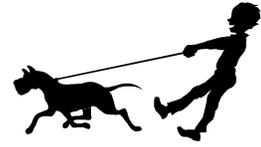


LESS THAN EXCITING BEHAVIORS ASSOCIATED WITH UNNEUTERED MALE DOGS!



ASPCA NATIONAL SHELTER OUTREACH

DOG CARE

Periodic binges of household destruction, digging and scratching. Indoor restlessness/irritability.

Pacing, whining, unable to settle down or focus. Door dashing, fence jumping and assorted escape behaviors; wandering/roaming. Baying, howling, overbarking.

Barking/lunging at passersby, fence fighting. Lunging/barking at and fighting with other male dogs.

Noncompliant, pushy and bossy attitude towards caretakers and strangers. Lack of cooperation.

Resistant; an unwillingness to obey commands; refusal to come when called. Pulling/dragging of handler outdoors; excessive sniffing; licking female urine.

Sexual frustration; excessive grooming of genital area. Sexual excitement when petted. Offensive growling, snapping, biting, mounting people and objects. Masturbation.

A heightened sense of territoriality, marking with urine indoors. Excessive marking on outdoor scent posts.

The behaviors described above can be attributed to unneutered male sexuality. The male hormone testosterone acts as an accelerant making the dog more reactive. As a male puppy matures and enters adolescence his primary social focus shifts from people to dogs; the human/canine bond becomes secondary. The limited attention span will make any type of training difficult at best.

If you are thinking about breeding your dog so he can experience sexual fulfillment ... don't do it! This will only let the dog 'know what he's missing' and will elevate his level of frustration. If you have any of the problems listed above, they will probably get worse; if you do not, their onset may be just around the corner.

Dogs can be neutered after 8 weeks of age and should be neutered before the onset of puberty (usually between 6 and 9 months) and before any of these undesirable behaviors appear. If a specific behavior is allowed to develop and become an established part of the dog's routine, it may be difficult to eliminate. This does not mean that if the dog is already exhibiting these behaviors you should not bother to have him neutered. **Neutering does facilitate retraining of the dog.** More often than not, habituated behaviors can be greatly reduced or eliminated if the male has been castrated prior to the beginning of serious retraining efforts.

Micky Niego, Companion Animal Services
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BASIC TRAINING



What is this gorgeous dog doing in the shelter? Why would someone give him away just because they are moving?

The answer may be that he's just plain rowdy and unmanageable. He's a turbocharged maniac. Besides lunging at everything in sight, this dog doesn't come when called; he runs away.

Because the dog is a chore to walk, he doesn't get exercised often enough or long enough for him to blow off steam. If he's a suburban dog, he spends too much time in the backyard digging, pacing or perhaps fence fighting. His urban counterpart is chewing everything in sight and bursting into a volley of barks at each and every sound in the hall. These are the very behaviors that landed him in the shelter.

It doesn't have to be that way. Teaching a dog functional skills: SIT, DOWN, STAY, HEEL, LEAVE IT and COME can change things dramatically. In the process of giving the dog some basic vocabulary and setting some rules and guidelines, the relationship between person and dog becomes enhanced. They become a team. There is much information available in the form of books and videos that makes humane training skills accessible to anyone who wants to learn.

Videos are the best thing to happen to dog training since the printing press. Books talk a great game, but videos make it come alive. Watching again and again, the viewer can pick up all the nuances of training; the timing, body positions, use of equipment and more. The action photo shows technique, but not the energy or coordination that is involved. Videos allow you to see it and hear it. . . all in your own living room! Rent a few. Get a feel for a few different techniques or ideas.

The leash and collar are important pieces of training equipment. Good quality equipment will hold up well and be an asset in helping you teach and direct your dog. Poor quality or ill-fitting equipment can break or come loose and foil your best efforts.

There are several types of collars that are readily available. Buckle collars wrap around a dog's neck in the same way a belt goes around your waist. They are made of nylon web or leather, rolled or flat in appearance. The collar must fit well or the dog will be able to slip out of the collar. Check to make sure it cannot slip over the dog's head. Be prepared to buy several collars for a puppy since they are in a stage of rapid growth. Remember to check the collar frequently. Buckle collars are a must for puppies and small dogs; they are best used with dogs that don't pull and forge or fearful and geriatric dogs. All dogs should wear buckle collars with their license and identification tags securely attached.

The slip or choke collar is a valuable training tool for some dogs. The slip collar must be put on correctly and used properly or it stays tight even though the handler has let up on the leash. They can do damage to a dog's trachea or spinal cord if improperly used. Dogs should never be left in a crate or unsupervised while wearing a slip collar. Nor should they be allowed to play with other dogs. The result could be strangulation. Fearful dogs that may bolt in panic should never be walked with a choke collar.

Ever controversial is the prong or pinch collar. It may look like a medieval torture device but it does have its place in training. Dogs that are extremely touch insensitive and/or have thick coats or are easily distracted may benefit from a collar that communicates better than a slip or buckle collar can. People who lack strength and stature may also find it easier to train using a prong collar (or head halter) to gain initial control. The number of links in the collar must always allow the collar to close fully without putting excessive pressure on the dog's skin. Using too few links can puncture the dog's neck, too many links makes it a useless tool. Once training has proceeded beyond basic control, most dogs can graduate to a slip collar and then finally to a buckle collar. Think of these tools in the same way that many people use training wheels on a bicycle — temporary.

Head halters are relatively new in dog training. Fearful, mouthy, bold, independent or aggressive dogs may benefit from being led by the head (like a horse) rather than being led by the neck. Halters give handlers better control without putting stress on the dog's fragile spine.

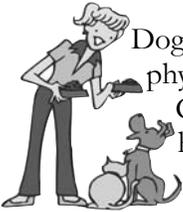




The training leash should be 6 feet long and no wider than an inch; preferably less. The width should be in proportion to the dog. Cotton web or leather leashes are more comfortable to work with than nylon. Pay special attention to the bolt snap that attaches the leash to the collar. Make sure that it is not too cumbersome or heavy in proportion to the size of the dog, and can be easily attached or disconnected from the collar. Stitching or braiding as opposed to tacking or stapling are indications of good quality.

If the dog bites at the leash, chewproof it. Do not give in to the dog's attempt to get control; do not use a steel chain leash. Use a cotton web (absorbent) leash and spray it down with an anti-chew agent. This type of product is readily available in pet supply stores and catalogs. If the dog tries to mouth the leash, it will taste awful. Combine that with a firm warning, "LEAVE IT" or "STOP IT" and the dog will get the message. The leash is an extension of the hand and he should not put his mouth on it! Don't confuse the dog by playing tug of war with the leash.

Voice and posture must accurately reflect what you are feeling but it must be delivered in a way that the dog understands. To warn or reprimand, stand tall, lean toward the dog slightly, speak in a deep strong voice. This can be challenging for women who have soft voices. When surprised or stressed, some women have a tendency to become shrill or whiny. To let the dog know that he did well, relax your posture or kneel down. Speak in a cheerful happy manner. Remember to smile. Men with deep, resonant voices will have to work at developing a lighter praise tone.



Dogs respond very well to training with food lures and rewards; hard corrections and harsh physical manipulations do not build confidence. Never train when you are angry or in a hurry.

Good relationships are not built on intimidation. A well-trained, well — behaved dog does not happen by accident. She is the product of a carefully nurtured relationship based on trust.

Training sessions should be short and frequent rather than long drawn-out affairs. Work on one variable at a time. For example, if you are working on SIT/STAYS, remember that length of time holding the stay, the distance from trainer to dog and the distractions in the area are points to be considered. Don't work the dog off-leash until he is quite proficient on-leash. Get a longer leash to do distance work! To go from a 3 minute to a 4 minute DOWN/STAY, reduce the level of distraction and move in closer to the dog. Set it up so the dog can be successful and that you can catch the dog before he begins to break his position. Once the dog can hold the position for the desired time, add either the distractions or the distance, NOT BOTH SIMULTANEOUSLY. Dogs do not generalize well. In order to understand that sit means the same thing indoors and out, on carpeting as well as linoleum, practice it in many locations under varying circumstances.

Use common sense when training. Don't try to teach new things to a highly distracted dog. Those same distractions will later become training challenges. When working on a new concept or exercise it is best to work with a calm and focused dog. When teaching and training, act like a leader. Don't repeat commands again and again. No chanting "sit, sit, SIT!"

Lastly, remember that there is more than one way to work with and train a dog and that one method won't work on all dogs. Be fair. Your dog should enjoy a training session. If what's being done causes the dog to become frightened or intimidated, physical and/or vocal corrections may be too harsh. If it's not working, don't keep doing it! Perhaps the book or video being used is for dogs that are more resilient. Just because a certain method worked with another dog doesn't mean it will work with your current dog. If the dog begins to scratch and pick, yawn or shake off with each command, he's getting stressed. Take a break. Play a game. Reassess the training routine. You may be moving too quickly. Or the dog may just be responding to the realization that he can no longer control the situation.

If you feel your home training has stalled, perhaps group obedience classes or private one-on-one lessons are in order. It will be worth the investment. A well-trained dog is a joy to live with and a good-will ambassador for its kind.

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Dog Talk

What we say to our dogs is important. How we say it is crucial. Different tones of voice are used to distinguish between commands, corrections, and praise. Commands are given in a firm, strong tone of voice. No chanting please. Corrections get a little lower, sharper and growlier. Praise is more exuberant and excited — pleasant, but not so exuberant as to incite him to wiggle out of control.



All commands should be preceded by the dog's name. How else will Rover know you're talking to him? But even before that, you're going to teach Rover to look at you. Trace a line with your index finger from Rover's eyes to yours. As soon as he makes eye contact, talk to him and encourage him to sustain the eye contact for a few seconds with a "Good watch!" in a pleasant, upbeat tone of voice. You can also get Rover's attention by taking a little tidbit of food after letting Rover sniff it, moving the food up to your eye level. When Rover looks up, praise him and give him the food treat. Now that you have his attention, he is ready to listen.

Your dog's mother did not repeat herself over and over again. Neither should you. Once the dog understands what the command means, it should only be said once, "Rover, sit!" If he continues to sniff the air, or otherwise ignore you, it's "NO, sit!" (an instructive reprimand) and then if you must, place the dog in the sit position.

When teaching a command for the first time, it is important to help the dog to be successful by luring him into the position. Dogs are not born with an innate understanding of words. They learn by associating words with actions.

Be consistent! You should only ask the dog to do one thing at a time. If you ask your dog to "Sit down," how is he to know which to do? "Sit" and "Down" are two different commands. Be specific with your commands. When you want him off the couch, don't interchange commands like "down" and "off." Make sure all family members are using the same commands, otherwise the confusion will delay training success.

Above all, keep it positive. You're communicating and building a relationship. You work for rewards (salary, bonuses, commissions), so will your dog!

Vocabulary List

WATCH ME or **LOOK AT ME!** Get your dog to focus on you and make eye contact.

PHEWY/ECH/NO/WRONG! Wrong choice, the dog blew it. Should be said in a low, firm tone of voice.

OUCH or **IEEEE!** Stop that mouthing, it hurts. When your dog bit down too hard on his littermates, they yelped at him and stopped playing.

GOOD DOG/WHAT A GOOD KID! Right choice. Should be said in an upbeat, happy tone of voice. You want the dog to know that what he did was wonderful and he should keep doing it.

SIT! The most basic of all commands. Can be practiced before eating, at street corners, in elevators, whenever you need to get active control of your dog.



DOWN! This means to lie down. Down is a very subordinate position so some bossy dogs may not readily comply. To be used when you want your dog to be comfortable or when you need control of a dog throwing a tantrum. Do not confuse this with “Off!”

STAND! Use this when you want the dog to go from a sit or down and stand with all four feet on the ground. This is very useful at the vet’s office or at the curb on a rainy day.

STAY! This means do not move from whatever position you are in. You may ask your dog to “sit stay,” “down stay,” etc.

OKAY! Dog is released from whatever position you asked him to assume. He is done working until the next command is given.

LET’S GO! This is the command for controlled walking, what you do on a regular basis with your dog. The dog may go out to the end of his six-foot leash and sniff around and do his thing but he may not drag you down the street or trip you by crisscrossing in front of or behind you.

HEEL! This is a very precise position at your left side. The dog walks along beside you. If you stop, the dog stops. Heel is a good command to use on very crowded streets or when you want your dog very close, such as when there’s broken glass in your path.

COME! When your dog hears this command, he should leave whatever he is doing and come to sit in front of you. Because this can be a lifesaving command, you should always give it in the most cheerful, inviting tones. Reserve a very special treat for teaching it and never use it to call your dog to you to do something he does not like.

OFF! Use this for jumping up on either people, furniture, or counter tops. Don’t confuse this command with “down.”

TAKE IT! Teach your dog to take food or toys using this command. The dog should wait until you give the “take it” command before putting the offered object in his mouth.

DROP IT or OUT or GIVE! This means that the dog should spit out whatever is in his mouth. It is important to teach this command using a reward system or you can create an overly possessive dog.

LEAVE IT! This tells your dog not to even think about picking up the object, to avert your eyes from the object, other dogs, rollerbladers, etc. Very useful on city streets.

Jane Flanagan Kopelman
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NIP MOUTHING IN THE BUD !!

Do you have a puppy that would rather use your arm than a bone as a chew toy? While it is normal for puppies to use their mouths when playing with each other, this behavior becomes a problem when it carries over into their interactions with us.



Many breeds are genetically inclined to use their mouths to do a job. Sporting breeds are the retrievers and the carriers of items. Working and the Herding breeds use their mouths to control the movements of humans or other animals. Terrier breeds are motion-activated and will chase anything they perceive as small rodents, including your feet. Understanding these tendencies in your own puppy, whether a mixed breed or purebred, can help in dealing with the problem of mouthing.

