

## **Adolescent Preparation** **(or...Don't forget)**

Don't forget the statistics of how many dogs under 2 yrs old are euthanased, Because of normal doggy behaviours like jumping up, digging holes, barking etc.

NOW is the time to instill as many desired behaviours that you can, your puppy will be so busy doing the *right* thing he won't have time to be naughty.

And we shouldn't be telling him off for doing the wrong thing when we have not taught him sufficiently what is right.

We should be concentrating really hard now on continuing his good behaviour, to make it a habit for the future. In the great majority of our statistics the problems start from 8 to 18 months, so we have another 6 mths up our sleeve to really establish a good foundation for the future. The better your puppy is now the better he will be at that problem age, problems developing are harder to fix, prevention is easier than cure so they say.

The better our training now the better prepared both we and our puppy are for the dreaded adolescent period that is coming. The typical adolescent testing the boundaries that dogs do as well as children!! The more trained he is the more settled he is the less trying on your patience he will be. Preparing now means that all his good behaviours are well on the way to becoming good habits.

Don't forget the punishment rule... First teach the correct behaviour.

Compounding the adolescent surge is boredom, confinement, lack of activity both physical and mental, and lack of socialising. Keep up the socialising to keep his doggy language skills fine tuned. And don't forget that 10 mins training is equal to 30 mins exercise if you're short on time some days.

Keep him busy while he's young and restless and into everything. The more stimulation you provide the less time he has to get into mischief.

Keep up the training, even on those cold wet dark miserable days, they can be the start of our problems, lonely dog outside with nothing to do. Bring him in while you watch television – while the show is on you do mat training, eg he lies quietly on his mat next to you, during the adds get him up for some puppy pushups, eg sit/down/stand/down/sit etc, then a treat and a quick game, and then back to lying quietly on the mat when the show recommences. You will be providing company, teaching settling and being quiet even in the middle of a game behaviour, and preventing bad habits while you brush up on his skills, apart from relieving your annoyance at too many adds!

Or teach him some tricks during the commercials. And brief sessions are better learning tools than long sessions, plus you don't even have to leave the armchair.

Dogs learn even when we are not teaching them, so be careful what he does learn. Plan ahead. Don't leave him access to the rubbish bin for example, so that he never learns what fun it is to tip and what yummy things are at the bottom. Once these behaviours have been rewarded, (because they are fun for a dog), they are much harder to train out. Try to have him so addicted to his kong toys that he doesn't feel the urge to chew your pot plants instead.

Be careful with things like your recall. If the only time you call him in the park is the time that you put his lead on to go home, he'll learn really quickly to not come, as coming spoils all his fun. Never call him when its bath or tablet time either, you go to him, (until he's really reliable that is, then his reward level can be greater than the hard thing you are asking). And in the park call him to you regularly, give him praise and a treat when he comes, then tell him to 'go play', which is his best reward.

Careful with fencing, if your yard is a little boring and he happens to get out, the fun outside can be so good that he'll try again, and again, and again. Dealing with a hole digging or fence jumping escapist can be very frustrating, to say nothing of cars or the local dog catcher. Prevent problems happening.

Dogs are highly social animals, they are interactive, intelligent, active. They like company. Loneliness and stress from being alone can cause problems. Have him with you as often as you can, let him in if it suits you, let him feel part of the family, part of your social structure, don't leave him on his own all day.

Position his bed or kennel when he is outside, so that he can still be part of the family, have it near the backdoor, where he can see and hear you easily, having him way down the back of the yard will have him left out.

Remember rewards increase frequency of behaviours, (whether you have asked for the behaviour or not) so if he's outside lying quietly, go out and reward him.

Don't expect too much. Don't forget he is a dog and not a 4 legged human. He doesn't understand human unless we teach him, although they are **very** good on body language. Sometimes that can get us into misunderstanding our dog though, he recognises our angry body language and slinks and curls his body at us, (what they call appeasement gestures), we think he's acting guiltily, but those gestures in dog language mean 'please don't be angry, I like you' and most of the time they do not know what we are angry about, they are just trying to make us 'un-angry' as they do in doggy language.

Don't forget there is no right or wrong in dog. There is fun and not fun, reward and no reward. Chewing your furniture was fun while you were out, was not fun while you were home. Conclusion – chew when owners are not home.

