

Pawsitive Press

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Training Basics	1
Training Continued	2
Walk Your Dog Month	3
Coupons	4

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Training Basics

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Now that you have your new Christmas puppy, it's time to start socializing and training. Here are a few tips to help with the process.

SOCIALIZATION

Socialization is a crucial component of raising a stable, well-behaved dog and should be started before the age of 4 months old. Socializing puppies means socializing not only to a broad range of people (tall, short, people wearing hats or glasses, men with beards, etc.), but also to other pets (cats, dogs – big and small), places (cities, towns, parks), activities (car rides, the crate, stairs, the elevator), things (trees, cars, the vacuum cleaner), and the veterinarian's office! The experience of socialization should be done slowly and all attempts should be made to keep it a positive experience! If your puppy becomes fearful, remove the stimulus and slowly re-introduce, using food rewards.

For example, if you are socializing your puppy to the veterinarian's office, start by taking him only as

offering him a treat, until he is clearly relaxed in this environment. During the next few visits, take him into the reception area and offer him treats. Again, repeat until he seems at ease. Next, take him back to the scale, again, with ample positive reinforcement (treats) until he's comfortable. Finally, have a technician take him to a scale, and then to an exam room. Again, always keep the experience positive with lots of treats and praise. If he grows fearful, take him back to a place where he is comfortable, even if it's outside the office, let him relax, and offer him praise and treats.

CRATE AND HOUSE TRAINING:

Crate training: Crate training is one of the quickest ways to houstrain a dog. Furthermore, providing a dog with a crate gives him a safe haven, and a familiar place to go when

you are leave, which can help prevent separation anxiety. Don't use the crate as a punishment or a place to house your puppy for long hours. A puppy's age in months is the number of hours he should be able to hold his bladder. Still, unless it's overnight, try not to keep your puppy in his crate for more than 4-5 hours without a break. A puppy should only be confined to a crate until he can be trusted not to soil or chew around the house. Thereafter, the crate should be a place where he goes voluntarily.

To introduce your puppy to a crate, first make it a hospitable place to be. Place a soft blanket inside and position the crate in a room of the house where you and your family spent most of your time. Most puppies will naturally explore the crate. If not, you can offer treats, first just inside the door of the crate, then slowly at the back of the crate. Once your puppy is comfortable with walking into the crate to retrieve treats, it's time to start feeding him meals in the crate and locking the door. At first, only crate him during the course of the meal. Slowly increase the time post-meal that your puppy stays in the crate. If he whines to get

Training Continued

out of the crate, don't let him out until he stops, unless the whining continues beyond several minutes. At this point, try taking him to his elimination spot outside. If he doesn't eliminate, return him to the crate and ride out the whining. The next time you crate him, keep him there for a shorter period and try to let him out before the whining starts, so he doesn't associate whining with being let out of the crate. If he does eliminate, reward him and bring him back to the crate.

Once your puppy is comfortable being confined to his crate, you can try leaving him there for short periods of time when you're home, and eventually, when you are away. When you crate your puppy and leave the house, never make a big deal of leaving or returning – keep the event low-key and vary the steps you take prior to leaving the house. You can even come and go a few times to make the process more routine.

Potty Training: To start with potty training, your puppy should be in his crate or 100% supervised. Ideally, every hour or two — as well as after he wakes up and after eating and drinking — bring him outside on a leash, stand in the same area, and give him a consistent verbal “go potty” cue. When he goes, immediately give treats and lavish him with praise. Reward must be immediate; don't wait until he is back inside! If he doesn't go, bring him back inside, again, keep him in his crate or under your

supervision, and in 10 minutes, bring him outside again. Repeat until successful.

Accidents are normal parts of house-training. Unfortunately, they can only be instructive if you catch your puppy in the act. If you find a soiled area, and the soiling happened even minutes ago, your puppy is not going to remember what he did, and any punishment will be confusing to him at best, and at worst, he will be afraid of you and afraid to eliminate in your presence. If you do catch him in the act, interrupt him and give him a firm verbal cue, such as “Outside,” and immediately take him to his usual elimination spot. Praise him with a treat if he finishes up there. Always clean the area thoroughly with an enzymatic cleaner, so there is no evidence of the house soiling. Otherwise, the puppy will go back to this familiar spot and eliminate again. Enzymatic cleaners are easy to find at drugstores, grocery stores, and pet stores.