At a very young age, puppies begin to learn how much pressure with their mouths is too much by the reactions of their mothers and littermates. When puppies play, they chomp each other's ears and chew each other's necks until one bites down too hard. Then, the bitten puppy lets out a piercing "iey, iey, ieyyy" (referred to as the wounded puppy noise), gets up and walks away. This teaches the biting puppy that when he is too rough, play ends. Since dogs are social animals, this in itself is a correction. The puppy learns bite inhibition through these playfighting sessions when allowed to remain with his litter until at least seven weeks of age. This is one of the most important lessons puppies carry into adulthood, especially concerning their relationship with people.

As a new puppy owner, it is necessary to establish what is and isn't acceptable behavior from the very first day. Puppies benefit from expectations that are consistently enforced. Teething lasts from four to six months, so mouthing is quite common then. If mouthing has not gotten under control by the time the puppy enters adolescence at six months, not only will you have a less cooperative teenager to handle, but a larger, stronger jaw to deal with as well. Mouthing can become a way for your puppy to try to control you, allowing him to take that first step towards assuming a leadership role within your home. The following techniques are recommended for most puppies up to four months of age, depending upon their size and the severity of the problem.

Initially, a puppy will use his mouth to investigate his environment. Throughout the teething process, it gives a puppy relief to chew on all manner of items, soft and hard. Providing appropriate items for your puppy to focus his attentions on can sometimes be a simple way of solving a mouthing problem.

Indestructible chew toys like large nylon bones or hard rubber Kongs™ can provide a positive outlet for mouthing. Large rawhide bones and carrots can be placed in the freezer and given to a teething puppy. Braided fiber knotted tugs dipped in chicken broth or water and then frozen are also a good option.

If your puppy is chewing on you, the moment the pressure increases use your "wounded puppy" noise leaving your hand in their mouth. Once the pressure is released, slowly remove your hand. You may wish to offer the back of your hand for your puppy to lick. By doing this, not only are you teaching him that your skin is tender, but also that you expect a sign of deference (licking your hand) from him. Praise him in a calm manner if his cooperation is immediate and offer him an appropriate chew toy. Do not offer a





toy while your hand is still in his mouth, or you will be rewarding the wrong behavior. You may also choose to assign a command like “no bite” or “no mouth,” so he will associate his behavior with your correction. This method should work with the average, eager-to-please puppy. For piranha puppies, a squirt of breath spray (such as Binaca™) in the mouth when mouthing may serve as a negative reinforcer. To avoid the minty freshness, the puppy will keep his mouth closed.

Does your puppy start mouthing you if you don't play when HE wants to? Is he constantly tripping you up or trying to play tug-o-war with the leash when you're walking in the direction YOU want to go? Is he uncooperative when you ask him to do something like get off the couch or wait for you to go through the doorway first? If your answer is “yes” to these questions, you may have a bossy or dominant puppy. With this type of puppy, you may need to exercise a little more discipline.

Discipline does not mean physical punishment, it means correcting an unwanted behavior and teaching a new, more desirable one. In this case, we want a puppy that understands by our reactions that his behavior is unacceptable. Since he may not look for as much guidance from you, the puppy needs to learn to accept you as a leader. The first step in letting a bossy puppy know you are in charge is to handle him in a variety of ways. Touching the paws and tail of a confident puppy often stimulates a mouthing response. Rather than forcing him to accept being handled, the goal is to increase his comfort level. Touch a toe and give a treat if he has not already mouthed you. If he does, use your “no mouth” or similar command and try again. Continue on until you are able to gently squeeze his paw in a non-threatening manner. This will help later with nail trimming as well.

As a prelude to good dental care, your puppy should also get used to fingers in his mouth. Begin by sliding your finger coated in tuna fish oil or one of the commercially prepared dog toothpastes, into the pouch created by his jowls on the side of his muzzle. Try to briefly massage his gums, praising all the while. If this presents no problem, slip back towards the molars, actually letting your finger run over the surface of the tooth. If, at this point, your puppy bites down too hard, use one of the corrections previously mentioned, again offering the back of your hand to lick.

With a puppy that is really being obnoxious, a more direct approach may be needed. For this method, your puppy should be wearing a well-fitted buckle collar. Should he begin to mouth you, slip your fingers under his collar just under the jaw on either side. Looking directly into his eyes, say “no mouth” or similar command in a growly voice. Wait for him to look away or to put his ears back slightly as a sign of submission. Release him and walk away or briefly close him in another room for a few minutes as a “time out.” There is no need to shake or strike the puppy, he will get the message.



For the lunging, snapping puppy, you need to be aware of how you may be motivating him to mouth. Beware that movement inflames the behavior. Never encourage games involving your hands or feet as targets. Hold your leash so that it never dangles. Until you have started to retrain your puppy, it is a good idea to avoid wearing loose, flowing garments. It is natural to raise our arms when we feel physically threatened. Unfortunately with a lunging puppy, this may lure him closer to your face.

Instead of pulling your hand away when your puppy mouths you, push your hand a little further into the puppy's mouth. This creates a bit of discomfort causing him to “spit” you out. You regain control of the situation by reversing his action. Once your hand has been released, praise. Spraying your hands and leash (cotton web preferably) with a commercially prepared, bitter tasting spray can act as a deterrent. Diluted lemon juice can be used in a pinch.

If the above methods don't work, you may need to become a “statue.” Instead of your puppy playing “tag, you're it,” cross your arms across your chest, turn your back to your puppy, and become motionless. When you do not respond, your puppy gets no reward for his behavior. When done consistently, this should extinguish the “game.” This method also works for a puppy that tries to initiate games of “tug-o-war.” If the leash goes slack instead of pulling back, the fun goes out of it for the puppy.



If you are having a serious biting problem, especially with an older puppy, consult your veterinarian and consider bringing in a private trainer or behaviorist to help you solve the problem. To find a trainer, ask your veterinarian for a referral or call a local obedience club or humane society. Ask what methods they use and speak to former clients if possible. Contact The Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT) at www.apdt.com for a list of trainers in your area. Rule out any trainer that advocates harsh corrections, as they can have a long-lasting negative effect on your relationship with your puppy. They could make matters worse. Guidance and consistency are key when training, even when those needle-sharp teeth are gnawing away at your patience.

Deirdre Ryan Rivas
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ASPCA NATIONAL SHELTER OUTREACH

DOG HELP

NO LEAPIN LIZARDS: GETTING CONTROL OF YOUR DOG'S JUMPING PROBLEM

Do you find it necessary to lock Bouncing Bowser in another room before inviting in friends and relatives so their clothing remains intact and their hips and wrists remain unbroken? Do you walk Raucous Rover at odd hours of the day and night to avoid meeting another living soul on the sidewalk? If so, it sounds like you have a jumping problem.



Jumping problems are most often found with adolescents (dogs 6-18 months old). Toy, terrier and sporting breeds such as Italian Greyhounds, Poodles, Jack Russells, and Labrador Retrievers are notorious jumpers. And belligerent, dominant dogs such the Rottie that puts his feet on your shoulders to better stare you in the eye or the Pit Bull that uses you like a basketball backboard also cause jumping mishaps. Dogs jump up because they want to get closer to someone's face.

For most, peak jumping behavior is observed around the high points of your dog's day — mealtime, your homecoming, walk time (you pick up the leash and the bouncing begins), out on the walk itself, and when friends and relatives come to call. This problem can be solved by calm, consistent training. The proper amount of exercise for your dog's breed type is of great help, too! Lack of exercise results in out-of-control whirlwinds who lack the ability to focus.

WHAT TO DO:

Since a dog jumps in order to solicit attention and to get nearer to your face, when you see him rev up to leap, say "No, off" and turn away from the dog. Removing your attention (a reward to the dog) is a gentle, effective way to correct the dog. As soon as he has settled either with four feet on the floor or in a sit/down-stay, turn back around, drop to your knees and quietly praise the dog.

➤ Give the jumping behavior a name, so you can turn it on and off. At my house, it's called "leapin' lizards" but "paws up" or "feet up" can suffice. Teach your dog how to jump up on command, then add "no" as in "no paws up" to let the dog know when you don't want him to jump up.

➤ More importantly, give the dog something else to do. Obedience training is a strong plus when trying to get a jumping problem under control. A dog holding a sit or down-stay is not a jumping dog. When attempting the sit or down-stay, avoid pushing, shoving, flapping your arms or other fast, excitable movements. Use a lure-reward method rather than physically manipulating the dog. Avoid raising your vocal tone or whining. All extra movements and excited vocalization will incite the dog. Here is a situation where the old Bauhaus motto, "Less is More," really applies.

➤ To aid the dog in holding his sit or down when visitors arrive, put him on a leash before opening the door; this way, you have a means of control at your fingertips.

➤ For an unfocused bouncing maniac, give him just enough leash to do a sit or down-stay and step on the rest. When the dog attempts to move, he will correct himself. (This may not work for a 100 lb. person with a 200 lb. dog, but it works well for most handlers.)



▶ Be consistent. Never let the dog jump up without being directed to do so. A dog cannot distinguish between dirty, old blue jeans and a designer suit. He cannot tell which days it is okay to jump on you by what you are wearing or what the weather is like. (“If it's cool and dry and I'm wearing my jogging suit, jump away. If it's raining and I'm wearing my white Chanel suit, don't you dare lay a paw on me!”)

▶ Be consistent with strangers, too. Do not let someone confuse your dog by stopping you in mid-correction by their crooning, “It's OK, I just looove dogs,” while kissing and stroking your dog and rewarding him for his misbehavior. There is nothing wrong with not allowing people to pet your dog unless he is on a stay command. Guests to your home are no exception. Warn them beforehand. (“I'm training my dog not to jump up unless commanded. I could really use your help. Please don't pet him or even acknowledge him unless he's holding his stay.”)

For the Slow-Learner, jumping set-ups are in order. On a week-end or vacation day, arrange for a friend, neighbor, or relative to ring your doorbell every 10-15 minutes for a couple of hours. Each time, put your dog on a leash, command him to down or sit-stay and open the door and greet your visitor. Sometimes giving the dog a distinct place such as a small foyer rug helps him to focus on his job (go to your place and lie down). Your visitor can give your pup a treat or a tickle if he is behaving, but should ignore him if he is not.

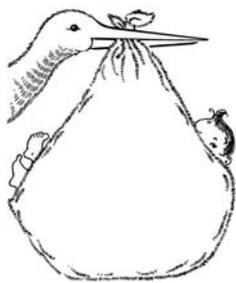
Once the dog is under control, the visitor leaves, only to return again in another 10-15 minutes. This goes on until Rover understands that his job is to stay put until he is told to do otherwise.

WHAT NOT TO DO:

Remember that your dog is your friend and companion. There is no need to knee him in the chest, hit him on the head with a children's book, squeeze his front paws 'til he is frantic (this often leads to mouthing), or step on his back feet — solutions you may come across in out-dated literature. By teaching him the acceptable behavior and rewarding him for carrying it out, you become the fair, humane leader every dog needs.

Jacque Lynn Schultz
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"BOWSER MEETS BABY"... OR HOW TO INTRODUCE YOUR NEW BABY TO THE FAMILY DOG



Congratulations, you're going to have a baby! In all the flurry of activity, many parents-to-be forget to prepare the family dog. This can be a costly mistake. Dogs are social creatures. Left on their own, they form packs. The pack is organized. There are leaders and followers, all equally essential to the pack's survival. Your dog belongs to a pack, too: your family. The people lead, the dog follows. It's that simple. It is important to recognize and respect your dog for who and what he is — a dog. You must be able to communicate with him and read his body language. He needs structure and guidance if he is to function appropriately within the family. How? Read on.

BEFORE BABY ARRIVES

How good are your dog's obedience skills?

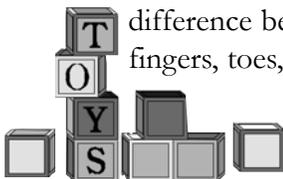
If your dog does not know the commands SIT, OFF, DOWN, and STAY; teach them. Use lots of praise and positive reinforcement. Make sitting and staying a wonderful thing! Begin to add distractions such as dolls dressed in the baby's layette, wheel around the baby carriage, get tapes of crying babies, be creative. Use treats, favorite toys and lots of praise and love. Let the dog know when he is right! If your dog jumps up on people, it is very important to train him to keep all four feet on the floor. The dog can do serious harm by jumping on you while you're cradling junior in your arms. At this point, it doesn't matter that the dog is happy to see you. Teach him to sit rather than jump. Remember you want the dog to be successful and to have fun.

Is your dog spayed or neutered?

Neutered and spayed dogs make better family companions. Unaltered dogs more likely to growl, snap, and bite than their neutered counterparts. Unneutered males tend to be bossy, pushy and challenging. They are easily distracted, making training difficult at best. Unspayed females go through hormonal changes before, during and after each heat cycle, causing their behavior to become erratic and sometimes aggressive. Intact dogs experience sexual frustration and engage in household marking, daring escapes and overbarking — not to mention mounting both children and adults.

Does your dog guard food, bones, balls or toys?

If your dog guards objects, he must learn that this is unacceptable behavior. You may be able to tell the difference between dog toys and baby toys but your infant cannot. Don't risk your baby's fingers, toes, or life; train the dog. As his primary caretaker, you must be able to take any item out of your dog's mouth. If he bares his teeth, growls or threatens you, call a behavior consultant. While many dogs can be retrained, you should not attempt this without professional assistance.



Does your dog have a strong predatory drive?