Don't forget he won't know what is right unless you teach him.

Chewing your furniture is not wrong for him, chewing is stress relieving behaviour, or teething behaviour, or boredom behaviour. So we need to prevent stress, relieve boredom and provide appropriate chew toys. Chewing your furniture was fun for the boredom behaviour, reward for the teething behaviour, and relief for the stress behaviour. Are we telling him off for being stressed?

Keep up the socialising, as his doggy language skills will decline otherwise. (Like an english speaking child moving to Germany at 5 yrs old, unless they have practise its easy to forget.) Keep up his socialising, as he can be a target for other dogs if he commits a doggy social blunder and offends a superior dog, by clumsy unskilled use of 'dog'. (Like an adolescent 16 yr old at a cocktail party).

Learn to read or understand 'dog' yourself.

That way you'll know if an approaching dog is friend or foe.  
And if foe you'll know how to de-fuse the situation.

- By yawning and looking away for example, as that is a calming signal for dogs.
- By asking your dog to look away, which says to the newcomer 'hey I'm not a threat'.
- By asking your dog to sit facing away from another dog, which says 'I'm really not that concerned about all your bluster'

Trust your dog a little, give him some space on the leash to feel that he is not cornered, so he feels less threatened by other dogs approaching.

Keep up the socialising –  
Fear and Aggression are flip sides of the same coin.  
**Undersocialising.**

Most dog aggression is worry. Generally it is 'don't come too close I'm unsure'. 'Stay away I'm frightened of you' or 'Stay away my owner is worried'.

If he does get into a bit of a scrap don't panic. 95% of dogs are extremely careful to not hurt each other, and we all argue occasionally. If you raise the excitement level by panicking, that's generally when someone gets hurt. If you're not dealing with a maltese in a Rottie's mouth, trust him a little and run away, cartwheeling and being excited about where you are going, chances are he'll drop the argument (often thankful for the excuse to back out if he's young), and follow you.

Again keep up the socialising, even after he's had a minor altercation with another dog, if you stop now his skills will get even worse. (That is of course assuming your dog did not hurt the other dog, if this is the case seek professional help dealing with the problem.) What teenagers don't occasionally argue? Usually though the arguments are without serious injury.

Don't expect him to be perfect. He is after all a dog. He can only ever be as good as his genetic capabilities and the time and training YOU have put in. If he is not perfect then the trainer is who we look at. We teach him our human values, what is right, what we expect, how to behave. If we don't continue the lessons then they eventually become forgotten, (just like high school algebra!).

**Be aware of early warning signs.**

Be aware and fix them before something goes wrong. If he backs away from children, the **first** time is when to address the problem, what he is saying is 'hey I'm worried about this children thing', so follow the advice in the 'gotcha game', lots and lots of children to give him treats, don't wait until he is so worried about children that he bites one. If you are worried that he will bite then seek professional help before it is too late.

If he hits the brakes at the vet clinic door, then start the de-sensitising again. Don't fob it off with 'dogs don't like vets, do they?' Some dogs do, the ones that do not are frightened, and it is unfair if we leave them frightened when it IS fixable. Lots of visits to weigh, for the nurses to give treats, and nothing scary.

Don't forget the grabbing collar, the toenail preparation. The emergency sit. The putting treats in his bowl while he's eating.

**Keep up the socialising.**

Don't forget when he asks you for attention don't always give it. You will end up doing what your dog asks. Take his hint, but first ask him to sit/down/stand/sit shake etc, then all the attention he wants, as he has just earned it.

Channel his energy into acceptable behaviours. Don't leave him to improvise, as chances are some of his fun you won't find acceptable. Don't forget there is no right or wrong in dog, just reward or no reward.

Don't forget competing motivation, but don't use it as an excuse for non-compliance. Enforce obedience (without force), by insisting, urging, compelling him to obey, he will learn that you do mean it so he will obey, plus don't forget the reward. And the harder the ask the better the reward. If he stops sniffing some really great doggy smell because you asked him to sit, then say good dog go sniff, and let him sniff as the reward for compliance.

Especially through puberty don't forget competing motivation, (and even desexed dogs will go through puberty, although it will be a little easier). Proof all your commands without distractions, then with slowly increasing distractions.

**And especially don't forget that training is supposed to be fun,  
for both you and your dog.**