

Bringing Home a New Puppy? **10 Tips for Becoming the Positive Leader of Your Pack!** **(plus a BONUS tip at the bottom of the page!)**

After weeks, months, or possibly years of anticipation, the day arrives when you are blessed with bringing home your new four-footed baby! While you'll want to spend endless hours rubbing, smooching, playing and laughing with the newest member of your family, neglecting to set up rule and boundaries from the start can lead to behavior problems that may never end. Yes, love your pet. But realize that true love means more than fun and games. To have a pet you'll adore for years to come, it is vital that his introduction to your home, your rules, and your role be clear from the get go.

Tip One **Be a Pick Up Artist!**

You'll never get a second chance to make a first impression with your pet, so be sure to slow down, take your time, and remember this is a big deal for your new dog.

When you pick him up, he'll be tired and probably a little scared. He may have to relieve himself or not, depending on the last time he was taken out. If it will be an hour or more before you get home, you may want to find a quiet, grassy spot and let him out of the carrier for a few minutes and offer him a drink of water. He will be wearing a collar and it's a good idea to take a small leash with you and attach it to his collar. It's best to put him back in his carrier for the ride home.

Tip Two **Welcome Home!**

With all the excitement surrounding getting your puppy, you may not have considered what to do once you've got your puppy! You could be unlocking a world of trouble if you haven't thought about what to do once you unlock the front door.

Once home, another break on the grass in the yard is in order. Let your puppy relax and explore a little if he wants. Then it's time to take him inside and introduce him to parts of his new home. Limit his freedom by closing bedroom doors, bathroom doors, etc. You should have already decided what his boundaries

are going to be. Carefully think about where he will sleep at night. Whether or not he will eventually have access to the entire house. Where he will nap. It is critical to set these important limits from the start.

With boundaries in place, give him a small meal of dog food. Afterwards take him back outside to let him run around for awhile. When he tires, take him back inside and put him in the cage you've prepared for him. If it's already late in the day, he'll probably go to sleep and may not wake until morning. If it's still early, let him sleep until he wakes up, then take him outside before he goes back in the cage for the night. Be sure he has fresh water in the cage and a few chew toys in case he gets bored.

Positive Puppy Tales:

The cage should be placed in the spot where it will remain permanently. My husband and I enjoy having our beagles sleep in our bedroom. They have their own beds *beside* our bed. When they first came to live, they spent the first year sleeping in their cages.

Tip Three **To Cry or Not to Cry, That is the Question...**

Loving a pet means teaching him who is in charge. It's important for a puppy to learn that his home is safe and secure.

The answer to this all important question? Let him cry. During the first few nights after your puppy comes home, he may not go to sleep immediately. You must ignore his crying or he'll learn that you'll come running whenever he doesn't want to be alone. You can confidently leave him alone knowing he's relieved himself, he's comfortable, he has a toy and fresh water is available. He will be okay! If you're careful about making sure he's been able to run around, been walked, or played with until he's tired, you probably won't have a crying issue. And if there is crying, upping evening exercise might just do the trick!

Tip Four

Good Cages Make Good Pets

Please do not view your pet's cage as a "trap" to be avoided or a mere method of transportation. Instead, begin to see the "security blanket" it really is!

Plan to use your puppy's carrier – the one it arrived in – until it has outgrown that space. Later, transition to a cage just large enough to comfortably fit your growing puppy. Bigger is not better until the dog is older. Limiting space will help get potty training off to a successful start since your puppy is unlikely to poop or pee in such small quarters.

Your cage will serve several purposes. When you leave your puppy alone at home, he should go in the cage with a treat and water. Always strive to make his cage a happy, secure place where he can play and rest. As he grows, a timeout in his cage for inappropriate behavior is a great way to discourage bad habits, but don't make his home within a home a negative place. Time-outs for puppies work just as well as they do for kids. Meaning, just as you would send a child to his room to put an end to acting out, so should you give your puppy a break if needed. But it's still their room, so the goal is a change in behavior, not punishment. The cage should be a safe spot to rest, chew, take in the world around him, and sleep.

Tip Five

Teaching Independence

You should spend some time teaching your puppy that it's okay to left alone in his cage. He needs to learn that you'll be coming back and there's nothing to be afraid of.

Start out by leaving your puppy alone at night to sleep. Then leave him while you go into other rooms during the day. If he should start barking when you do this, go back and tell him, "No!" very firmly. Give him one of his chew toys, and then leave again. This time, don't go back until he's quiet. Praise him lavishly and give him a little treat when he's been quiet and let him out.

You should lengthen the time when he's left alone. Once he's learned that no matter how long you're gone, you'll always come back with a treat and praise, leave the house and go outside, staying somewhere close to listen.

Repeat this exercise until you feel confident he will remain quiet for however long is necessary.

Positive Puppy Tales:

For those of you who must leave him to go to work, try to find someone to take him out every three or four hours. If possible, arrange your schedule so you can do this yourself. Gradually, he'll be able to stay in his cage all day without a break but that's only true when he's fully mature so plan to take lunch breaks at home at the very least.

**Tip Six
Control Your Coddling!**

Establishing healthy boundaries is not the same as ignoring or abandoning your puppy – so don't feel bad for doing what is best for him!

