

The
A B C s
Of
Puppy Training

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Introduction

Two years ago I brought home a delightful new puppy named Jigger. What I thought would be a warm and fuzzy experience quickly turned into frustration, all because I had forgotten effective training techniques and became confused by all of the different advice that I received. My confusion led to a confused puppy.

My purpose for writing this is to provide you with the proper information to train your new puppy. I want you to avoid the failures and frustrations that I experienced by equipping you with the steps needed to turn your puppy into a well-behaved, adult dog. Puppies need consistent training, discipline, and positive reinforcement from the moment they come home. This contains the techniques that I had success with, along with common training techniques that should be avoided.



My puppy Jigger at ten weeks old.
Note how he is sitting still for this photo. You can't see the treat I was bribing him with.

Note

Before bringing home any new puppy, please investigate the breed to be sure it will be a suitable size and temperament for your family. Specific breed information can be obtained from your veterinarian, breeders, the library, and the internet. If adopting a mixed breed, the animal shelter or your local veterinarian usually can tell you the breeds of the pup, and an approximate size you can expect when fully grown.

Preparing for Puppy



When you bring a new puppy home a little preparation is best. Consider these things before the puppy arrives.

Where Will the Puppy Sleep

Your puppy is used to sleeping with her littermates and will be comforted by your presence if you crate her in your bedroom. Also, she will be able to wake you if she needs to potty.

What Will You Feed Her

For puppies I recommend high quality foods specifically for puppies until they are at least a year old. I have found that when fed brands such as *Science Diet*, *Eukanuba*, or *Iams*, the puppy will have firmer stools, making accident cleanup easier.

Is Your Home Puppy Proof

A cluttered home is a hazard to a puppy who will try to chew on whatever you make accessible. Make sure that hazards are off of the floor, electrical cords are hidden and doors are closed to forbidden rooms. Remember, things that are hazardous to small children are also hazardous to puppies.

Who Will Check on Your Puppy

If you will be gone all day, is there someone who can check on your puppy? A puppy younger than six months will not be able to hold his bladder for more than a few hours, so a friend, neighbor, relative, or pet sitter who can help out for a few months is important.



Things you should have when you bring a puppy home:

- Crate or doorway gate
- Premium puppy food
- Non-tipping feeding bowls
- Toys
- Chewies
- Treats
- Small container for treats
- Collar
- Short leash
- Retractable leash or rope (25 ft.)
- Nylon bristle brush
- Puppy or baby shampoo
- Toenail clippers
- Tooth brush and canine toothpaste

Early Puppy Training

Ready for Formatting

What you teach your puppy from the moment he comes home will affect his behavior for the rest of his life. Think of your puppy as a blank computer disk whose output depends on your input. Now is the time to think about how you want your puppy to behave as a full grown dog. It is difficult to resist holding your little pup on your lap, but what about when he is a full-grown dog? Will you still want that?

Remember that you need to teach your puppy now, what you want him to do when he is fully grown.

Potty Training

From my recent experiences with puppy training, I have discovered that it is best to always take your puppy to where you will want him to relieve himself. Whether you will be taking him out on a leash or into your yard, you must always be consistent, or he will not know where to go. Don't just open the door and send him outside by himself. He will not know what he is going out for.

Always do the following when potty training:

- Go out with him.
- Give the command "Go potty!"
- Reward him with praise and a treat when he is successful.
- Be consistent about where and when you take him out.

Never scold, spank or rub his nose in it when he has an accident. This teaches

him that going potty is wrong and he will become sneaky when he does it.

Paper Training

I advise against this common practice because it teaches your puppy to relieve himself in the house. Also, the puppy will have to be retrained to go outside at some point. It is best to just train him correctly from the beginning.

Routines

Establishing routines with your puppy is crucial for success in potty training. Puppies learn from you when it is time to eat, play, potty, go for a walk and sleep. Also, if you feed him at the same time every day, you will be able to determine when he will need to relieve himself.



If your puppy has an accident in the house, it is your fault. You must take a young puppy out at least every two hours, especially after meals and playing.

To Crate or Not to Crate

Although many people believe putting their puppy in a cage is cruel, there are many advantages for doing it.

- Dogs feel safer in small spaces.
- Aids with potty training.
- Keeps her out of trouble.

Your puppy has the natural instinct to keep her bed clean, so she will develop better elimination control if she is confined for gradually extended periods of time.