This is one of the most important questions to answer. Dogs with strong predatory drives may view infants as prey resulting in attacks in which infants are mauled or killed. Be honest. A newborn infant bears little resemblance to the humans most dogs know and love. They sound, smell, and move in unfamiliar ways. Don't be lulled into a false sense of security. Some dogs don't express their drive on the child until the baby starts crawling or toddling. The high pitched squeals and jerky movements of babies and toddlers can trigger predatory behavior, even though you may not have witnessed it before. Does your dog chase cars, bicyclists, joggers or small game like squirrels and cats? Has your dog ever caught and/or killed small game? If he has, you need to consult a behaviorist, preferably before the baby is born. In extreme cases, the dog may need to be re-homed or euthanized.

Has your dog bitten anyone?

Please don't rationalize this. Has your dog's teeth connected with human flesh? That is a bite. Has your dog snapped at anyone? A snap is a warning or a bite that didn't connect due to your quick reflexes. A dog with this type of history must be evaluated; call a behaviorist, now.

SHE'S HERE!

Before the baby comes home, have Dad or Grandma bring home a blanket or a towel that the baby used. Do not wash them. Leave them around within easy reach of the dog's nose. Let him become familiar with the scent. Encourage him as he curiously investigates the scent. Be upbeat and positive; "That's our new baby! She's coming home tomorrow. You're just gonna love her!"

If you are considering home birth, the dog should not be present for the actual birth. Board him with a neighbor or have someone supervise the dog, taking him for long walks to make sure he's fully exercised. If he's crate trained, confine him. Wait until things settle down before introductions. Then let the dog sniff articles the baby has been in contact with. This can happen in a matter of hours after the event.

BOWSER MEETS BABY: THE INTRODUCTION

Mom, greet the dog without the baby in tow. Give him a genuine hello, let him know you're OK. Let the dog sniff you up and down; he'll pick up the baby's scent on you. Pay close attention to his responses.

After the initial excitement has calmed down and all is quiet, have one person hold the baby, while whomever the dog is closest to and obeys most readily has the dog on leash. Sit the dog and praise him. The dog should be close enough to see, but not touch, the infant. Frequent short sessions during the first day are recommended. Gradually bring the dog closer, paying attention to his responses. If the dog is under verbal control and calm after several introductions, try it without the leash.

Now you can allow the dog to wander loose in the room while the baby is being held. Feel free to pet the dog while you hold the baby, and don't forget that praise!

LIFE WITH BOWSER AND BABY

Never, ever leave your child unsupervised with your dog. No matter how well you know your dog, accidents happen. Newborn infants are far more fragile than newborn puppies; even with the most maternal of instincts, the dog can unintentionally injure or worse case scenario, kill your baby. A dog's predatory drive may be triggered by the sounds, smells and movements of infants and children. More likely, dogs are unaware of their own strength, and can cause injury when playful and excited. You can not afford to take risks. Do not leave your child alone with the dog!

Make time daily to have "fun" with the dog without the baby present. Play-training sessions, fetch, or any other positive interactive games are all good choices. You must not, however, play any of the following games if your dog has any dominance-related behavior problems: tug of war, wrestling, or games involving chasing people or animals. While they may seem like games to you, tug-of-war, wrestling, and chase games all tell the dog that he's in charge. Canine friendships can be loyal and true if you realize that dogs cannot understand the concept of equality. In the canine world there are leaders and followers — you must be your dog's leader.

Take time daily to have fun with the dog while the baby is present! If you are relaxed and happy around the dog, the dog can be relaxed and happy around you. Include the dog during feeding times by giving him a chew toy to enjoy while you nurse your new baby nearby.

Dogs and kids; it's the American Dream. Unfortunately it can also be the American Nightmare! Growing up with animals can give our children some of the most positive lessons life has to offer, from self-respect and self-control to sharing, caring and the experience of unconditional love. The dream can come true with careful planning, training and awareness.

Elizabeth Teal
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The Second Time Around...



The dog that you adopt from the shelter may be a rescued stray or a dog that someone has voluntarily surrendered for adoption.

Whether he was born in the bushes behind the laundromat or an adolescent abandoned on the streets by his once-upon-a-time owner, the streetwise stray can be a real challenge to incorporate into your life. The famous "he followed me home, can I keep him, Mom?" canine is a special animal that needs time and space, patience and understanding.



This is a dog that has had to compete to stay alive; he's fought for food, scrambled for shelter. His reliance on his inborn canine savvy kept him alive on the streets long enough to be rescued and adopted by you. Now you've committed yourself to him, it becomes a crash course in Canine Socialization and Human Interaction 101.

If he's street-born, chances are he's never heard a toilet flush or seen a vacuum cleaner in action. He'll gobble up his food, throwing furtive glances left and right. The acoustics of the indoor environment may make him anxious. Edgy, he'll whine and pace. A sudden sound and he'll either bolt upright ready for action or slither along behind you.

Be reasonable in your expectations. Be sensitive. It's culture shock, pure and simple. Put yourself in his shoes. Just imagine that you've been snatched away from home and suddenly find yourself in an aboriginal outback community. No language or gestures in common. Communication is by trial and error. Be patient and supportive. You'll succeed.

The stray that was "previously owned" enters your home with a completely different set of baggage. Leashes, hands, rolled up newspapers and magazines, feet, chairs and sticks are just some of the pieces of "training equipment" that may have been used on this dog. Words like "come here" and "lie down" may bring forth a reaction other than the one you expected. Or maybe he led a sheltered life and was never socialized to children or sidewalk activity. This dog may be the product of a never-ending series of scrambled communications and unreal expectations.

As an adolescent or adult dog, he's already formed his opinion regarding humans. Be prepared to meet with confusion, reluctance and resistance as you retrain this fellow. He may flinch when you reach to pet him, make a sudden move or raise your voice. But don't let yourself be held hostage by thoughts of past cruelties and abuse. Don't treat him like a victim. The key here is confidence. Build his with consistent training and you'll turn him around.

The dog that has been voluntarily surrendered for adoption may have somehow let someone down. Not housebroken, too active, too noisy, destructive when left alone, too friendly. Or maybe he's a victim of circumstance. Divorce, an owner who died, is ill or was arrested. A newborn who is allergic. Whatever the

reason, he's separated from those he loves and trusts. In despair, he waits for them to return, sniffing for the familiar smells that make him feel good all over. He misses them, he mourns them. His pack, his family ... where are they?

When you get him home, he's confused and disoriented. Sights and sounds are simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar; things are jumbled up. He jumps on the couch and bed, he drinks from the toilet bowl, barks at the phone and makes wild lunges at strangers. In another life, these behaviors may have been encouraged or maybe just not discouraged. Don't worry; he'll catch on. He'll get past it all. He'll become your dog.

Taking on the responsibility of a dog with a past is hard work. At first, it may seem overwhelming. Most of the problem behavior you'll encounter is an expression of the dog's inability to cope with the demands of your personality and lifestyle. Make sure you and he are indeed suited for each other; that you can meet his needs for activity and companionship according to his breed type. Things may proceed slowly; you'll hit frustrating learning plateaus. But if you're committed you'll get there. Remember that the basic period of adjustment can be anywhere from six to twelve weeks. Go into this with your eyes open... and then stand back and marvel at the transformation. . . it will knock your socks off!

Micky Niego
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ASPCA NATIONAL SHELTER OUTREACH

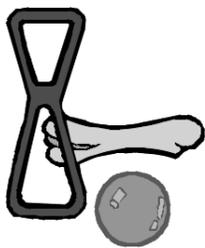
DOG HELP



The Dog That Chews When Left Alone

Chewing is a natural behavior for dogs. They use their mouths to explore the environment in the same way that humans use their hands as investigative tools. Irrksome and sometimes expensive destructive chewing usually takes place when the owner is not with the dog. Therefore, correction when the dog starts or is in the act is impossible. The chewing can then become a compulsive behavior when the dog is lonely, bored, stressed or anxious.

THE LONELY DOG is one that is left alone for long periods of time in an unstimulating environment. These dogs chew out of boredom. To remedy the situation several things are in order. First make sure your dog is well exercised. An aerobic work-out is required for older puppies and adolescents. Second, provide your dog with a place that he can have all to himself. Dogs possess a denning instinct; let it work for you. The best way to confine a dog is with a kennel crate. A small bathroom or a kitchen area may do, if the dog is adverse to crating. However, there are many chewable objects in these rooms including flooring and cabinetry.



Confine the chewing dog in his crate whenever you are unable to supervise his activity. Leave him with a couple of acceptable chewies. **ACCEPTABLE CHEWIES** are toys that are not easily consumed, ones that may change their form as the dog gnaws at them. Nylabones, beef marrow bones, large rawhide knots all become more interesting to the dog as he works on them; the chewing action creates all sorts of lumps and depressions that keep most canines enraptured for hours. Kong™ toys can be stuffed with a variety of goodies including some of the dog's breakfast, challenging him to work for his meal. Old shoes, towels, scrap wood, or phonebooks are not acceptable chew toys. Dogs cannot differentiate between old shoes and new shoes, or scrap wood from kitchen cabinetry. Don't confuse your dog by giving him anything that may be mistaken for a forbidden object.

When you are ready to leave the house, put the dog in his confinement area with a couple of chewies and go. No long, sloppy goodbyes, no pleading or threatening gestures, just a cheery "see you later" or a matter-of-fact "be good," that's all.

For the first two weeks the dog cannot be allowed any unsupervised time. Put him in his crate each and every time that he is left alone. Do not give him an opportunity to chew a forbidden object without feedback.

Starting with the third week, put the dog in his crate with the door open and leave for about 10-20 minutes. If you return home to any destruction your dog is probably not bored and lonely, but rather is anxious about being separated from you.

THE ANXIOUS DOG is one who suffers from feelings of social isolation. Dogs are pack animals and many do not take it very well when they are left on their own to "defend their territory." There is safety in numbers for pack oriented animals, and what the anxious dog needs is a secure and comfortable place to stay when he is left behind.



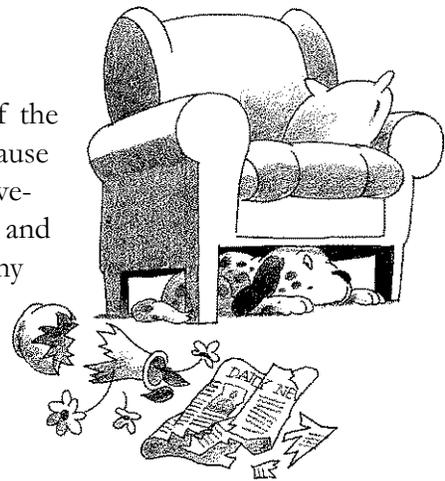
Once again, a kennel crate may be the tool of choice. Introduce the dog to the crate in a positive manner. Never use the crate for punishment. This is your dog's den — he should be happy and secure when he's inside. As with the lonely dog, there should be no long, emotional goodbyes. However, before you leave his chew toy with him in his crate, rub the toy between your palms. This action imparts your scent to the toy and tends to focus the dog on this object rather than something else.

Excellent results have been obtained by using the following exercise to re-orient the dog's chewing habits. Take away all of the dog's former chewies, and replace them with a meat-scented nylon bone (Nylabone™ is one such toy). Make this bone the focus of a fetch and play session at least twice a day. The combination of the owner's scent with the meat scent makes it an appealing object on which to chew. Since the toy bone has now become the focus of intense interaction between the dog and the owner, the vast majority of dogs will aim their chewing at it.

As with the lonely dog, the anxious dog should be confined to his crate for the first two weeks when home alone. Beginning with the third week, leave the dog in his crate with the door open for a period of time not to exceed 20 minutes. If you return home to any signs of destruction, shorten the length of time that you are gone until you arrive at a time span that is successful. From that point on, SLOWLY increase the length of time that you are gone until you have reached your goal. If at any time, you come home to destruction, go backward in time at least two steps and maintain that time frame for at least a week; then proceed with the schedule as planned.

If you find your dog is bloodying his paws or otherwise hurting himself trying to escape the crate, another course of action needs to be taken. For cases of severe separation anxiety, an applied animal behavior or other behavior consultant should be employed. This serious problem will need an individualized behavior modification program and possibly drug therapy to be resolved.

Every new puppy or dog owner should expect a certain amount of destruction from curiosity-based or tension-relieving oral tendencies of the pet. The solution to the problem lies in removing the environmental cause and guiding the dog towards the appropriate objects to chew. The above-mentioned preventive and corrective approaches will help to minimize and ultimately solve the problem while allowing the dog to develop a healthy relationship with you.



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HARK, HARK, THE DOG DOTH BARK:

SILENCING THE DOG THAT BARKS WHEN LEFT ALONE

Of all dog behavior problems, perhaps the most distressing one is the dog who barks when left alone. Incessant volleys of yips, woofs and whines are an irritant to those who live in close quarters or for those who need some peace and quiet in their life! These latchkey barkers fit several profiles. It is important to determine which one or more describes your dog; misreading the dog may result in a failure to extinguish the problem.

1. THE GENETICALLY PRONE BARKER

Virtually all terriers and many small dogs, particularly Maltese, Poodles and miniature Schnauzers, fit into this category. These breed types have been pre-programmed to bark at movement or noise within their range. Sensitive alarm barkers once bred to alert the farmer of the fox in the hen house now announce that the phone is ringing, the neighbors are home or that the elevator has arrived. They must be trained to limit their barking. Training them to bark on command gives you control; you can turn it "on" or "off" on your orders! It's not that you don't want them to bark; you just want them to be appropriate. Find a suitable place or time where the yappy dog can bark to his heart's content.

2. THE ALPHA/TERRITORIAL BARKER

These barkers are most often unneutered males and/or guarding breed types. They believe that they are protecting their yard, house and general "air-space" from intruders such as the mailman, a squirrel, a passing dog or a neighbor. Neutering may take the overprotective and/or territorial edge off the intact dog. Training will get the genetically protective dogs' instincts in line. Blocking the dog's view of the property lines (stockade instead of chain-link fencing) and keeping him from patrolling the area around the front door or front porch may assist in cutting down the owner-absent barking. Monitor this type of dog carefully; do not permit him to bark at passersby when you are home. If you cannot silence him when you are there, you can't expect much when you're not.