There is no need to give into your puppy's every whim when it comes to showing affection. If you coddle your pet and give into his desire to be with you constantly you risk "giving" him control over you. If you baby your pet and coddle him because he is scared or nervous about something that is of no realistic threat, you inadvertently make his fear real. You can be close by and engaged in the tasks you have to do without constantly "checking in" on your puppy. In fact, going about your business will indicate to him that everything is in order and you have the situation under control.

**Tip Seven
Show Some Class**

Your puppy should be enrolled in obedience class as soon as possible. This training will create a well-mannered companion that will be a joy for life!

When it comes to taking professional classes, one session may not be enough. Some of my puppies have been to obedience class several times. Interestingly, it's not because they're particularly unruly but because they love spending interactive time with their owners and vice versa.

Tip Eight

Don't Make a Mountain Out of a Mess

Speaking of obedience, there are two hot buttons that your beloved pet is likely to push: chewing and potty accidents. But before you go flying off the handle, consider a calmer approach...

No one wants to come home to a blizzard of pillow stuffing covering the floor and there are ways to avoid such a mess. But should you find your puppy has chewed through your favorite pillow, shoes, or purse, do not punish him harshly. Simply show him the mess, tell him, "No", in a firm voice, and put him in his cage while you clean up the debris. Then go on with life as usual. It does absolutely no good to punish a puppy for something he did hours before. People tend to assume that dogs will make a connection between their wrongdoing and your punishment, but they don't...so please don't encourage other behavior issues by overreacting. In fact, the best defense is a good offense. Your puppy should be left home alone in his cage with his necessities.

Tip Nine

Don't Cry Over Spilt Milk (Or Wet Floors)

Potty accidents are part of potty training. But it might surprise you to learn that how long this process take is actually up to you...

The second hot button issue is potty accidents. If you catch your puppy in the act of piddling on the floor, simply say "No!" scoop him up and put him outside where he normally goes. If he finishes going outside, praise him lavishly for his good deed and let him stay out for a few minutes before you both go inside. It's good to praise him EVERY time you observe him going outside. **The key is to reward good behavior, rather than punish bad.**

The total housetraining program can be simple, or long and arduous, depending on your puppy's individual personality and how much time and structure YOU can

devote to it. Ideally, he should be taken out when he wakes up from a nap or first thing in the morning. Also after eating, after a play session, before a nap, before bedtime and after an extended stay in his cage. It's best to err on the side of taking him out too often, than not enough. Stay with him to be sure that he does go, and praise him lavishly when he does. (*I love that word lavishly!*)

As I previously described, deal with accidents calmly. Yelling, humiliating and calling undo attention to an innocent accident actually gives him the impression that relieving himself is not acceptable behavior. These mixed messages can prolong potty training and confuse your puppy. Much better to be calm from the start and strive to expedite the process as much as possible.

Positive Puppy Tales

I NEVER condone yelling at, or hitting a puppy or dog. Any and all harsh methods of discipline undermine trust. Confinement in his cage and calm reprimands are the only methods of discipline I recommend.

Tip Ten **Who's the Boss?**

This is where the rubber meets the road in becoming and maintaining leadership of your pack in your home.

My husband and I employ an exercise to encourage submission from the time the puppies are a week old. We lay them on their back and rub their tummies. We patiently teach them to relax and stop struggling before we will let them up again. This is the same method the mother dog uses to keep her puppies under control and tell them whose boss. By doing this from day one, you'll be more capable of handling any future aggressive behavior if and when it crops it. By immediately putting him on his back for a tummy rub and allowing him up only when you say so, you will curb any tendency toward dominance in your puppy and stop aggression in its tracks. It is totally necessary for YOU to be the dominant force in your pack (family). Your puppy WILL test boundaries. By showing him who's in

charge he will soon learn to accept his rightful spot in the hierarchy and let you be the strong, protective leader.

Remember always to be consistent with your puppy's training and socialization. A good rule of thumb: never let him do anything today you don't want him to do the rest of his life! By following the suggestions in these ten tips you will be well on your way to making your pet an indispensable part of your forever family!

About the Author

Jeanie Hudson is an expert on breeding, raising and loving beagles and has adapted her knowledge to help all types of dog owners get off on the right paw! For more information about the benefits of adding a puppy to your family, please visit Jeannie's page on petfinder.com

BONUS TIP!! Taking It Slow

After your puppy has settled in a bit, you'll probably be anxious to *do* things together: go for walks, start basic training, learn some tricks etc. It's very important to remember that you're dealing with an eight-week old baby. Such a young body and brain can only handle so much. If you walk him, go only a short way, never further than a couple blocks, then gradually increase the distance. If you push too hard and play too much, your puppy will protest by going on strike by crying and refusing to move. This will be very stressful for both of you.

You may even start thinking that you aren't cut out for puppy ownership.

TIME TO RELAX! Take a few days off. Don't ask your puppy to do much of anything other than basic necessities like potty training, correct chewing etc. Let him hang out in his cage with his toys and enjoy some much needed rest and recuperation.

You can avoid this setback by simply taking it slow the first few days (or weeks) you are together. Concentrate on getting to know each other indoors or out. Let your puppy explore and learn about his new world, with you by his side.