Photo courtesy of PetEducation.com

There are many types of crates available. These range from wire crates, to travel crates that are mostly plastic with a wire door. If your pet will be traveling a lot, a plastic crate will provide better protection in a car or plane.

Crate Location

The ideal location for the crate is in your bedroom. This will give your puppy uninterrupted time with you while you sleep. This will also make her feel secure. If isolated away from you, she will be more apt to cry or do destructive chewing out of fear and loneliness.

Warning

Never place your crate near drafts, heat sources, vents, or in bathrooms.

Introducing the Crate

1. Prop open the door to the crate and toss a treat inside. As you do this, tell her to "Go to bed."
2. Let her go inside and get the treat. Let her investigate the crate, come and go as she wishes.
3. Repeat until she is comfortable with the crate.
4. Offer her next meal in the crate. After she is in, close the door, and let her out when she is finished eating.
5. Repeat for several meals and treats.
6. When comfortable with this, go back to feeding in her original place and offering treats for going in the crate. Always tell her "go to bed."

Leave her in the crate. If she cries or scratches at the door, tell her "No, quiet!" If you let her out, you are teaching her that the temper tantrum works. Only let her out when you are ready and when she is quiet.

Leash Training

Begin leash training as soon as you bring your puppy home. Many puppies do not like the leash, so they must be able to associate it with something good which you will accomplish using praise and treats.

1. Place the collar on his neck, keeping it loose enough to come over his head if he gets caught on something.
2. Let him wear this for a couple of days to get used to the feel of it.
3. Under supervision, attach a short leash onto the collar and let him drag it around for a little while. Do not try to lead him with it yet. Do this three or four times.
4. Hold the leash in one hand and some treats in the other.
5. Show him the treats, then back away a few steps and say, "Let's go!" When he comes to you, praise him and give him a treat.
6. Do this three times a day, increasing the distance each time and he will soon readily follow you.
7. Always walk him on your left side. Consistency with this means he will not be underfoot.

Tip

If your puppy refuses to follow you, do not drag him on the leash. He will associate the leash as something unpleasant. Instead, just kneel down, call him to you, and pet him. Wait a few moments then try walking with him again.

Preferred Collars and Leashes



Image courtesy of Petsmart.com

Soft, buckled collars made of nylon are preferred for puppies. They are tough, resist mildew, and do not easily tangle in the fur of long-haired dogs. For leash training a short nylon leash is best. When trained, a retractable leash is fine.

I do not recommend using collars with decorative beading, spikes, or chains. These can be hazards to a chewing puppy and can injure persons handling him.



Image courtesy of For Dog Trainers.com

Becoming the Boss

Dogs are pack animals and most will try to dominate you. It is natural for them to try to establish themselves as the “Alpha” member of their new pack, your family. Some people find dominant behavior in a puppy to be cute, but cute will eventually be replaced by frustration when your full-grown dog rules your house. By stopping her attempt to assert dominance as a puppy, you will be rewarded with a more obedient dog.

Do's and Don'ts for Establishing Dominance

Do:

- Correct bad behavior immediately with a firm “No!” Waiting will confuse her.
- If your command is ignored, firmly grasp the scruff of her neck and give it a good shake and tell her “No!” again.
- Make her sit before all meals and treats.
- Cradle an aggressive puppy like a baby for a few minutes, until she is calm. At first she may become more upset by this, but will eventually calm down.



Photo Courtesy of Good Dog University.Com

Don't:

- Allow her to initiate play. If she brings you a toy wanting to play, ignore her. You must be the one to initiate play time.
- Allow aggressive behavior such as mouthing, biting, snapping, inappropriate growling, or tug of war.



Image courtesy of seeFIDO.com

- Allow her through a doorway or stairs first, make her wait for you.
- Leave her food out between meals. You give her food at meals and take up her dish when the meal is over. This lets her know that food comes from you!

See Appendix A for more information about the ages to expect domination behaviors from puppies.

Basic Commands

You probably chose your puppy because you want a companion, friend, or protector. But, in order to fulfill the role you want him to take, he will need training; and that training begins with the basic commands.

With basic training, not only will your puppy be learning self control, you will be learning what motivates him to be good.

- It is best to practice these commands several times a week, but not for more than 10 to 15 minutes a day.
- Always end training sessions on a happy note, with a couple of minutes of play or praise. Your puppy will think of training as something positive.
- Remember to bring plenty of treats.

“Sit!”

