

puppytraining

Photography by Christopher Campbell



Getting a new puppy is an exciting time. Your puppy is so cute and lovable, and you just want to hold and cuddle her.

But your puppy won't always be little. Puppies grow up very fast and become adult dogs. That's why there is an important process that needs to start from the first day you bring your puppy home: training. Training is the key to having a well-behaved dog that's a welcome addition to your family and your life.

Training starts now

Don't make the mistake of thinking you should wait until your dog is a year old to begin training, or that your new puppy will just grow out of bad habits. Up to 16 weeks of age is a critical learning period for your puppy. If you want a well-trained dog, you've got to start training right now.

Think of it this way – everything you do with your puppy affects her behaviour. That's why it's so important for training to start early and for the whole family to be involved. (When children are involved with training, their bond with the puppy is strengthened.) Don't delay.

The goal is to teach your puppy what you want her to learn *before* she learns something inappropriate or undesirable. Once problems arise, training will be more difficult – you will have to undo what has already been learned and then train the behaviour you want.

Learning the techniques of positive puppy communication takes lots of practice and repetition until it feels natural. Then, puppy ownership can be joyful and effortless.

Knowing how to communicate with your puppy is the key to getting all the behaviours you want.

Learn about training early

Try to research training alternatives before you get your puppy. Start by asking your veterinarian for suggestions.



What about puppy school?

If you have trained dogs before, a few good books or videos may be enough to get started. But if you are a first-time puppy owner, a puppy class is a wise investment.



Photographed at Puppy People, Thornhill, Ont.

Some benefits of puppy school

-  Puppy classes teach you the essential techniques to control your puppy and get her attention.
-  Classes build your puppy's confidence and ability to socialize with people and other dogs.

When should school begin?

Puppy school usually starts around 11 to 12

weeks of age, up to four months. This is an important developmental stage – a window of opportunity you don't want to miss.

It's a positive sign if your potential puppy school asks for veterinary information about your puppy. Then you know that the other puppies in the class will be healthy.

Check with your veterinarian before registering your puppy in a class to make sure she has the inoculations she needs and that she has been dewormed. 