3. THE DEMANDING BARKER

This confident soul does not want to be left alone because the fun stops. He stands at the door and commands you to return to play with him. Both barking set-ups (explained below) and engaging toys work well to quiet this imp's demands, as does the citronella anti-bark collar.

4. THE BORED UNDEREXERCISED DOG

Sporting, hound and herding breed types were bred to work all day long. Many retrievers, pointers, setters, collies and the like now find themselves sadly under-exercised, especially in the urban environment. These dogs need to be kept busy. If not, boredom turns into barking (not to mention chewing, pacing and digging). Most need at least two hours of vigorous, aerobic exercise a day. If you are going to be gone for an extended period of time (over six hours,) an hour of mentally challenging and physically active fun and games is mandatory. You should leave behind a panting, heaving, utterly exhausted dog as you set off for the day. Offering them breakfast from a stuffed Kong™ or food-dispensing toy can also keep them busy.





5. THE FEARFUL, ANXIOUS DOG

Some of these dogs fall into the category of toy and miniature breed types. Dogs that have been passed around from home to home and shelter rescues also fit into this group. Their histories may include coddling and over-protective handling, lack of proper socialization or isolation. Dogs that have never been out of the back yard or permanently paper trained apartment dwellers are candidates for anxiety behaviors if placed in a new home environment. These dogs suffer from separation anxiety when left behind, even for brief periods. Chewing, barking, house soiling and digging at doors or window sills are some typical responses. The majority of these dogs need to be properly socialized to the world around them. Obedience work with plenty of praise builds confidence, yielding a more stable dog; a dog with a better ability to cope.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES TO MINIMIZE OWNER ABSENT BARKING

The anxious dog may feel less stressed-out when home alone if he's confined to a kennel crate — either the enclosed airline type (molded plastic) or a wire crate draped with a sheet or a tablecloth. With less space to worry about — just the bed and a chew toy — many dogs just curl up and calm down. A word of warning regarding dogs with severe anxiety problems (often a rescue/shelter dog): some dogs may go to pieces in a crate; they will shake, slobber, struggle and exhibit extreme escape behavior. In these instances you must seek the counsel of a professional dog trainer or applied animal behaviorist who is well versed in canine behavior problems and can customize a program for the dog that may include short-term drug therapy.

BARKING SET-UPS

1. Keep the dog in the quietest part of the house. A dog with behavior problems has not earned "the run of the house".
2. Keep curtains and/or shades drawn. If you don't have adequate window coverage, get some; hang a sheet or blanket across the window. A darker environment has a calming effect on most dogs. Additionally, there is no visual stimuli to provoke the territorial or bored dog. Curtains muffle sounds from the outdoors for alarm barkers.
3. Leave a radio or TV on as "white noise." In many households, the stereo/TV/radio is on from morning 'til night as long as someone is home. Imagine how "loud" the silence is when everyone is gone and the sound system is turned off! Beyond masking outside noises, leaving the stereo/TV/radio on gives the aural appearance of your presence.
4. As you leave, give the dog an "only-when-I'm-gone" chew toy with your scent imparted on it. This toy should be something spectacular - a sterilized beef bone stuffed deeply and thoroughly with canned dog food or cheese spread (served frozen or chilled), a flavorful beef-basted knotted rawhide bone, or a stuffed Kong™. Give it to the dog upon leaving; rub it between your palms several times before you go. Not only is this a diversion tactic, it actually makes being left alone not so bad, as this is the only time the "most-wonderful-thing-in-the-world" appears!

If you have tried all of the above and you are still finding notes from your neighbors, you must desensitize the dog to your departures with "barking set-ups." Set-ups take time; slow incremental progress is a necessary part of the program. Be prepared to use a long week-end or some vacation time for the program.



First, imitate your daily departure routine. Do you usually put on make-up, search about for keys, gloves, etc. pack a gym bag or throw out the garbage? Make the dog think that this is just like any other daily departure.

Second, while giving him his special goodbye toy, get eye contact and tell him in a firm and matter-of-fact manner to be quiet until you return. Please, no longwinded emotional scenes; no begging, pleading or whining for him to be quiet. It will only serve to emotionally charge the situation and further stress-out the dog.

Leave — for a brief period of time. Just a minute or two to start out with. If you wait for an elevator, ring for it and get in. Go one floor down and come back up using the stairs. Wait 1-2 minutes. If the dog has not barked, return and gently praise. If you hear him begin to bark, mark the behavior by a sharp rap on the door with a solid object like a brass key ring and start timing again. Each time the dog barks, rap on the door and set the timer back to zero. It may take a half hour to get 1-2 minutes of silence. When you do, go in and praise. Leave 15-30 minutes later and repeat.

The goal, of course, is to be able to stay away for longer and longer periods of time without having to correct the dog for barking. The time away must be built up in small intervals. Set goals (5, 10, 15 minutes) and go back in and praise the dog if he remained quiet for the set amount of time. Don't wait for an undetermined amount of time and correct the dog for finally barking. Silence must be praised. Appropriate behavior must be acknowledged.

Most dogs who can remain silent for two hours can usually stay quiet for an 8 to 10 hour work day. It is building up to that first hour or so that may take several days of set-ups to achieve.

Barking problems are rarely solved in a day. Barking set-ups can be tedious, but they usually work if you take the time to do them properly. Let your neighbors know that you are not ignoring their complaints; that you understand their discomfort and you are taking steps to correct the problem. Quite often, they will cut you a little slack if they know that their complaints have not fallen upon deaf ears.

Jacque Lynn Schultz
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Selecting the Family Dog: How to Find the Dog of Your Dreams

“Select” is defined in the dictionary by such phrases as “a preferred choice” or “carefully chosen.” Selecting the family dog should be a well-researched and carefully soul-searched activity. Are you and your family willing to make a 10-15 year commitment to this sentient being in sickness and in health, for richer and for poorer, for as long as all shall live? Let's pose some of the questions family members should discuss before obtaining a dog, after which we will look at where to obtain the carefully chosen dog of your dreams.



HOW OLD ARE THE FAMILY MEMBERS?

If the youngsters in your household are under seven years old, they are usually not developmentally suited for puppies five months old and under, or toy-sized (under 15 pounds) dogs of any age. Puppies have ultra sharp "milk teeth" and toenails and often teethe on and scratch children, resulting in unintentional injury to the child. The puppy becomes something to be feared rather than loved.

Toy dogs are fine-boned, touch-sensitive creatures that do not weather rough or clumsy handling well. Their bones break relatively easily and they are quicker to bite than their larger boned, mellower relatives.

Unless your children are unusually sensitive, low-key, respectful individuals, a medium-to-large sized dog over five months old is usually the safer choice. Regardless of size, all interactions between small children and dogs should be monitored by a responsible adult. When there is no one to watch over them, they should be separated.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, are there frail elderly or physically challenged individuals in the household? If so, strong vigorous adolescent dogs are not a wise idea. No aging hips or wrists are safe from these yahoos. People who were one-breed fans throughout their lives may one day find that their favorite breed demands more than they can physically handle. The new dog must fit the current physical capabilities of his keepers with an eye toward what the next 10-15 years will bring.

WHO WILL BE THE DOG'S PRIMARY CARETAKER?



Years ago, this was an easy question to answer — Mom. She stayed home and cooked, cleaned and raised the family dog. Most families these days do not have that option. All adults go to work and the kids head off to school. This leaves the family dog to be sandwiched in between lessons and sports and household chores and so on. One parent should be designated Primary Caretaker to make sure the dog does not get lost in the shuffle.

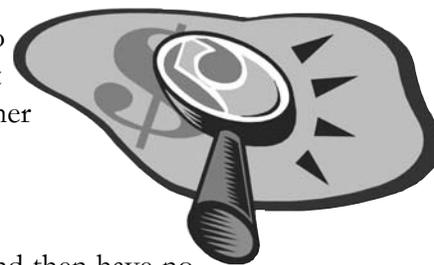


Some parents bow to the pressure their children put on them to get a dog. The kids promise with tears in their eyes that they will religiously take care of this soon-to-be best friend. The truth of the matter is, during the 10-15 year lifespan of the average dog, your children will be growing in and out of various life stages and the family dog's importance in their lives will wax and wane like the moon. You cannot saddle a child with total responsibility for the family dog and threaten to get rid of it if the child is not providing that care. It is not fair to child or dog.

Choosing the family dog should include input from all family members with the cooler-headed, more experienced family members' opinions carrying a bit more weight. The family dog should not be a gift from one family member to all the others. The selection experience is one the entire family can share. Doing some research and polling each family member about what is important to them in a dog will help pin down what you will be looking for. Books like Daniel Tortora's *The Right Dog for You* or *The ASPCA Complete Guide to Dogs* can be tremendously helpful and can warn you away from unsuitable choices for your family's circumstances.

HOW MUCH CAN I SPEND?

The price to obtain a dog runs the gamut from free-to-a-good-home to several thousand dollars. It does not always hold true that you get what you pay for. The price you pay in a pet shop is usually 2 to 3 times higher than what you pay a reputable breeder for a puppy of similar (or usually better) quality.



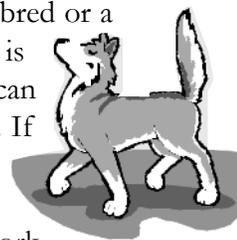
Too many folks spend all their available cash on a pet shop purchase and then have no money left for initial veterinary care, a training crate or obedience classes — all necessary expenses. Remember, the purchase price of a dog is a very small part of what the dog will actually cost. Save money for food (especially if it is a large or giant breed), grooming (fancy coated breeds such as Poodles, Cockers, and Shih Tzus need to be clipped every 4 to 6 weeks), chew toys (the vigorous chewers like a Bull Terrier or Mastiff can work their way through an \$8.00 rawhide bone in a single sitting), outerwear (short-coated breeds like Greyhounds, Chihuahuas, and Whippets must have sweaters and coats in the winter or in lavishly air conditioned interiors), and miscellaneous supplies (bowls, beds, brushes, shampoos, flea products, odor neutralizers for accidents, baby gates, leashes, collars, heartworm preventative etc.).

And then, there is the veterinary emergency! Very few dogs live their entire lives without at least one accident. Your puppy eats a battery or pair of pantihose, your fine-boned toy dog breaks a leg, your big boy has bad hips, your dog gets hit by a car or beaten/bitten by the neighborhood bully. These surprises can cost \$500 or more. Unlike our children, most of our dogs are not covered by health insurance.

But "How much can I spend?" is not only a question of money. How much time and energy can you spend on a new dog? Various breeds and ages of dog make different demands on our precious spare time. In general, the Sporting, Hounds, Herding, and Terrier breeds will demand more time in training and daily exercise than will the Guardian or Companion breeds. A puppy or adolescent will need more exercise, training, and supervision than will an adult dog. And the first year with any new dog regardless of age or breed type will put more demands on the owner than any other time, for this is when you are setting up house rules and routines which will last for the lifetime of your dog.

WHERE TO GET THE DOG OF YOUR DREAMS

Where you go to get the family dog depends on whether you have decided on a purebred or a mixed breed dog. If knowing what size, shape, and general temperament your puppy is going to be when he grows up is important to you or you wish to compete in American or United Kennel Club dog activities, then getting a purebred would be right for you. If a one-of-a-kind look and a loving personality combined with the warm glow you get from "saving" a dog is more important, then a mixed breed would be right up your alley. Puppies are cute but demand lots of supervision and training. In a full-time working household, older dogs are easier to integrate than are puppies.



The following are eight avenues to obtain a dog. The first three are highly recommended, the next two can work out but leave more to chance, and the last three should be avoided like the Plague.

I. LOCAL HUMANE SOCIETIES/SPCAs/ANIMAL SHELTERS

Most shelters offer adoption programs and are staffed with trained counselors experienced in matching families with suitable companions. An application is usually filled out so the staff is made familiar with your needs and limitations. Most animals have been screened for major health and temperament problems. Many shelters offer additional free services such as training materials, vaccinations, initial check-up, and spay/neuter surgery. Both pure and mixed breed dogs can found in shelters, but purebred puppies are seldom found here. The cost is usually quite reasonable especially considering the entire Adoptions package you get. For a list of shelters in your area, check your Yellow Pages under "Animal Shelters."

II. REPUTABLE BREEDERS

For those searching for a sound, purebred puppy, a reputable breeder is the answer. This person specializes in only one or two breeds of dog, has been linked with this particular breed for at least five years, is a member in good standing of his/her national breed club, and will usually take back the dog if for some reason it does not work out. Often a reputable breeder will not breed a litter unless she has pre-screened candidates on a waiting list for the puppies. They breed no more than a few times a year because their puppies are raised in the home and provided with early socialization and stimulation. They would never take a pup from the mother and littermates earlier than seven weeks of age, sometimes even later. They can discuss the Pros and Cons of this breed with you in depth. They will screen you as vigorously as a humane society would for they feel totally responsible for the puppies they bring into this world.

The cost of the dog will depend on its age, and whether it is show quality, pet quality or breeding stock. The pet quality puppy prices are usually much more reasonable than in a pet shop, plus most breeders make themselves available to knowledgeably answer your various questions on this particular dog or breed in general — something most pet shop employees cannot do.