Begin teaching the sit command a few days after bringing your puppy home. There are two methods for teaching your puppy to sit.



Photo Courtesy of Second Chance Prison Canines.org

Tip

Only give the command one time. Do not keep repeating the command. If he does not sit on the first command, help him sit and then praise him.

Method A

1. Hold his leash in left hand, have treats in your right hand.
2. Tell him “Sit!”
3. Move your hand with the treats over his head, from his nose towards his tail.
4. His head will go up and back to watch your hand, and his hips will lower to the ground.
5. When he sits, give him a treat and praise him “Good boy!”

If method A is not successful, try the following.

Method B

1. Tell him to “Sit!” as you hold one hand under his chin, near his neck.
2. Use the other hand to tuck his back legs under him, shaping him into the sitting position.
3. Give him a treat and praise him.

Only reward him if he holds the sit for a few seconds. If he pops up quickly, tell him “Be still!” in a firm voice, and have him sit again.

“Lie Down!”

This command is a continuation of the sit command. This teaches your puppy self control and to be still.

1. Begin with your puppy in the sitting position.
2. Place one hand on her shoulders and let her smell the treat in the other hand.
3. As you tell her “lie down!” or “down!” take the treat down to the ground between her front paws.
4. She will follow the treat down while you gently push down on her shoulders.
5. When down, give her the treat and praise her, holding her down for a few seconds.
6. Release your hand and step back.



Image Courtesy of KAOS Kennels.com

If she doesn't lie down when you tell her “Down!” do not repeat the command. Gently sweep her front legs forward and lay her down.

“Stay!”

Teach the stay command after your puppy has mastered the sit and down commands. This is a two-part command. You can command her to “Stay!” from either the “Sit!” or “Down!” position, which she will hold until you “Release!” her.

The object is to train your puppy to hold in position for a few moments, gradually increasing over time, the time holding in position.

1. Have her “Sit!”
2. With the leash in your left hand pull back on the leash towards her tail.
3. With your right hand – palm towards her face – give the command “Stay!” as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1.

Image Courtesy of WeForAnimals.com

4. Step back one step and release the pressure on the leash.
5. If she moves, correct her with “No!” and make her sit again.
6. Repeat steps one through four until she holds the sitting position for a few seconds.
7. Step back to her and give her the “Release!” command.
8. Reward her with praise and a treat.

“Come!”

It is very important that you teach your puppy to come to you. If he gets away from you when you are outside, you want to be able to call him back to keep him out of danger.

Like the sit command, there are two methods for teaching a dog to come to you. You will need to teach him both methods. Begin with Method A inside your home. After he is consistently successful with Method A, move on to Method B, outside the home.

Method A

This method teaches your puppy to come when you offer him a treat.

Part I

1. Place a few tasty treats in a small container with a lid, similar to the one shown in Figure 2.
2. Shake the container in front of your puppy and ask him “Cookie?” or “Treat?” Give him a treat.
3. Do this a few times a day for several days.

This will teach him to associate the rattle of the container and your question, with a reward.



Figure 2.

Image Courtesy of Cool Pet Products.com

You can purchase small containers of treats from most pet stores. When empty, you can simply refill them with other treats or dog food.

Part II

1. Have him sit in front of you.
2. Shake the container.
3. Replace the word “Cookie?” or “Treat?” with “Come!” Give him a treat.
4. Do this a few times a day for several days, until he becomes excited by the rattle of the container.

This will teach him to associate the rattle of the container and the word “Come!” with a reward.



Image courtesy of seeFIDO.com

Part III

1. With your puppy across the room, shake the container while telling him “Come!”
2. When he runs to you, give him a treat and praise him.
3. Practice this around the house. You are now ready to move outside using Method B.

Method B

This method teaches your puppy to come to you using a retractable leash or piece of rope measuring 25 feet in length.

1. Fasten the long rope or leash to his collar.
2. When he is distracted and wanders away from you several feet, tell him "Come!"
3. If he comes to you, praise him and give him a treat.
4. If he does not come, do not call him. Do not correct him.
5. Pick up the rope or leash and pull him to you, even if you are dragging him.
6. When he is close, let the line out again, repeating steps 2 and 3.
7. If he is too distracted to come to you, rattle the container of treats when you call him. Eventually you will be able to make him come without treats.



Image Courtesy of Positive Puppy.com

Warning

When working outside of a fenced area with your pup, always keep him on a leash. Have available your container of treats, to rattle for his attention in case he gets loose.

