create a win-win partnership between you and your puppy. You get a polite dog for life, and your dog gets to play with other dogs, chase Frisbees®, and eat his favorite treats.

- Reward behaviors you like. That will make them happen more often.
- Ignore behaviors you don't like. That will make them happen less often.
- Ask your dog to "say please" when he wants something. Ask your dog to sit for doors to be opened, balls to be thrown, leashes to come off at the park, etc. This makes asking politely your dog's main strategy for getting what he wants, instead of using pushy behavior.

For more details, see *Nothing in Life is Free* in the Behavior & Training section of our website.

## Lure-Reward Training

Lure-reward training means showing your dog what you want and then rewarding that. The method is most commonly used by putting a piece of food right in front of the dog's nose (close enough that he can lick it) and moving the food in the direction you want the dog to go. Where the nose goes, the rest of the dog follows.

If, for example, you put a treat right by your dog's nose and lift your hand up and toward the back of the dog very slowly, your dog's nose will go up and his bottom will go down. Reward that by releasing the treat and you have your first rewarded sit.

## Puppy Training Classes

Prime Paw offers puppy playgroups and training classes at the SF SPCA's Mission Campus, 243 Alabama Street. These classes teach proper social skills by encouraging play, learning, and safety.

To learn more, visit [primepaw.com](http://primepaw.com)



## COMMON PUPPY PROBLEMS

Keep in mind that most of what we label “problem behavior” is normal canine behavior, and none of it is meant to spite or frustrate us. Your puppy is simply being a puppy.

Dogs do what they do because they want food, play, attention, social time with other dogs, etc. Pleasing—or annoying—us isn’t part of the picture. Fortunately, you can use what your puppy wants to train him to behave in ways you like. With patience and consistency, most problem behavior can be changed for good.

### Troubleshooting Puppy Problems

#### PLAY BITING/MOUTHING

Why puppies play bite:	To strengthen jaw muscles
	To learn to soften bite intensity
	Because they can’t help it

#### **My puppy is biting my things—and me. What should I do?**

Aside from eating and sleeping, biting is a puppy’s main activity. It’s absolutely normal and healthy behavior, and the best strategy is to allow your puppy to learn through his play biting. Teach your puppy to soften his mouth by yelping loudly at medium-hard bites and by stopping play completely at hard bites. Redirect any attack on your possessions or clothes to dog toys. As your puppy grows older and reliably softens his bite, you can begin to phase out play biting.

Outright puppy aggression is very rare. If you think your puppy is showing signs of aggression, contact a professional dog trainer or veterinary behavior specialist.

For more information, see *Puppy Play Biting and Mouthing* in the Behavior & Training section of our website.

#### CHEWING

Why puppies chew:	Because it feels good
	Seeking attention
	Pent-up energy
	Hunger

**Tip:** Always rule out hunger first. Ask your vet what the correct amount of food for your puppy is.

#### **My puppy chews on anything and everything, including my clothes. Help!**

Like play biting, chewing is normal and healthy for dogs, but it can still be a problem—for you, your wardrobe, and your puppy. Teach your puppy what he’s allowed to chew and what’s off-limits by giving him plenty of interesting chewies and directing him to those whenever he gets stuck into something forbidden. Supervise closely and hide valuable objects until your dog is fully grown and well trained. Never leave your puppy unsupervised unless he’s in his puppy playpen or crate.

For more details, see *Chewing* in the Behavior & Training section of our website.

#### BARKING

Why puppies bark:	Excitement
	Fear and anxiety
	Loneliness/boredom
	Seeking attention

**My puppy barks at people when I'm out on a walk.**

Your puppy may be uncomfortable with strangers—or with a subset of people he hasn't encountered often enough yet (people wearing hats, for example). If so, a dog trainer can help put together a socialization program to teach your puppy to be more comfortable around new people.

**My puppy barks at other dogs.**

Puppies usually bark at other dogs either out of excitement or unease. Make sure your puppy has good experiences interacting with other dogs and isn't overwhelmed by bigger, more confident dogs. And if your puppy gets worked up when he plays, give him frequent play breaks. Take him out of the action for 15 to 30 seconds. Give him time to breathe, ask for a sit, treat him, and then send him back to play.

**My puppy barks when he is home alone.**

First suspect loneliness or boredom. Make sure your puppy isn't alone too long, exercise him well before you leave, and provide food puzzles to occupy him while you're away. If your dog still barks incessantly while alone, give us a call or consult a dog trainer.

For more details, see *Barking* in the Behavior & Training section of our website.

**JUMPING**

Why puppies jump:	Greeting people/dogs
	To explore/get something they want
	Seeking attention
	Play initiation

**My puppy jumps up on people I meet or on guests in my home.**

That's your puppy saying hello the canine way. Ask your puppy to say hello a more polite way, for example by sitting or going to his bed when the door bell rings.

**When I sit quietly and read a book, my puppy jumps on me.**

Your puppy wants attention—and probably has a surplus of energy. Direct your puppy to play with his toys, and find ways to increase his exercise and mind workouts. Don't take calm behavior for granted either. Make a habit out of praising, petting, or tossing your puppy a treat whenever he's lying around quietly.