Finding a good breeder can take some time. Contact the national breed club or your local dog clubs to see if they have a breeder referral service. Go to a dog show in your area, buy the catalog and go talk to the folks whose dogs most appeal to you — after they leave the show ring. Subscribe to the breed magazine and contact people who advertise in it. These are usually serious show people who care about the placement of their dogs and puppies. Check the American Kennel Club website (www.AKC.org) for breeder



and club referrals. A reputable breeder will serve as a safety net for her puppies throughout their lives and will generally take them back should there be problems. A reputable breeder will most likely have you sign a contract spelling out your agreement and will often insist that you have the pup neutered if the dog is sold as a “pet quality” puppy.

III. PUREBRED RESCUE GROUPS

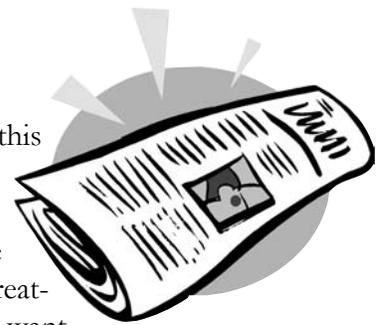
With the substantial number of purebred dogs being turned in at shelters, many breed organizations have started rescue networks. Here, people with knowledge of a particular breed either rescue a dog turned in to a shelter or they send someone from their waiting list to adopt the dog from the shelter. The cost to adopt is usually quite minimal (\$100-300), but often these rescue dogs may need immediate medical treatment and/or a commitment to neuter the dog as soon as possible — if it has not already been done. Often little is known about their individual backgrounds, but the rescue contact can help the adoptor with general breed questions and training methods. In some cases, breed experts go to the shelter to evaluate the rescue candidates. Most potential adoptors are carefully screened before being put on a waiting list. Rescue groups can be found by contacting the national breed club or your local animal shelter.

IV. RESCUING A STRAY OFF OF THE STREET

In this situation, the heart leads the way. Taking in a stray is taking in an unknown entity — no history and no safety net. It can work for some people, especially if the timing is right and you were looking for a dog of this type anyway. Often times, there are medical and temperament problems that are not solveable without considerable time and expense. Go cautiously with your eyes open if this is the route you choose to obtain the family dog.

V. NEWSPAPER ADS/SIGNS IN THE GROCERY STORE AND THE LIKE

If someone is giving away his dog for an acceptable reason, obtaining a dog this way can be advantageous. You have a chance to speak with the former owner, find out the dog's routine and habits, and have a chance to see the dog in a relatively nonstressful environment. However, you are relying on the fact that the former owner is not lying to you. Many people find they have created dogs whose habits they cannot live with; yet they still love those dogs and want to see them in a home — just not their home.



VI. PET SHOPS

Most pet shops deal only in purebred puppies. These dogs are usually purchased from puppy mills or big scale commercial breeders. These puppies are not brought up in a healthy home environment, nor are they well-socialized and stimulated to the world around them. They are taken from their undersocialized mother and littermates too early to be developmentally sound and placed in a stressful, unsanitary environment. The results are all too often sickly puppies that are nearly impossible to housebreak and have lost all bite inhibition. Pet shops thrive primarily because of two segments of society: (1) the impulse buyer and (2) the person who is averse to a screening process. Those who have taken the time to research their options are seldom best served by acquiring a pet shop pup.

Note: In the last few years, large pet supply chains have invited local shelters and rescue groups to bring their adoptable dogs to the stores for meet-and-greet sessions. The resulting adoptions are ruled by the individual group's policies. This can be a win-win situation for all parties.

VII. BACKYARD BREEDERS

These are those "savvy" economists who believe that because they purchased a dog, this dog should earn back its purchase price by producing puppies or generating big stud fees. The truth is, if you do it right, there is no profit on a litter of puppies. You are lucky if you don't end up in debt! Do not support this nonsense. If Fred finds out that there is no market for his poorly bred, garage-raised puppies, maybe he will stop mating his snappish Cocker with Millie's down the road.

VIII. COMMERCIAL BREEDERS

Whether they are Midwest puppy mill farms or one-breed kennels so big that they always have puppies for sale, they are commercial breeders and that's not the kind of start in life you want for your special family companion. The high volume of these operations does not provide for the close daily examination a new pup deserves. How can they possibly know if the puppy is eating enough, warm enough, healthy enough? Many of the puppies available through puppy brokers found on the internet come from these kennels. Use your consumer powers and boycott these facilities that treat puppies like "products."

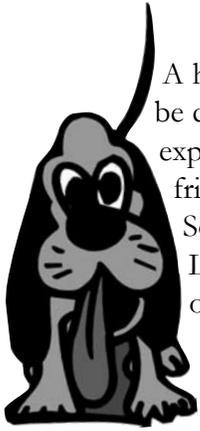
Choose your dog wisely, for when the bond breaks, everybody concerned suffers. Make selecting your new family dog a life-affirming act.

Jacque Lynn Schultz
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Social Graces: the puppy perspective



A happy, well-adjusted dog is a joy to live with. A puppy has so much potential just waiting to be developed. Sights, sounds, smells, tastes and textures are all new to her. A puppy learns by exploring her environment, investigating everything in her path. To help her mature into a friendly and outgoing adult, it's important to encourage exploratory and social behavior.

Socializing your puppy to new things should be a positive and pleasant experience for her. Learning is stressful. Expose her at a rate that she can absorb new information, not be overwhelmed by it.

Socialization is an ongoing process of changes and additions in a puppy's life. As she matures, she will develop a catalog of experiences that help her to manage the world at large. This includes forming relationships with all types of people, other dogs and different species in various environments.

From three to twelve weeks of age, a puppy is in one of the most important developmental periods of her life. She is receptive to new things that later may prove to be more difficult for her to adjust to. Regular handling by a variety of people during this stage is essential for her to form positive attachments later. The desire to bond with humans should be capitalized on at this stage.

A puppy usually goes into a new home at seven to nine weeks of age. She is ready to transfer to her "human" pack at this age. If you are adopting an older puppy (over 12 weeks) and she has had limited socialization, you may have to work harder at first. A puppy adopted from a shelter may not have a known history. It is not too late to teach her what the world is about.

Some puppies are shy, others bold and outgoing from day one. Learning to observe the signals a puppy gives helps in the socialization process. A confident puppy will advance towards new things with her tail up or wagging, ears forward and a relaxed facial expression. A hesitant or fearful puppy may hang back, holding her tail low or tucked and have a facial expression that might appear worried. A shy puppy needs more time to adapt but if not forced, can become more confident. When first socializing your puppy, focus on confident responses and praise her for her bravery in new situations.

HOUSE RULES:

Once away from her littermates, a puppy needs to learn self-reliance. The first few days can be an adjustment period for both of you. For the first few nights, most young puppies will object loudly to being alone. A large stuffed animal she can cuddle up to helps to keep her company. You may also choose to keep her crate or bed in your bedroom, to ease her loneliness.

Choose an area in your home to become your puppy's den. Spending time there will be important for her to build self-confidence and cope with being on her own. Allowing her free run of your home gives her too many unsupervised choices as to what to chew, jump up on, chase, or destroy. Use of a confinement area also reinforces her denning instinct which helps with housetraining later. For a place to call her own, a crate or small gated area works best. Provide her with a couple of chewable items in this area to teach her what is hers.

Confinement balanced with free time helps to teach a puppy self-control. A puppy that shadows your every movement may tend to overbond and become very stressed when left alone. If left alone too much,



she will not receive the social contact she needs which often leads to boredom-related behaviors like shredding newspapers. Balance the time she spends in her den with supervised free time. As her house manners improve, her greatest reward can be to receive more freedom. If a puppy complains loudly about confinement, do not release her immediately or she will get louder the next time. Wait for a few moments of silence and praise her sweetly by saying “Good Quiet.” Helping her to associate her silence with the word makes it possible to use it as a stronger “QUIET” when she is noisy.

Most puppies would rather race around like wild things than sit quietly by your side. Your puppy should not be encouraged to do anything now that you would not like when she's fully grown. Rewarding her for good behavior increases the likelihood of it recurring. Structuring her free time with games and toys provides an outlet for the “puppy crazies.” Rewards come in many forms. For some puppies, your eye contact is all that is needed to motivate them to mischief. Other puppies may find rewards in your cat's litterbox. Attention, eye contact, vocal praise, petting, edible stuff, are all forms of rewards for a puppy. Timing a reward to coincide with a behavior you like should occur during after the desired behavior. Correcting a behavior should also occur within this time frame. Delayed corrections are punishment and don't provide enough information for her to get it right the next time.

Introduce her to new items gradually. For example, indoors a vacuum cleaner is often a top panic producing experience. It's large and loud and moves! To show her that it is no threat, put the vacuum in the middle of a room. Allow her to investigate it in its dormant (turned off) state first. Next, turn it on for a second, turn off, put a tasty treat on it and walk away. At first, she may show no interest in investigating the machine. Encourage her if she approaches the vacuum, but never force her. Hopefully, she will take the treat and gain confidence as you repeat this many times, leaving the vacuum on longer each time. When she readily approaches, start moving the vacuum slowly before turning off. The more this is done and she realizes that nothing is hurting her, the faster she will take it in stride.



SCHOOL OF THOUGHT:

Puppy Kindergarten Training (PKT) classes are available in many areas. These classes are structured to expand a puppy's experiences during a time that they are unable to go outdoors. A well-run class will teach basic manners, build confidence and attempt to prevent problem behaviors from developing.

Attention spans are limited at this age. Reward-based training, with an emphasis on luring into position, often works best. PKT also teaches puppies of all kinds to be appropriate with each other, regardless of size. Check with your veterinarian before signing up for a class. Most will allow attendance after two sets of vaccinations.

THE GREAT OUTDOORS:

Walks are important for your puppy. They provide more than just an opportunity to go to the bathroom. Try to vary the route for your walks daily. This automatically exposes her to a wider variety of experiences. At first she may be overwhelmed and freeze in place or try to take off. She is not being stubborn when she stops. All puppies have an instinct to react to situations that startle them — it is genetically hard-wired and is based on survival. Do not to comfort her with "It's okay" as this reinforces her fearful reaction. Praise her when she appears to make the choice to investigate. Timing is crucial when praising to give her feedback for the appropriate response. Choose a less busy area for the next walk and she will adjust more rapidly.

Socializing a puppy to people on the street is usually easy. When people ask to pat her, start teaching her to "say hello" by sitting. This automatically teaches her not to jump up to receive attention. Puppies need to learn to greet children as well as adults. Young children and young dogs tend to fuel each other's energy levels. For a shy puppy, the approach of a child may intimidate her. It is important to teach her that kids are no threat. Choose a bench near but not next to a schoolyard or playground. Find what her comfort zone is with children. How far away does she have to be to not respond to them? If it is ten feet, start praising her for calm responses when children are beyond that zone. Eventually, your goal will be to teach her that receiving attention from children is safe. If a low-key child wants to pet her and she seems okay with that, make sure she isn't backed into a corner. This gives her the option of moving away when she has had enough. Never physically hold a puppy in place to be petted by a stranger. Having a stranger offer her a treat may get her to approach, but that is different from being forced to interact.

Do you plan to take your puppy on errands, to the beach, to the park? If so, what association would you like her to have with car travel? The car can cause a lot of stress in some puppies. If at first her only rides are to the veterinarian, she may develop negative associations with cars. Vomiting and excessive drooling are some of the signs that she is stressed. Make cars a fun place for her. Bring along a favorite toy and play with her in the back seat for a few minutes. Then take a short drive around the block and play with her briefly again before going inside. Avoid traveling with her if she has eaten recently. The use of a crate for car travel makes most puppies feel safer. If you do not use a crate, secure her leash (attached to a body harness) to a seat belt when driving.

To prepare her for veterinary visits, touch and handle her all over on a daily basis. She will also need to be comfortable with strangers handling and gently restraining her. Make mock veterinary visits to build a positive association for her. Go once weekly and ask the staff to give her treats. This way, she will go to the veterinarian's office five times a month and have something unpleasant happen only once. You may actually end up with a puppy that looks forward to her vet visits.

Teaching a puppy to eliminate outdoors is a form of socialization. It requires an understanding by the puppy of where to go as well as her feeling comfortable in different settings. Puppies that are paper trained initially may "hold it" to go back indoors. For them, the concept of going to the bathroom includes the feel of papers under their feet, a roof over their head and usually no



human at the end of a leash — if even in the room. Your puppy may not immediately generalize that concrete or grass beneath her feet, wind on her face and you at the end of the leash is the same thing. The use of a phrase like "HURRY UP" introduced at the time she is going on the papers can later be used as a prompt outdoors. Taking her to the papers on leash, as a transitional phase, may also help. From the beginning, vary the surfaces you take your puppy to for elimination. Surface-specific puppies only want to soil on one type of surface — only grass or pavement. This can cause difficulties later if you move to another area or want her to travel with you.

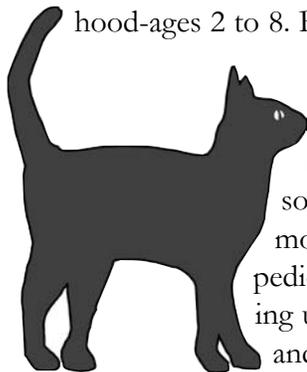
Many dogs that are re-homed during adolescence are products of an undersocialized upbringing. It takes an investment of time and effort to raise and train a puppy properly. What you put into a puppy that first year influences the rest of her life. Socialization is ongoing. As she matures, different issues may arise. A puppy that has been exposed to the world outside her back yard has a better chance of taking things in stride. A well socialized dog makes a wonderful companion and will be welcomed anywhere you go.

By Deirdre Ryan-Rivas
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A Companion Animals Golden Years

Our companion animals rocket through infancy in six short months, struggle through an adolescence that seems like forever but is actually only 12 to 18 months, and then reach that plateau known as adulthood—ages 2 to 8. Before we know it, Mojo and Belle have reached their Golden Years.



