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# 10 Things Every Puppy Guardian Should Know!

by Ian Dunbar, Ph.D., MRCVS

## 1. Developmental Deadlines

Miss any of your pup's crucial developmental deadlines (at 8, 9, 12 and 18 weeks) and your dog will be playing catch-up for the rest of its life. Your puppy **MUST** be socialized to the home physical environment by 8 weeks, undergoing errorless housetraining and chew toy training by 9 weeks, and socialized to people by 12 weeks.

## 2. Errorless Housetraining

Even a single mistake is a disaster, since it signals many more to follow. Make sure you learn how to houstrain **BEFORE** you get your puppy. Specifically, your pup needs a Puppy Playroom (with bed, chew toys, water and toilet) plus a secure Doggy Den (with chew toys), to help you predict when your pup needs to relieve itself.

## 3. Home Alone

Your pup needs some acceptable form of occupational therapy to pass the time when left at home alone. Stuffing several Kong chew toys with a portion of your puppy's daily allotment of kibble will teach your pup to settle down quietly and calmly, thus preventing chewing problems, excessive barking and hyperactivity.

## 4. Socialization Puppy Parties!

Your puppy must be socialized to people **BEFORE** it is three months old. Thus, between 8 and 12 weeks of age, your pup needs to meet at least 100 people in the safety of your own home.

## 5. Bite-Inhibition!

The most important quality in a pet dog is a soft mouth. Your puppy **MUST** develop bite-inhibition by 18 weeks. Whereas it is unrealistic to expect dogs never to squabble, it is perfectly realistic to expect dogs to resolve their differences without causing harm. In fact, well-socialized dogs are really no different from well-socialized people!

## 6. Handfeed

to teach dogs to like hands and to like people, especially children, men and strangers. Handfeed to teach "Off", "Take it" and "Gently". Handfeed to prevent begging and food guarding. And handfeed to teach dogs to like kibble, which may then be used effectively as lures and rewards for handling and gentling exercises and for teaching basic manners.

## 7. Watch Me!

Attention is the foundation of all communication and training. When handfeeding, wait for your pup to glance at you before offering each piece of kibble. Then progressively increase the length of time your pup is required to look at you for each piece - one second, two seconds, three, five, ten, twenty etc. and before you know it, your pup will not be able to take his eyes off you.

8. Sit! Teaching your puppy just a single reliable 'emergency' command - Sit! (or down) can prevent most bothersome behavior problems. Just think of all the many things your dog cannot do if it is obediently sitting. For example, if your pup has been taught to sit when greeting people, it will not require reprimands for jumping-up!

## 8. Sit!

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## 9. No Free Lunch!!!

Totally integrate training into your dog's lifestyle by having short training preludes before all enjoyable activities (ask your dog to 'sit' to, say please, prior to opening doors, feeding dinner and couch privileges etc.) and short training interludes at frequent intervals during walks and play sessions. Remember, regular walks in unfamiliar areas are the very best way to enjoy keeping your dog well trained and well socialized.

## 10. Puppy Classes

Your puppy needs to be enrolled in a reward based puppy class BEFORE it is 18 weeks old. Apart from learning numerous fun games and training tips, off-leash play sessions are absolutely essential for establishing reliable bite-inhibition. Also, there is now some considerable urgency for your dog to play catch up visa-versa learning the requisite doggy savvy for a stress-free canine social life. And last but not least, puppy classes are a great evening out for you and your pup.

*By Ian Dunbar, Ph.D.*

## Puppy Extra Credit:

All dogs need to believe that humans can be trusted. That can't happen if you are using fear or intimidation in any aspect of your puppies' life. Teach your puppy that you are a predictable source of all good things, a true leader.

- Never "Alpha Roll" your puppy
- Do not use old school training methods that use choke chains or pinch collars
- Only dog friendly training techniques
- Set your pup up to succeed, do not simply wait for them to fail

## Books to help you succeed

Before You Get Your Puppy, by Ian Dunbar  
(Available free at tails!)

After You Get Your Puppy, by Ian Dunbar

The Power of Positive Dog Training, by Pat Miller

On Talking Terms with Dogs; Calming Signals, by Turid Rugass

## Television Programs to help you succeed:

It's Me or The Dog, Victoria Stillwell.  
Animal Planet, Saturday's 8:00pm

Barking Mad, Mark Evans  
Animal Planet, Sunday's 8:00am

