

PUPPY PRE-SCHOOL HOMEWORK 1



1. CONFIDENCE

Give your puppy lots of positive experiences with the items (and more) on the "Socialisation Checklist".

First impressions are the most important: Make sure it's an especially positive one!

Teach your puppy that sudden changes in the environment are generally nothing to worry about (loud noises, people appearing behind fences, people opening umbrellas etc.): Talk in a happy voice and give treats whenever your dog experiences a surprise. Observe your puppy for signs of fear.

Prevention of separation anxiety:

Leave your puppy alone for short periods of varying length (even while you are home) and never make a fuss about going away and coming back. Walk through doors and gates and close them behind you in a matter-of-fact way and keep things equally low key on return. This will teach your dog that being alone is no big deal. You can leave them with interesting chew items and puzzle toys to make being alone a good experience. However, make sure this does not simply serve as a distraction only for your dog to start panicking once they realise you're gone.

2. BODY HANDLING

Now is the age to get your puppy comfortable about being restrained, handled and groomed. Be very generous with treats! Give treats during and after handling.

Lift ears, open mouth and pop a treat in, brief restraining hug, play with feet including between toes, gently pull tail, briefly grab your dog's collar under the chin, touch gums with toothbrush, touch nails with nail clipper etc.

Start gentle and gradually increase pressure and invasiveness.

Always watch your dog's body language to make sure they are entirely comfortable with the handling. If not, go easier.

3. TRAINING

Training Rules:

- Use tasty treats: Something your dog loves.
- Reward your dog immediately with a treat if they do the desired behaviour.
- Always reward your dog in the correct position (e.g. while they are sitting or lying down).
- Be patient. Never lose your cool.
- Repeat each level until your dog is successful at least 80% of the time, i.e. 4 out of 5 (or 8 out of 10) attempts.

SIT (LEVEL 1):

With a tasty treat in your hand, lure your dog's nose up. Give them the treat as soon as their rear goes down. If your puppy doesn't sit after a few repeats, start by first rewarding neck craning and then knee bending.

DROP FROM SIT (LEVEL 1):

Ask your dog to sit and reward them. With a tasty treat in your hand, lure your dog's nose down. If the dog gets up, immediately withdraw the lure and start again from the sit position. Give them the treat as soon as their elbows are on the ground (with rear also still on the ground!).

If your dog doesn't lie down, start by rewarding nose on the ground for 2 seconds, then 4 seconds, then wrist buckling or elbow bending. Check out <https://vimeo.com/171498058> for an example.

COMING WHEN CALLED:

Call "[your dog's name] come!" in a happy voice, back away from and prompt your puppy to come to you with happy talk, clapping hands, high pitched sounds, trilling sounds, whistling etc. As your puppy approaches, **praise** them extensively and - when they arrive – **TREAT!!!**

This is important behaviour so be generous!

Also, call your puppy for good things such as walks, dinner or play. Never call your puppy for something they might not like, especially to reprimand them.

PREVENTION OF RESOURCE GUARDING:

Guarding their resources is a normal, instinctive and common behaviour for dogs. For safety reasons, it is recommended to prevent this tendency with the following exercises.

Food guarding prevention:

While your puppy is eating, pick up the food bowl, add a bonus (tastier food than what is in the bowl) and then give it back. Do this at least once per meal to teach your puppy to *love* having their food taken away.

Object guarding prevention:

While your puppy is chewing on an item or playing with a toy, approach your puppy, briefly take away the item, give a tasty treat and then give the item back.

Location guarding prevention:

While your puppy is resting (on their bed, on the couch etc.), approach and touch your puppy and give them a treat, then walk away again.

People guarding prevention:

Have a stranger approach you while you are cuddling with your puppy. Have the stranger give your puppy a treat (unless your dog is already worried, in which case let the stranger simply drop treats and tell them not to look at the dog directly).

Have a person with a friendly dog approach you and your puppy and touch/cuddle/treat the *other* dog, *then* give your puppy a treat and praise.

Note: Do not do these exercises if your dog already displays guarding behaviour, i.e. growling, baring teeth etc. when approached. In this case your best option is to hire a positive reinforcement trainer. As a DIY alternative and for further education, I recommend Jean Donaldson's book "Mine!".