As with every stage of life, cats and dogs in their golden years demand some special considerations. For example, not unlike their human caretakers, geriatric dogs and cats slow down — in some cases way down. Older animals tend to sleep more soundly and for longer periods. It is more difficult to roust them out of bed in the morning, and they may become a bit snappish if startled out of slumber. A soft, orthopedic foam bed with a machine-washable pile cover and plastic liner (essential for cleaning up old-age accidents) becomes indispensable for arthritic bones that seek warmth and comfort.

Because of changes in metabolism, an older animal is unable to regulate his body heat the way he used to. A thinning coat doesn't help matters either. Older pets feel colder in the winter and hotter in the summer than they did in their middle years, so winter sweaters may be advisable even for breeds that never needed them before. Summer walks may need to be shorter and taken at the coolest time of the day.

Four of the five senses diminish with age, leaving only the sense of touch as acute as it was in more youthful days. Hearing loss is noted by owners who feel their companion has tuned them out. Such a loss may help to explain why older animals seem to sleep more soundly or react more aggressively to being woken up.

Loss of the sense of smell can be quite dismaying for owners who rely on their working dogs' noses to perform tasks such as drug detection, search and rescue or tracking (Although a few beagle and basset hound owners excitedly look forward to the day when their dogs will be less scent-oriented on their strolls outdoors.)

A diminished sense of smell can be more serious for felines than for canines because cats rely on the aroma of food for their appetite. Some geriatric cats have been known to waste away as their sense of smell waned. You can avoid such an outcome by purchasing a more aromatic food or warming up the regular entree, thus releasing a stronger odor.

Cloudy lenses, cataracts, and eye diseases may dim the sight in your older pet. Most companion animals compensate extremely well for loss of vision and move about their abodes with a sense of ease. Sometimes an owner doesn't realize that a pet has gone blind until the furniture is moved and the animal loses its way in the now unfamiliar terrain. A reluctance to leave the house by a dog who once cherished his walks may have its roots in diminishing vision. Thick discharge may mean tear production problems. A trip to the veterinary ophthalmologist may be in order.

Like their human counterparts, many older animals gain too much weight. Obesity is due to reduced activity, overfeeding and a lower metabolic rate. The additional weight stresses the heart and can exacerbate arthritis, resulting in an animal that is even less likely to exercise.

How do you help a fat cat or plump pooch? Diet and exercise. For the minor weight problem, reduce daily portions by 10%. For a more serious weight problem, a change of diet is in order. A prescription diet may be necessary. Foods can be found at both grocery stores and specialty shops that are formulated with the senior companion in mind. Prescription diets are available for cats and dogs with heart, liver, kidney and other problems. Moderate play can keep muscles toned, blood circulating and, perhaps most important of all, the digestive system moving. In other words, play can prevent constipation — a very serious problem, particularly in older cats. Mojo and Belle's senior years are time that demands owner alertness. Weigh your companion every three months and write his weight on the calendar. Bring weight swings in either direction to your veterinarian's attention, for they could indicate a serious medical problem such as diabetes.

Frequent grooming sessions will also keep you in touch with any physical changes. Keep your eyes and nose open for tumors, lesions, lumps, discolorations or bad breath; and report any such changes to your veterinarian. Early treatment can prolong your companion's life considerably.

Be on the alert for behavior changes in your older companions as well. A dog who appears disoriented and less responsive to his family, loses housebreaking or experiences sleep disturbances may have canine cognitive dysfunction. An older cat who cries all night may be suffering hyperthyroidism. Any behavioral changes should be brought to your veterinarian's attention for possible treatment. A cat or dog may become set in his ways and resist change. Slow introductions to new environments and activities are in order. Don't fall for the old adage, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks!" Of course you can; it just takes a little longer. *Old Dogs, Old Friends*, by Chris Walkowicz and Dr. Bonnie Wilcox, is filled with stories of dozens of canines who took up new activities in their golden years.

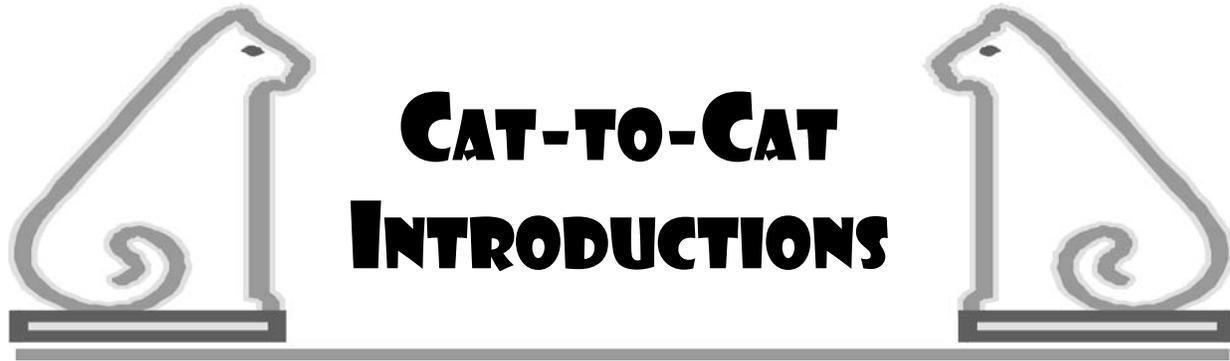
For those who think that bringing a new, younger companion into the household will put some pep in the step of their old boy or girl, think again! If Mojo or Belle has been the "only child," a new addition can add more stress than he or she can bear and cause the animal to go off its feed, become snappish and irritable or go into hiding. It could also lower its resistance to disease. However, if your cat or dog has always been part of a multi-animal menagerie and is in relatively good health, a new household member may fit in with little fuss and strain.



Although geriatric cats and dogs are seldom the ideal new companion for a young child, they do quite well presiding over a full-time working household or share retirement with a senior citizen. If you are interested in providing a few quality years for a feline or canine senior that has fallen on hard times, go to your local animal shelter or rescue group and make your wishes known to the adoption counselors. A geriatric companion is waiting to wash your face and warm your heart —not to mention your feet. Ah, the "tails" they can tell!

Jacque Lynn Schultz
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**DOG & CAT
GATE**



CAT-TO-CAT INTRODUCTIONS

A carefully planned introduction is everything. Most cats do not readily accept a new member of the family; they need time to get used to the idea. It is important to have patience and not rush things along. A certain amount of hissing, posturing and chasing is to be expected. Don't chance an all out fight: preventing a problem is easier than solving one. When in doubt, wait a few more days before proceeding to the next step.

Several factors need to be considered and balanced in a planned introduction; among them age, size, sexual status, and personality. Experience matters. A stray may be competitive, territorial and stand up for himself. An orphaned hand-raised kitten may grow up to be an easily stressed adult. This type of cat commonly is unable to make the adjustment of living with another cat. The more the situation deviates from the ideal, the more the introduction process should be protracted. The period of adjustment and creation of a new routine can stretch beyond the normal 6 to 12 weeks. If enough factors are in conflict, the cats will become adversaries rather than friends.

If this were an ideal world, the New cat (N-cat) would be younger and smaller than the Existing cat (E-cat). N-cat would be of the opposite sex (or both would be female), sexually immature or neutered. His personality would complement that of the E-cat. You would take your time interviewing all candidates and would be rational, not emotional during the decision-making process.

The reality is that many times choice is not an option. Roommates, lovers and spouses with cats come as a basic non-negotiable package deal; the humans agreed to cohabitate, the cats will have to manage. This type of introduction can be rough. Be prepared for a prolonged introduction especially if the cats have lived alone since kittenhood and have no experience living with another cat or the living space is particularly small.

Finding a stray on the street or falling in love at the shelter is another one of those unplanned events that can deliver a jolt to both you and your E-cat. Should you take him home just because fate put him in your path? A cat from the shelter or a rescued stray must be physically isolated from your E-cat for 10 days to 2 weeks to make certain that he is not incubating a contagious disease. A cat with an unknown background must be thoroughly examined for parasites and disease, FIV and feline leukemia tested, and vaccinated by a veterinarian before he can come into contact with E-cat. Neutering before introducing is also recommended.

All introductions start with the same basic rules. The Newcomer must be isolated. The Existing cat, will have the run of the house except for the area designated as N-cat's confinement area. The isolation area should be a room with a door that can be closed so there is absolutely no visual contact between the Newcomer and the Existing cat. You must be able to provide this type of space if N-cat is a shelter cat or a stray.

If air-borne diseases such as upper respiratory infections are not a problem and space is severely limited, a large cattery or kennel cage with a sheet over it will suffice. A spare room, your bedroom or a bathroom can be set up as the isolation room. Remember, E-cat should be inconvenienced as little as possible. If your cat is used to sleeping with you, you may have to use the bathroom. Suddenly denying E-cat this basic level of companionship will complicate the situation.

If you're left with no choice except the bathroom and E-cat's litter box is currently located there, move the box to a new quiet spot or create one with a privacy screen. If possible, do this at least two weeks before bringing the newcomer home. Planning ahead will minimize the chaos for E-cat.

The isolation area should be cat proofed and well ventilated. The simple set up should include a litter box, a water bowl and a cave-like hiding box lined with bedding.



STEP ONE

Upon arrival, the newcomer should be brought directly into the isolation area. Don't stop to chat with E-cat. Remove N-cat from the carrier and let him scope out the room. Don't linger. Bring the empty carrier out with you. Put it down on the floor and proceed with your normal "just got home" routine.

Give E-cat a chance to discover and explore the empty carrier and respond. Watch carefully, but don't interfere. E-cat's response to the scent of N-cat can be telling. Some cats will posture, hiss and may even attack the carrier while others will stalk and growl, run off then return again and again. Still others will approach curiously and sniff with great excitement. Leave the carrier out until E-cat loses interest.

Spend at least an hour with E-cat before going back and peeking in on the newcomer. He'll be just fine. He needs some alone time to explore; studies have shown that cats need to respond to environmental challenges before they can respond socially.

When E-cat winds down, slip into the isolation room with a small portion of food. Sit quietly. Talk softly. Do not actively solicit the cat. He'll approach when ready. If he engages you, respond conservatively; don't rush forward and scoop him up. Remain a half-hour to 45 minutes. Wash your hands if you've been petting, then leave without ceremony. Visit the newcomer several times a day.

E-cat may begin to hiss or growl at you; you smell like the intruder and he's a bit confused. Continue with your normal routine. Note how much time E-cat spends sniffing around and sitting outside the isolation room's door. Do not proceed to STEP TWO until all hostile responses to the scent, doorway and carrier have ceased.

Be sure to spend quality time with E-cat. Let him know he is still special. Play his favorite games. Groom him daily. Give him little bits of something yummy by hand. Make it intimate. Meanwhile, visit N-cat at least 3-4 times a day. Engage him or her in play if N-cat is willing. If in hiding, sit still and quietly talk or read to N-cat.

STEP TWO

Now that E-cat is accustomed to the newcomer's limited existence, its time to move forward. The next step will allow them to see each other without full body contact. Stack two 36" high-tension gates in the newcomers doorway. Rigid plastic mesh baby gates are available at most children's specialty or department stores. If you have reason to believe that either cat will get over the 6' gate set-up, use PLAN B. It is very important that the cats not fight. PLAN B: jam the door of the isolation room with two hard rubber door



stops, one on each side with the door cracked open 2 to 3 inches. Make sure that neither cat can fit his head through the opening. Check that the door is secured and will not suddenly pop open or slam shut if a cat body slams the door aggressively. They will be able to touch noses, whack each other with their paws and investigate without full body contact. When you are not at home or unable to at least peripherally supervise, close the door. Do not proceed to the final step until the cats seem relatively calm in each other's presence; hissing, posturing and growling should be at a minimum.

STEP THREE

Finally, you get to open the door! With E-cat occupied elsewhere, take down the gates or open the door. Downplay the situation. Don't make a big thing out of it. Let the cats happen upon each other. Stay on the sidelines; don't interfere. E-cat may stalk and chase the newcomer; this is typical territorial behavior. The newcomer may do the same if E-cat enters the isolation room. Do not leave them unsupervised.



If a catfight erupts, keep your hands out of it. Do not attempt to handle or pick up either cat. Clap hands and shout, bang a pot with a spoon, throw water, or anything to startle them. But don't ever reach into a tangled mass of fighting cats. It always sounds much worse than it is. Cats yowl and scream, but if their nails have been trimmed prior to the event, damage should be minimal. Declawed cats have no alternative except to bite. When things have cooled down considerably, go over each of their bodies carefully checking for damage. Bites and puncture wounds can become infected and abscess. Call your vet if you suspect that an abscess is forming. If you must physically intervene during a particularly nasty fight, drop a large thick blanket or bath towel over the combatants. Scope up one and deposit him or her in another room behind a closed door. Allow for the adrenaline to subside before checking for wounds.

In some tough situations, another intermediate step is necessary. Here the N-cat will leave isolation and be set up in a cattery cage in E-cat's territory. Both cat's will be fed side-by-side; one in the cattery, one outside it. If one or both are too stressed to eat, put the bowls on the opposite sides of the room and move them a little closer each day. After 7-14 days, the introduction should be attempted again.

The complete process can take anywhere from several days (kitten to kitten/juvenile) to several months or more (adult stray to adult prima dona): a lot depends on how far you deviated from the ideal. You must watch for signs of stress. Eating food quickly and then vomiting, excessive grooming, sleeping and/or drinking are signs that someone is not happy. Spraying, indiscriminate urination and defecation, mewling and hiding behaviors are also associated with anxiety and stress.

Do not promote competition. Continue to feed in separate areas. Maintain the two separated litterboxes. Many E-cats have been known to block doorways and deny access to box or bowl. Don't be in a hurry to consolidate. If a cat can't get to his box, he will be left with no choice except to create a new toilet area!