**My puppy jumps on me with his favorite toy when I sit down.**

That's play behavior and attention-seeking rolled into one. Again, the answer is to redirect your puppy to solitary play and make sure he gets to exercise both his body and mind every day. Once your puppy has his first two DA2PP/DHLPP/DHP vaccinations, consider enrolling him in a puppy daycare.

**My puppy jumps on the kitchen counter to get to the leftover dinner.**

This is known as "counter surfing" and here, prevention is the best cure. Dogs are natural scavengers, so figuring out how to get to out-of-reach food is hard-wired behavior. And if your puppy manages to get at last night's lamb stew just once, you may have an incurable counter surfer on your hands. Install doors in your kitchen or use a baby gate to keep your puppy out of the kitchen when you can't supervise.

Please note that counter surfing deterrents rarely work. Counter surfers are usually clever problem-solving dogs who don't give up easily.

For more details, see *Counter Surfing* in the Behavior & Training section of our website.

## **FEARFULNESS IN NEW ENVIRONMENTS**

Dogs are hard-wired to be cautious of new surroundings and need time to adjust—often lots of time, by human standards. Remember that the whole world is new to your puppy, and many things you take for granted may seem strange and scary to him: metal stairways, flapping awnings, kneeling city buses, etc.

### **My puppy crouches low to the ground, stalls, shakes, or cowers.**

Avoid the worst triggers or most difficult situations—and give your puppy plenty of time to adjust to new environments. Try to keep him comfortable by feeding him extra yummy treats or bringing his favorite toy. This way, you can gradually build positive associations with the new surroundings.

## COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

**Myth: Rubbing my puppy's nose in his urine or feces will stop him from soiling the house.**

**Reality:** Absolutely not true. The only thing your puppy will learn from this experience is to expect irrational and unpleasant behavior from his humans. Just like newspaper swatting and scolding, it may even teach your puppy not to go to the bathroom in front of you, which makes it harder to house-train him.

**Myth: Using food to train my puppy is bribery.**

**Reality:** All animals, including humans, work for reinforcement. A reward to us might be a promotion at work or a dinner out with friends. Dogs too will work only for reinforcement. Much as they enjoy our company, their purpose in life is to fulfill their own needs—food, shelter, security, social needs, etc.—not to please us. You can use food, play, praise, the prospect of a leash walk, or a belly rub to reward your puppy. As long as you manage to motivate him sufficiently, he will happily do what you ask.

**Myth: If I start training with food, I will always have to use it.**

**Reality:** Not all the time, no. To maintain an already established behavior, you should use any reward your dog cares about and only break out the food intermittently; a jackpot prize to keep him playing the game. But when you want to introduce a new behavior into your dog's repertoire, food is a superior tool: portable, easy to deliver, and high on a dog's list of priorities.

**Myth: When my puppy pulls on leash, jumps on me, or barks, he wants to dominate me.**

**Reality:** The label of “dominance” has been used to explain every type of behavior in dogs, from not coming when called to protectiveness of toys and food. But dogs don't constantly plot how to overthrow humans and gain sole custody of the fridge. If your dog jumps on you, he's probably excited to see you. If he pulls on leash it's because he's in a hurry to go places. The idea of dominance sets up an unhelpful conflict. Better to focus on what you would like your dog to do instead of the behavior you don't enjoy, and then teach him that by rewarding him for it.

**Myth: Stubborn dogs need assertive training and punishment.**

**Reality:** It's true that some dogs learn faster than others, but no dog is willfully stubborn. If your puppy doesn't respond to your training efforts, odds are you haven't provided enough (or the right) motivation. Put another way: if chickens and elephants can be trained with positive reinforcement methods, so can your puppy.

**Myth: My puppy destroys things in my home or urinates on the floor out of spite. I can tell because he looks so guilty.**

**Reality:** When you return home to find shredded bed linens or a puddle in the living room, it's easy to think your puppy did those things because he's angry with you for some reason. But guilt is a wholly human concept. The “guilty look” on your puppy's face doesn't mean he feels bad for what he did—he's forgotten all about that by now—it means he's reading subtle cues in your body language telling him something is wrong. His behavior might spring from boredom, loneliness, a surplus of energy, anxiety, or simply having to hold it too long.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

We hope the information in this handbook will be helpful during your puppy's transition into his new home.

If you have further questions, we offer basic advice via e-mail. If you adopted a dog from us and need help with house training, alone time training, rough play or socialization, email [adoptions@sfspca.org](mailto:adoptions@sfspca.org). Our website at **[sfspca.org/behavior-training](https://sfspca.org/behavior-training)** has helpful information to answer many behavior questions.

You may also be interested in attending one of our Puppy Parenting Orientations. This free class is highly informative for anyone who has a puppy, is a new adopter, or is interested in adopting. A question-and-answer session with the trainer provides you with valuable advice specific to your situation.

Topics covered will include new puppy management, house-training, crate training, the importance of socialization, chewing, mouthing, and more. This class is lecture only; relevant handouts will be provided upon request.

No pre-registration is needed. Interested students may simply show up for class as we will have plenty of space available. The class is at 243 Alabama Street, and street parking is available.

**Please note this class is for guardians only – no dogs, please.**

For a list of upcoming classes visit: [sfspca.org/behavior-training/dog-training](https://sfspca.org/behavior-training/dog-training).

**Please double-check our website the day of class to confirm the schedule.**