

Discipline and Training:

All dogs require discipline. They need to know their boundaries. A dog taught at an early age what is considered proper behavior in the house is a dog that is well balanced and happy, not to mention how happy the family is! Puppies are full of energy and will, just like small children, push the boundaries.

Disciplining a dog does not mean hitting him. Please never hit your dog. This is an antiquated training method that does nothing but foster a fearful, anxious dog. Positive reinforcement training, like clicker training can be used to train proper manners. Incessant barking, jumping up on guests, jumping up on kitchen counters, and any number of other unwanted behaviors can be corrected with consistent, persistent, calm training.

Remember that your puppy will bite. All puppies do and the Portuguese Water Dog is a very mouthy breed. They have been bred for generations to work in the water off of fishing boats. They are required to have the stamina and willingness to haul heavy, wet fishing nets through the water. Your puppy's mouth will bother him terribly in the first few months because of the changes between puppy and adult teeth. Offer him plenty of toys. If he decides your ankle would make a great chew toy, simply give him a soft chew toy to keep him busy instead. Redirecting your puppy's attention is the most effective way to teach them to look for something that belongs to them and chew on that. And most importantly (and probably the hardest to remember in the moment) is that when puppy bites your hand, try not to pull back and throw your hand above your head, which is the most natural of reactions to have. Instead, move your hand slowly away while saying a firm, "No!" or a negative verbal noise of your own choosing, and replace your hand with an appropriate chew toy.

Every household must determine what is appropriate behaviour for their puppy. Is it acceptable for puppy to jump on the furniture and cuddle beside family members? Is it acceptable for puppy to beg for food at the table? It is awfully cute when a small puppy tries to get your attention by jumping up on your leg but is it still going to be acceptable when that puppy grows to be 50 pounds and he jumps up on Great-grandma Ellie? Each family has to remember to have set expectations of behavior for the newest member and help puppy know and understand what those are. It takes patience, consistency and a whole lot of love.

Having decided what your family's expectations for puppy are and having made a pact that all family members will agree to the same rules, then how do you make your puppy that perfect family member? There are several tips we can share now.

Barking is particularly difficult to manage since we tend to respond to barking by raising our voices and yelling, "Quiet!" or "Stop it!". We understand that we want the dog to be quiet. Unfortunately, no-one has yet taught puppy how to speak English and all he hears is more joyous barking joining in with him. As our voice gets louder and more frustrated, puppy tends to simply get more excited and unruly. How can we break that cycle? Two ways. First is quick and simple. Keep an empty metal can with a lid that has been filled with coins. When puppy barks, quietly and calmly look directly at him, pick up the can and shake it to make a far more annoying noise than he could ever dream of making. Puppy should learn to quiet down very quickly.

The second way of dealing with barking or most any other unwanted behaviour is called body blocking. This [link](#) outlines body blocking very well. I have found body blocking to be invaluable in training my dogs.

There are literally hundreds of books written on how to teach your puppy proper manners and even tricks! We included some of our favourite books in last week's email.

Simple commands such as, "sit", "wait", and "down" are mandatory and great fun to teach a young puppy. Every dog must learn to "come" on command. This should be non-negotiable. Not only is it easier to simply call out "Fido!" than to chase a dog running full speed around the backyard, it can be lifesaving to the dog if he decides to chase that cute little squirrel across the backyard, through the neighbor's yard and across the street into possible oncoming traffic!

And when you are training puppy, remember that to him this is a game. And it should be fun for you too! While you and your puppy are training and learning new commands, keep a small supply of tiny treats in your pocket. When you give a "sit" or "down" command and puppy successfully does what you asked, have a party! A little treat and a 10 second time out for hugs and scratches will not only reinforce his success but also build a stronger bond between the two of you. So simple!

The single most important thing to remember in disciplining or training your puppy for anything is to never engage in any training technique if you are frustrated or angry. You can easily lose any progress you have made to that point.

Socialization:

Take your puppy with you to as many different places as you possibly can. Many banks and other small businesses keep small dog treats behind the counter to offer to puppies that come in. Pet stores always welcome dogs. Invite friends and visiting family members to pet your puppy. If they are willing, ask them to put their fingers into the puppy's mouth (after a careful hand washing). Share your puppy with other animals, especially cats and other dogs.

Puppy Kindergarten classes usually offer a period of time at the end of each class for free play time when your puppy can interact with other pups and handlers. Please always remember that you are the steward of your dog and that his welfare and safety solely rests with you. If for any reason you ever find that you and your puppy are in a situation that you are uncomfortable or that you feel is unsafe for any reason, it is your responsibility to maintain control and remove your puppy to a safer place.

Your puppy will come home after his first set of vaccines. Immunities from his mother's milk starts to wear off right around the time that he goes home and the vaccines have time to start working. Having said that, please be very careful where you let puppy go until after all his shots (at 16 weeks). Anytime puppy goes to the vet's office make sure that from the time you take puppy from your car until the time you are able to place him on the exam table in the patient room, that your puppy remains in your arms.

This will keep him safe from the myriad of viruses and bacteria that they would otherwise be exposed to on the floor of a veterinarian's office. My doctor's office requests that all patients with fever, cough or sniffles wear a mask provided for us at the door. Unfortunately, there is not that option for our dogs! Dog parks or any large, unknown areas are not worth the risk. There are still lots of ways to socialize puppy while still remaining safe. We will be sending home a puppy BINGO socialization sheet when you pick up your puppy! Lots of fun!