Eventually, hostilities will decline. E-cat will stop the chasing and stalking and the newcomer will stop perching and scurrying along the edges of the room. They'll declare a cease-fire. They may start to groom each other and share sleeping spots. At worst, you will have brief squabbles and a shaky truce. Hopefully, peaceful coexistence and mutual respect will be yours. And if you are lucky, they will become best buddies.

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By Tooth and Nail: Feline Household Destruction

Many people choose cats because they think they are an easy pet to live with, one that does not require obedience training like a dog does. While they may not need to learn to come when called or heel at your side, by tooth and nail, untrained cats can cause tremendous household destruction. Destruction by tooth would include noshing on houseplants and eating inappropriate materials such as dirt, leather, and wool — a habit referred to as pica. Destruction by nail refers to those old feline classics, using the furniture as a scratching post and the curtains as a jungle gym.

Feline destruction can be resolved in a number of ways: by managing the problem, by distracting the cat away from the objects of desire, and/or by retraining the cat. A combination of these three can solve almost any problem.



Houseplants often fall victim to young cats. For the cat that loves to eat plants, the problem can be managed by turning tabletop plants into hanging plants or by putting them in one room that is kept off-limits to felines. (Giving your plants away and learning to love plastic and silk flowers is another possibility.)

Another option is to distract the cat by making the houseplants harder to reach, meanwhile growing flats of catnip and wheat grass in a more easily accessible area. Praise and reward interest in the appropriate "cat plants." This should satisfy the cat's craving for fresh vegetation. And if that doesn't do it, add some string beans or fruit to the cat's dinner bowl.

Or you can attempt to retrain the cat by spraying the leaves of plants with an anti-chew agent especially formulated for plants and attaching balloons or double-stick tape to the planters. Cats avoid sites of loud noises (popped balloons) or surfaces that feel tacky to their touch.

In cases that involve pica, the cat should first be examined by a veterinarian to make sure it is not suffering from any sort of physical problem or metabolic imbalance.

For the cat that eats/chews inappropriate objects, managing the problem would take the form of keeping objects that the cat is attracted to in drawers, closets, and other closed containers.

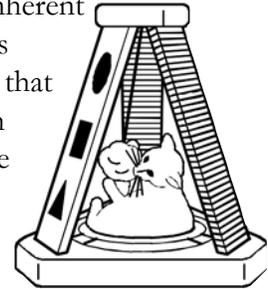
Distract the cat from desired objects by providing plenty of playthings. Some experts feel that chewing inappropriate items is a sign of boredom and isolation. Increasing the cat's exercise sessions and rotating toys might bring about a welcome change.

Introduction of a second cat as a playmate might also alleviate the problem but should only be considered if the owner truly desires a second cat. Adding cats to a household is stressful at first to the existing occupant and numerous misbehaviors may result such as fighting or inappropriate litterbox habits. Stress-related health disorders such as Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease can also occur.

Attempt to retrain the cat through dietary measures. Put the cat on a premium quality dry food with a dequate fiber in it. Feed only that food and no other supplements or treats and keep the cat away from his former pseudofood items for at least two weeks. After two weeks, douse the desired object with an anti-chew spray and reintroduce it to your cat.

To deal with the Number One destruction complaint — scratching the furniture, manage the problem by making sure furniture and drapery materials are tactilely unattractive to cats. Generally most smooth cotton fabrics such as chintz or silky fabrics such as parachute cloth hold little interest for cats. Their preferences run to the rough, bumpy, textured surfaces like Haitian cloth, Herculon, raw silk, and leather. If the furniture pre-dates the cat, use of heavy canvas slip covers or a comforter as a furniture protector should be considered. Of course, there are always plastic slipcovers for the truly desperate! Trimming the cat's nails every two weeks will keep them blunt and minimize the damage done by any errant scratching.

Distract the cat from furniture by providing a suitable scratching post. Cats have an inherent need to scratch in order to remove the dead nail sheaths from around their claws, thus allowing the new nails to grow out. Provide a sturdy, wide-based, rough textured post that is at least three feet tall. The post should be covered in sisal, burlap, or a similar rough fabric. A natural tree trunk that has been debugged is also acceptable. Keep it near the cat's favorite napping place or by a window, for the urge to scratch is often strongest upon awakening.



Scratching is also a territorial marking behavior. Cats often choose to mark an item that is prominent in the territory such as the corner of the sofa or wall. It is marked as a visual sign post, plus cats have a scent glands in their feet which are also used to mark items with their scent. (This is why even declawed cats will “scratch” and mark items.) Therefore it is important to initially place an appropriate scratching post beside or in front of the items the cat usually scratches, then move it slowly to the place where you would prefer it to be. Retrain the cat away from scratching on furniture by making favorite scratching pieces undesirable by covering them with double-stick tape, balloons, tin foil, or contact paper (sticky side out).

The sound of human nails run over the scratching post often entices the cat to the post. Praise the cat if that occurs. Dragging a ribbon or other interactive toy over or around the post also attracts the cat in the right direction. Several times a month, sprinkle some potent catnip on the post to increase its desirability if your cat responds positively to this herb.

By providing for a cat's physical and mental needs and keeping its environment stimulating through the use of kitty greens, appropriate scratching posts and challenging interactive toys; much of the destruction caused by tooth and nail can be avoided.

Jacque Lynn Schultz
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HELP! He's not using the litter box

They do not come into this world "knowing" how to use a litter box, that is, a colored plastic box filled with sterilized clay gravel. Cats learn what and where the "bathroom" is from their mom when they are about four weeks of age. Learning can happen so quickly that the casual observer may be unaware that any active instruction has taken place. In the case of orphan kittens, the caretaker must introduce the box concept otherwise the kittens will randomly choose a spot and imprint on the texture (cloth towels, dust balls, carpeting, etc.) The kitten should be placed in the litter box upon waking and after meals and vigorous play. The front paws can be dragged through the litter to simulate digging/covering. Most kittens catch on and successfully use the box. The trick is to keep watch to make sure that the box is the only spot the kitten uses. An unsupervised kitten can easily lose track of the litter box; if nature calls, the opportunistic kitten will use whatever is handy.

STRAYS AND FERAL CATS If the kitten was born outside, mom may have designated a clump of leaves or soft earth as the toilet. Imprinted on that texture, recently homed feral and stray cats may have to be actively trained to use a box filled with clay litter. While some strays catch on quickly, others don't. Try a fine grained sand type litter rather than gravel textured clay. In some cases it may be necessary to start off with the substance the cat was used to (soil, sand, newspaper) and gradually make the switch by changing the proportion of old type to new type over a period of several weeks. Clean the solids out of the litter box daily; completely change the litter and wash out the box as often as necessary to keep it clean and dry. Remember, a cat who lived outdoors had many sites from which to choose. A dirty box can drive the cat away from the box to a cleaner, drier spot (the back of your closet!) If the cat refuses to use the box at any stage, return to the last stage at which he was successful.

IS SHE SPAYED. . . IS HE NEUTERED? Sexually mature cats use urine and feces to mark territory and advertise for a mate. Your cat should be spayed or neutered (male cats are neutered, females are spayed) between two and six months of age. This is a routine surgical procedure performed on an anesthetized cat by a veterinarian. Call your vet or your local animal shelter to get more information. An intact cat that does not use the litter box is very difficult to train; the behavior may be hormonally influenced.

SPRAYING. . . WHAT IS IT AND WHY! Is the urine puddle up against the wall or along the side of the sofa? If it's the latter, the cat is not urinating out of his box; he is spraying. When a cat squats, he empties his bladder to get rid of bodily waste. A cat does not squat when he sprays. He stands with his tail straight up and sends a stream of urine sideways. It hits the wall and runs down onto the floor. It is not clear whether spraying claims territory or warns trespassers to stay away, but it is clear that it has nothing to do with needing to "relieve" oneself. Overcrowding and stress are often at the root of spraying. Although both males and females spray, males tend to do so more frequently, and unneutered males almost always do it. The good news is if an intact cat has just started to spray, very often neutering will put a stop to the behavior. Unfortunately, if the cat has been allowed to spray for some time, as is the case with many rescued tom cats, neutering may not solve the problem entirely. Once the behavior becomes habitual, the cat may continue to spray. It may be necessary to work with a behaviorist to attempt to modify the behavior.

CLEAN BOX. . . CLEAN CAT Cats will often refuse to use the litter box if it isn't kept clean. For some cats this means cleaning out the box after each use, for others once every day or two is more than enough. If the cat thinks the box is dirty, he may use the area around the box (throw rug, sink or tub), especially if he scatters litter out of the box when covering.

IS HE REALLY BOX TRAINED? Some cats can become oriented to the location of the box. You may think he is trained to the box when he is really trained to use the space in which you have placed the box. In this case, if you move the box, the cat will continue to eliminate where the box used to be. If you must change the box's location, move it when the box is moved a few inches each day until it reaches the new location. If you have moved into a new home, actively show the cat where the box is after he's eaten, when he wakes from napping, or at times when you know the cat "has to go." Better yet isolate him in one room for a few days (preferably the room where the box will be) then slowly let him have greater run of the house.

For some cats changing litter texture (clay to cedar chips or newspaper strips) or switching to a scented litter may cause the cat to go elsewhere. Switching back to the former litter usually solves the problem. Changing the size/type of box (covered/uncovered, lined/unlined) can also send the cat elsewhere. After all, that's not what his bathroom looks/feels/smells like!

HE USES THE BOX. . . SOMETIMES! Has the cat ever used the box reliably for any length of time or does he have accidents? How frequently? A cat who has frequent accidents is not box trained. This cat is demonstrating that he doesn't know that there is only one place to eliminate. . . in the box!

Use close supervision or confinement (see following pages) to train the cat to use the box and **ONLY THE BOX**. All previously soiled areas must be cleaned and treated with an appropriate odor neutralizing product. Whenever possible, visually change the areas most frequently soiled. Cover with a chair, an end table, a garbage can or umbrella stand! If it doesn't smell or look like the "old bathroom," he will be less likely to return. If you see the cat sniffing or scratching around a forbidden area, gently but firmly direct him towards the litter box. If your cat has infrequent or predictable accidents ("he always does it when I come back from vacation"), this may be stress related behavior. Read on.

DON'T YELL . . . CLEAN IT UP! Never hit or become aggressive with a cat for not using the box; punishing the cat after the act will not teach him to use the litter box when he's "got to go." Shouting, hitting, and general stomping around will only serve to damage your relationship with the cat; it will teach him to watch out for you, that you are an unpredictable and frightening human.

It is important to clean the soiled area thoroughly with an enzyme-based cleaner that will remove the source (urine/feces) of the odor as well as take out the stain. If you can't get to a pet supply store, an adequate substitute can be made from equal parts of seltzer and white vinegar. Never use ammonia or ammonia-based products to clean up. They will attract the cat back to the spot. Frequently soiled foam-backed carpets or carpet padding can break down emitting an ammonia-type odor. When this happens, enzyme cleaners may not work. In these cases, remove the padding and replace it. Follow package direction carefully; make sure you are using the product best suited for your type of mess (old, dried spots; new spots; spots previously cleaned, etc).

IS IT SPITE? NO, IT'S STRESS! Environmental stress takes its toll on house cats. Studies indicate that there is a high correlation between ongoing stress and stressful events and house soiling. Cats are as individual as people. Some are bold, outgoing and adventurous; they are resilient and forgiving. Others are timid and lack confidence. They slink from room to room and run from strangers. Like little old maiden aunts, most cats thrive on the predictability of a daily routine. Personal crisis, a new family member (spouse, baby) or redecorating are significant events from the feline point of view. A dinner party (a bunch of noisy strangers all over the place), going away for the week-end (isolation, change in routine and/or care giver) or having the plumber come in to fix the sink (trespasser) may cause the cat to feel threatened and become anxious. Anxious cats may spray or urinate or defecate outside the box.

Take the time to learn who your cat is and how you can meet his needs to minimize his stress. Whenever possible, insulate the sensitive cat from stressful events. Create a sanctuary for the cat now; bed him down there during the big party or when you're using power tools. Prepare the cat well in advance of a change in routine. Have the cat sitter come and feed the cat several times before you leave on vacation.

Dealing with stressful situations can be more difficult than the retraining exercises. Both objectives should be worked on simultaneously. The cat may continue to avoid the box and/or urinate on personal objects like bedding, clothing and your favorite chair in the presence of unresolved ongoing/escalating stress. This is not to say you must eliminate the stressful element but you must alter the cat's perception of that element through socialization or desensitization. Consider working with a behaviorist to modify your cat's behavior.

THE MULTI-CAT HOUSEHOLD It is known that cats have a loose, changeable social hierarchy that includes not only dominant and subordinate roles, but pariahs or outcasts as well. It is perhaps important to note that there are no hard and fast rules; that structure is dependent on the individual personalities and characters of the cats involved. This is most applicable in the case of the outcast cat. These cats hide most of the time or spend their days on the highest spots they have access to, rarely touching the floor. The other cats may fight with them regularly; they rarely fight back. If you find that the house soiler is an "outcast," the best thing may be to find that cat a new home. A cat who was a outcast in one group, may fit in well with a different or smaller group.



Ongoing stress within a multi-cat household can drive one or more members to spray (mark territory) or urinate or defecate out of the box. If the presence of a new cat is causing the existing cat to house soil, confine the newcomer. Make every attempt to keep the first tenant's life as stable as possible. Other solutions for the multi-cat household include multiple litter boxes placed in separate spaces, and creating more "cat places" with multiple levels (scratching posts with hideout/lookouts, carpeted window shelves etc). See the "Cat-to-Cat Introductions" article in this packet.

RETRAINING . . . CAN HE BE HELPED? The first step towards a solution is to rule out any health problems (worms, cystitis, intestinal disease) by having the cat thoroughly examined by a veterinarian. Once it has been determined that the cat is in good health, training can begin.