Do's and Don'ts of "Come!"

Do:

- Incorporate "Come!" into everyday practice, not just training.
- Like all training, end it with a few minutes of play.
- Use hand signals and commands consistently.

Don't:

- End a play session with "Come!" or he will negatively relate the command with the end of play.
- Ever chase your puppy if he gets loose. He will think it's a game. Try calling "Come!" "Cookie" or rattle the treat container to get his attention.
- Scold your puppy for running from you. Especially if he comes back to you. He will associate coming to you with punishment.

The Beauty Shop

All puppies require regular grooming to keep them in good health and condition. You can easily perform basic grooming on your puppy. In fact, if done regularly when she is young, the easier it will be when she is a full-grown adult dog.

Brushing

Brushing is the most important part of grooming your puppy. It cleans the hair without stripping it of protective oils.

Things to keep in mind about brushing:

- A brush of nylon bristles will work on most puppies. If your puppy has a thicker or longer coat a slicker or pin brush might work.

Slicker Brush Nylon Bristle/Pin Brush



Images courtesy of Petsmart.com

- Brush at least once a week.
- Teach your puppy to lie on her side while you brush her.

Mat Removal

Regular brushing will prevent fur matting. However, if mats do form:

1. Saturate mat with **No More Tangles**, or another conditioner. Wait a few minutes.
2. Try to pick out mat with a wide tooth comb, starting at the bottom of the mat and working up.
3. If this fails, use small scissors to cut the mat out.

Bathing

Bath your puppy only when she needs it. Too much bathing can dry out and irritate a pup's skin.



Photo courtesy of countryliving.home.att.net

Wherever you choose to bath her, make sure that it is where you will bath her when she is full-grown. Also, make sure that she cannot chill or be exposed to a draft.

1. Place non-skid mat or towel in tub.
2. Plug her ears with cotton and place her in tub.
3. Wet her thoroughly with lukewarm water.
4. Let water raise a couple of inches to soak dirt from her feet.
5. Lather her body with shampoo paying close attention to the belly, back and inside of elbows, anal area, and inside of thighs.
6. Rinse first the head, then the neck, chest, back, sides, rear legs, and tail.
7. Clean her face with a moist clean rag or washcloth.
8. Wrap her in a towel and blot excess water from coat.
9. If desired, use a blow-dryer on medium heat until she is dry.

Dental Hygiene

Puppies are good about cleaning their teeth because they do so much chewing. However, this is the time to get them accustomed to teeth brushing, so they will accept it when they are adults.

You will need a small, soft human toothbrush and canine toothpaste. These can be purchased from pet stores or your veterinarian.

1. Have your puppy sit, lie down or, if you think he will struggle, have someone cradle him on his back.
2. Put a tiny amount of toothpaste on the moistened toothbrush.
3. Holding his muzzle firmly in one hand, use the thumb of that hand to lift the gum to allow gentle brushing as shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3.

Photo courtesy of Petsmart.com

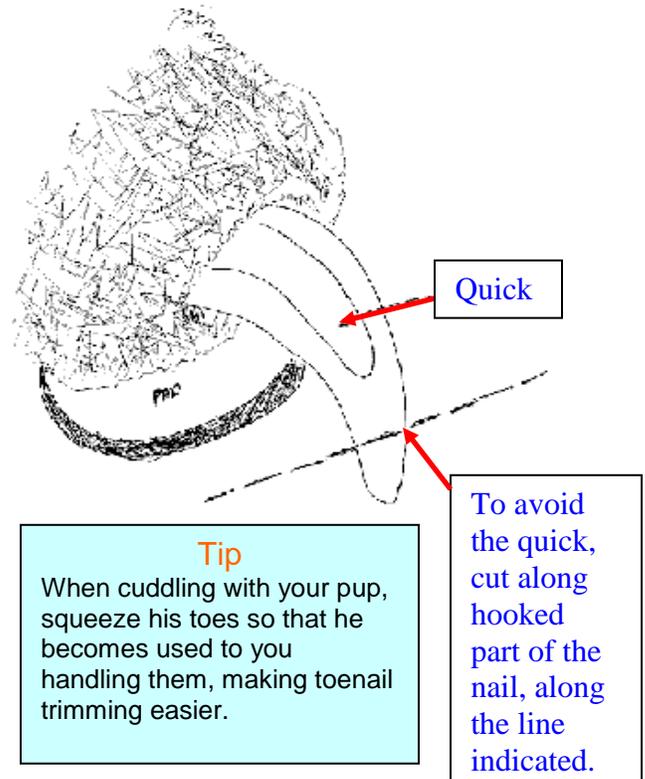
4. Start from the back of the mouth on one side, work towards the front, and then to the other side.
5. Always follow this up with praise and a treat.