If you have to be away for longer than 4-5 hours, you may not want to get a puppy in the first place, unless you have a trusted neighbor who can let him out every few hours. Alternatively, if your puppy must be indoors, you may wish to consider paper or “pee-pee pad” training. If you elect the latter, confine your puppy to an area with sufficient space for sleeping, playing, food and water bowls, and a separate space to eliminate. The elimination area might just be a pee-pee pad, newspapers, or a “simulated lawn” box. The “simulated lawn” box can be

made by placing sod in a plastic box. If your puppy eliminates outside the desired area, place soiled paper towels or rags inside the box or on the newspapers/pads, so he recognizes the appropriate area as a place where he is supposed to eliminate. Again, be sure to clean the soiled area thoroughly with enzymatic cleaner. If you do intend to train your puppy to eliminate outside, be aware that training him to eliminate indoors may create a life-long preference for eliminating indoors on the surface you've chosen to use.

Overall, the key to training, whether it is to welcome rather than fear strangers, eliminate outside, or sit quietly in a crate, is slow and patient introduction of your puppy to new situations, immediate and ample reward of desired behaviors, removal of any rewards for unwanted behavior (don't give your puppy a treat for barking and jumping all over you when you return home; don't let your puppy out of the crate for whining if he doesn't have to use the restroom) and, above all, consistency.

If you have any further questions please contact us at the Animal Hospital of Dunedin. We are happy to help!



January - National Walk Your Pet Month

If you're one of the 45% of Americans who make New Year's Resolutions, chances are that weight loss and/or exercising more often is among them.

You probably already know about the health benefits of losing weight. There's less stress on your joints, your heart, etc. But did you know that when your pet loses weight, he or she enjoys the same benefits?



According to Pet Obesity Prevention, 57.9% of American pets are overweight or obese. Even an extra two pounds on your cat (or five on dogs) is associated with greater risk for disease.

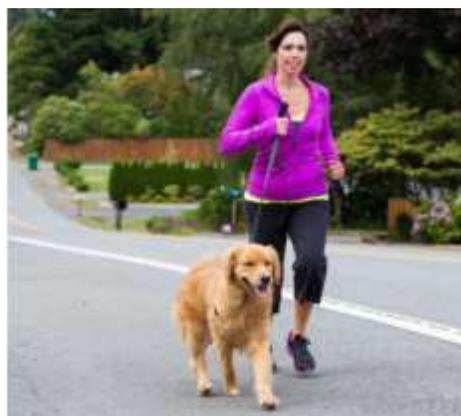
And if the exercise benefits aren't enough, dogs also enjoy mental stimulation by getting out in the neighborhood and sniffing the trees, sidewalks, fire hydrants and each other.

Walking Your Dog is Bonding Time

Walking together is a great time to focus on training your dog and strengthening the bond between you.

To get the most out of your time together, don't walk and talk on the phone. Use this time to focus on your pet. They spend a lot of time alone already and need you. Praise them when they walk well and pay attention to you.

If your pet needs leash training, find a class, hire a dog trainer for a few sessions or watch YouTube videos on how to train your dog to walk on a leash. It's no fun (and possibly dangerous) if your dog is doing the zoomies down the street at top speed about to pull your arm out of the socket.



You already know a slow meander isn't going to do much for revving up the metabolism. However, if you've been more sedentary than active, you've got to start somewhere. Even a few minutes at a slow pace have more health benefits than sitting on the couch. As soon as you can though, speed up your walk, even if it's only for a few seconds at a time.

An average is about one mile in a 20 minute period or 3 miles an hour. Are you walking that fast already? Sometimes dogs can be tricky. They get caught up in the smells and slow your progress. This is another reason the leash training comes in handy. There's a time to let them sniff and a time to walk. Maybe you start out slow or slow down when you get to a favorite spot. Over time, they'll adapt to your rhythm if you train them to trot along beside you.

Of course, if you have a high energy dog, then your pet needs to run—daily—to burn off that excess energy. If you're not a runner, then take your dog to the dog park or find a pet sitter who'll run with your dog. It's hard to walk calmly on a leash when you're filled with pent up energy.



Safety after Dark

It is January after all and it gets dark early. If your dog walking activities take place in the predawn or late afternoon/evening hours, you want to make sure you can be seen by motorists, bicyclists and other dog walkers/pedestrians. A lighted leash and collar combination is good for the Fido in your life. You will do well to wear light colored clothes at least and better yet, a reflective vest or jacket.





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