This should be done every week so that he gets used to the procedure.

Nail Clipping

Long toenails are a hazard to your dog. They allow dirt to accumulate between toes, force the dogs' weight onto his heels, and can snag on carpeting. Trim his toenails every two weeks.

Figure 4.



1. Hold his paw with one hand and gently squeeze the pad to expose entire nail.
2. Use clippers to cut the nail, avoiding the quick, as shown in Figure 4.
3. The quick is easy to see with white nails, but almost impossible to see with dark nails. With dark nails cut along hooked part of nail.
4. When finished reward him with praise and a treat.

Appendix A: Puppy Behavioral Stages

Puppy Age In Weeks	Puppy's Needs	Expected Behavior and Time for Training
6 – 8	Weaning. Separation from litter. Human socialization. Security & love.	Strong domination/subordinate relationships are developing. Motor skills improved. Capable of learning simple commands and being leash broken.
9 – 12	Bonds to humans. Accepts human as leader. Human socialization.	Capable of learning Come, Sit, Stay commands. Needs confidence instilled. Begin housebreaking. Expose to variety of environments.
13 – 16	Security. Discipline. Socialization. Attention.	Learns by association. Needs continued low-key socialization and exposure to new environments.
17-24	Socialization. Love. Consistent discipline. Basic training.	Fully developed mentally; needs experience. Will attempt to establish dominance. Adapts a negative or positive attitude towards training. Praise lavishly to correct behavior.
25-32 (6-8 months)	Basic training. Consistent discipline. Continued attention & socialization.	Ready for beginning show or obedience classes. Attention span is lengthening. Needs continuing exposure to new situations. Males begin to assert dominance.
33 – 56 (8-12 months)	Continued socialization. Reassurance. Training. Affection.	Teething period ends. Puberty begins. Spay or neutering can be performed.
12-18 months	More disciplined & structured training. Love.	Training can be more intense.

Table information courtesy of [Sheltie Talk](#)

Appendix B: Correcting Behavioral Problems

Problem	Solution
Incessant barking.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give command "Quiet!" If this doesn't work; 2. If outside, squirt with water hose while giving command "Quiet!" 3. If inside, toss a tin can containing a few coins near him while telling him "Quiet!"
Jumping up.	Take his front paws and gently push him away while telling him "Off!" Do not step on his toes or knee him in the chest.
Chewing.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell him "No!" 2. Take the object from him. 3. Replace it with a rawhide or chewie. 4. Praise him.
Bolting through an open door or gate.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approach door with him on a leash. 2. Make him sit at the door. 3. Open the door. If he gets up, quickly snap the leash. 4. Tell him "No, stay!" Repeats steps 2 and 3 until he performs them correctly. 5. Go to a different door and try it there.
Running from you.	If your puppy gets free from you, do not chase him or it will become a game to him. Try the commands "Come!" "Cookie?" while shaking the treat container. I always call my puppy, then run the other way. He always turns around to chase me!

Some bad behavior is caused by health problems. If nothing solves the problem you are having, consult a veterinarian to rule out illness. Also, puppies who get little exercise or are bored will express it with bad behavior. Try 20 minutes of walking or hard play every day. You both will benefit from it.

Remember, you must teach your puppy now how you will want him to behave as an adult dog. If you will not want an 80-pound Labrador Retriever on your furniture, do not let him on it when he is a puppy. Ultimately, your puppy wants to please you, but you must teach him what pleases you. With positive reinforcement and consistency, you have the power to mold your puppy into the dog that you want him to be. It is all up to you.

References

McKinney, Betty Jo and Rieseberg, Barbara. *Sheltie Talk*. 1985. Self published.

Contributors

I owe a note of gratitude to my friend, Rosemary Schoenberg, owner of Rosewood Shelties and veteran dog trainer. Most of the advice found here came to me from her, when I was trying to train my pup. After trying different training methods from books and websites, with failure; I turned to her and finally had success. The things I tell you to avoid are some mistakes that I made personally.