A combination of confinement and supervised freedom is the method of choice. The cat starts the program in confinement. Most cats do well in small rooms. The bathroom is recommended as it typically



has non-absorbent tile flooring and offers a peaceful sanctuary. Since the bathroom is an essential room for humans, the cat is not isolated for extended periods of time. In addition to those necessary trips to the bathroom, you should make time for three to four 20 minute sessions with the cat either playing, grooming, talking or feeding. Put a cat bed at one end of the room along with some toys. Remember to place dishes and bedding in the corner farthest from the litter box if the room is especially small.

Some cats may require a space smaller than a room, to ensure they have no opportunity to choose the wrong spot. For these cats, a cattery cage or dog crate is useful. It must be big enough to accommodate the cat bed at one end, and the litter box at the other. If the cat urinates on the cat bed, it must be removed. Feed the cat two meals a day, leaving the food down for approximately 20 minutes. Keep a diary; note when the cat uses the litter box.

When the cat has been using the box and ONLY the box for 2 weeks, you can begin to allow him access to other rooms in the house one room at a time. Observe from a distance; make sure that he has not fallen prey to old habits! The best time to let him roam is right after he's used the box, returning him to confinement before his next scheduled "pit stop." Do not leave the cat out when you are not home. Only when you observe the cat reliably returning to the litter box on his own, can you begin to cut back on the supervision. It is better to proceed slowly and build a strong foundation than to rush through the procedure because it is inconvenient or time consuming. In order for effective learning to take place, the cat must be watched carefully and encouraged to use the box. Consistency is everything. If you catch the cat using the box, gently praise and perhaps offer a treat. Reward appropriate behavior.

The complexities of cat behavior become quite evident when dealing with the cat who does not reliably use his box. The solutions often require patience and always require consistency. Be sensitive to your cat's needs. Your investment of quality time and attention will be well rewarded.

Elizabeth Teal and Micky Niego
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Surviving the Feline Teens

As your cat matures from kittenhood to adolescence, behavior once giggled over may now be seen as obnoxious. A less tolerant owner might begin to search for another home for Fluffy Sue and Tigger. This age calls for a little understanding. Perhaps looking at your cat's behavior through his eyes will provide you with that very comprehension.

I. SPRAYING

Hormones! The bane to any parent's existence whether you be parent to cats or kids — or both. As a young male feline matures, he feels the need to mark off his territory and let his competition know about it. This is done by sashaying up to a vertical surface, hiking up his tail and letting loose with a spray of urine and possibly, anal sac secretions. This usually happens at the stage his urine is beginning to smell all grown up, smelling more like the urine of cheetahs rather than chinchilla Persians.

The solution to a spraying Tom, Dick or Harry is a simple one: neuter immediately and there is a 90% chance that he will never spray again. The older the cat, the longer he has been spraying; so there is less chance that neutering alone will make it all go away. If he — or in rare cases, she — is still spraying, more drastic measures are called for: blocking outdoor views, behavior modification, re-homing additional cats, drug therapy, and other veterinary procedures. All because he doesn't want other cats in his territory! Better yet neuter him before puberty (between two and six months) and you are virtually guaranteed to avoid spraying.

II. ESTRUS

Has your female cat become smotheringly affectionate while purring, "Hey sailor, new in town?" If she is between five and ten months old, chances are she has gone into her first heat (estrus). She will yowl, roll about the floor and rub all over anything available for approximately 10 -14 days. She may also urinate around the house in her attempt to advertise for mates.

The solution is simple. Buy ear plugs, confine the cat to an easily cleaned room like the bathroom or kitchen, if Fluffy Sue is urinating outside the litter box and make an appointment to get her spayed. She will be a bit easier to live with if you know this heat cycle will be her last. By the way, there is no need to put yourself through this kitty hell in the first place. Some shelters and veterinarians are safely spaying kittens as early as two months of age.

III. SCRATCHING

Do you hear it, that rhythmic scratch, scratch, scratch down the side of your new sofa? Why is Fluffy Sue destroying new furniture when she has that obscenely expensive, color coordinated, carpet-covered scratching post standing unused half a room away? One reason is because she is trying to leave her mark, to claim that piece of furniture as part of her property/territory. The second, and perhaps more pressing reason, is because she is trying to loosen irritating old nail sheaths, so new nails can grow.

What's an owner to do? First, trim the cat's nails every two to three weeks to keep them relatively blunt. Second, provide a scratching post covered with a rough material (sisal is ideal but rope, starched burlap, or natural bark also suffices) that is at least three feet tall with a wide, sturdy base that won't tip over even when climbed or "attacked" by the cat. A short or unsteady post will be of no use to a cat and will be rejected in favor of non-tip furniture.





Keep the post interesting by sprinkling it with catnip every couple of weeks. Draw the cat's attention to the post by playing interactive games around the post with the cat. Place it near your feline's favorite resting place for the urge to scratch is strongest upon awakening. Place another one in front of whatever "sign post" he already scratches, after a month of scratching the cat post rather than the furniture, you can move it an inch a day to a more convenient location.

Don't think that declawing will be the answer to your prayers. Anecdotally, some believe this surgical amputation can shake your cat's confidence to the point that he may stop using the litterbox, become a biter or start hiding in dark out-of-the-way places to avoid social interactions. Behavior changes aside, it is a painful surgery that is a drastic, irreversible solution and should be left as a last resort.

IV. PREDATORY/PLAY AGGRESSION

Crouch, stalk, pounce, and bite! That was no mouse, that was an ankle! Felines are predators; as early as eight weeks of age, many cats have had all the training they need to be Mighty Hunters. If your cat was taken away from his littermates too early (prior to 8-10 weeks old) and he was not actively taught to inhibit his bite, you may find yourself his next hapless victim.

He needs an outlet for his predatory play behavior. Channel the predation toward playthings that you can make come alive. If your cat zeros in on your body parts, correct him with a loud hiss or blow a puff of air in his face. For more hard core cases, use a spritz of water, compressed canned air or a loud noise. Praise him for any interest he shows in the toy you are tantalizing him with. No hitting please, or his predatory play could swiftly turn into defensive aggression. Never tantalize him by tapping your fingers or toes, always place a toy between you and your cat during play.

V. NOCTURNAL BEHAVIOR

Did your cat keep you up last night? Contrary to popular belief, cats are not nocturnal creatures the way bats and raccoons are, but latchkey adolescents have been known to get restless, usually near dawn. When cats hunt, they stalk, pounce, kill and then eat their prey. Replicating this predatory ritual by playing interactive games and then serving dinner can be tremendously satisfying for your cat. A 10 minute play session followed by a fashionably late dinner does wonders for an early rising youngster.

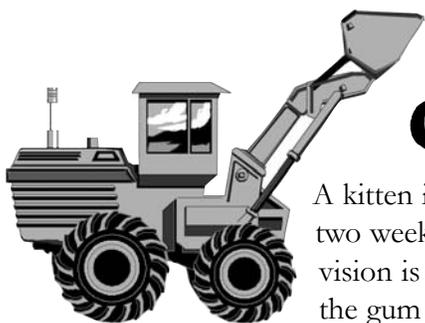
Make sure you are not inadvertently teaching your cat any bad habits. If he cries loud and long and you get up to (a) feed him, (b) play with him, (c) cuddle with him, or (d) all of the above, he will be rewarded for his bad behavior and will repeat the annoying behavior over and over. Do not give in to his commands. Play possum. Draw the covers up over your head and ignore his demands. A behavior that is not rewarded will eventually extinguish.

For those who can't stand it a minute more, create a play space/bedroom for your cat in a room like the bathroom. A litterbox, bed, and various types of toys dangling off doorknobs and towel racks should fill the environment. This will be your cat's bedroom until he outgrows his pre-dawn antsiness. Don't wait until he wakes you up, tuck him in there at bedtime. He earns access to your bed by his stellar behavior — by learning to sleep in until you say so.

During this stage of rambunctious high energy, willful excessive playfulness and boundary testing; patience, a sense of humor and a sound understanding of feline adolescent behavior are the best weapons.

Jacque Lynn Schultz
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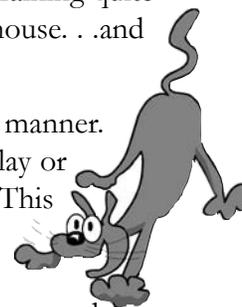
UNDER CONSTRUCTION!



A kitten is not a small cat. A kitten is an infant; a cat under construction. The first two weeks are spent in darkness, the eyes not yet opened. At one month of age, vision is fuzzy; by two months, complex visual tasks can be performed. Teeth cut the gum shortly before two weeks of age and continue until the fifth week. These milk teeth begin to loosen and fall out, replaced by adult teeth, beginning at about 14 weeks of age. By the age of five weeks, kittens can go to the bathroom without mom's assistance; prior to this, mom had to stimulate each kitten, by licking it, to pass body waste. A kitten under seven weeks cannot regulate and maintain his body temperature. Caring for an orphan presents a challenge. With no littermates to bundle up with, the orphan can rapidly lose body heat, a threat to life. It is not until eight weeks of age that a kitten begins to show adult-like responses to threatening social situations. A kitten in this age group must be adequately protected from adventurous pets and kids.

Kittens grow rapidly between two and six months of age; they need three to four meals of high quality kitten food (no milk, please) daily. Feeding individual meals is preferred to the "nibble all day long" method. Random eating habits may lead to random toilet habits which can make box training quite difficult. Remember, you want the cat to learn that there is only one bathroom in the house. . .and the litter box is it.

It is not until six to seven weeks of age that a kitten can walk, trot and run in an adult manner. While that's going on, the kitten develops eye/paw coordination. This leads to object play or the ability to move small objects around, like a bottle cap on a wood floor at 3:00 am! This behavior peaks at about eight weeks of age. Locomotor play, more commonly described as ripping around like a maniac, also develops rapidly at this age. Complex motor abilities and other daring feats, such as jumping onto, walking along and turning around on a narrow plank or railing, may not be fully developed until 10 -11 weeks of age. A kitten of this age must be provided with lots of supervision; he can climb up, but can't turn around to come back down. Additionally, you will want to be there to define "off-limits" areas (drapery valance) to the budding athlete.



Supervised exposure to physical and mental challenges like inclines, see-saws, mazes and tunnels, and different textures (think jungle gym!) encourage the development of self assuredness. Kittens that are left for long hours to amuse themselves often develop into adults that lack confidence, become introverted or independent. Unfortunately, many people accept aberrant (shy, fearful, timid, aggressive or anxious) behavior in cats; most are unaware that they participated in its development by not being able to meet their infant cat's daily need for adventure, activity, structure and feedback. These cats are referred to as "freaky," "schizo," or "quirky." Those humans without a sense of humor or commitment prefer not to live with it (attacking guests, household destruction, self-mutilation, etc.) and may deposit the now neurotic adult at the local shelter for re-homing!

Social relationships, which depend so much on familiarity, are readily formed during the first two months after birth. Humans or members of other species incorporated within the kitten's social group at this stage will elicit lifelong associations. It is important that the kitten remain with the litter; people are added to the circle of friends, not substituted. Exposure to men, women and children of all ages will help the kitten grow into a confident adult rather than the "scaredy cat" that runs at the first sounds of houseguests! Proper socialization and handling can make the difference between a cat that is calm, self-assured and resilient and one that is rigid, anxious and unable to cope with stress.

Kittens born to a well adjusted mother (one that reacts appropriately in response to human and feline social interactions) have been provided with a good model for future behavior. A mother that hisses and runs at the sight of a toddler is demonstrating to her kittens exactly what to do when a child appears. Social play becomes prevalent by four weeks of age and continues to peak until 12-14 weeks.

Social play-fights can escalate into serious confrontations, especially during the third month. Social play patterns will become increasingly predatory in nature: more stalking, pouncing, pawing and biting. Kittens that have been removed from the litter and live within a human household also go through this stage of development, with the increased predatory play-fighting directed at the caretaker. Feet and hands are primary targets and become fair game in wave after wave of sneak attacks! Now is the time to set boundaries as well as divert the kitten's attention to something more appropriate



(“Here, let's play with this pull toy”). A kitten that spends too much time alone in a non-responsive environment (locked in bathroom for 10 hours while caretaker is at work plus another seven while caretaker is asleep) can become quite “wild;” pouncing, scratching and biting without inhibition.

As the kitten gets older, play can also turn sexual. Kittens as young as four months of age will mount each other and posture. Biting and holding, a simulated mating behavior, is what can happen to a hand that was innocently petting a now sexually aroused cat! Male and female cats should be spayed and neutered between two and six months of age to prevent unwanted sexually related behaviors that include mounting, spraying, increased aggression and territoriality, heightened nighttime activity and yowling (not to mention the unwanted litter that will be conceived when your sex maniac escapes to answer nature's call).

KITTEN FACTS (developmental tidbits based on scientific and observational studies)

Kittens are well adapted towards learning from their mother. Neonate kittens tend to imitate their mother's choice of food, even if it is a food normally not eaten by cats. Kittens who watch their mothers perform a certain task (i.e. use litter box) were able to acquire the response quickly, whereas kittens that were given the opportunity to acquire the response solely by trial and error, with rare exception, never did.

Kittens that were separated from their mother at two weeks of age subsequently developed a variety of behavioral, emotional and physical abnormalities. They became unusually fearful and aggressive towards other cats and people. In addition they exhibited large amounts of random and undirected activity (busy, busy, BUSY) and were slow learners. Social experiences with litter mates also seems to play a role in development of later social skills. Hand-reared orphans were much slower in forming social attachments and social skills.

Several studies have shown that kittens of undernourished mothers subsequently exhibit a variety of behavioral and growth abnormalities. They showed poorer learning ability, antisocial behavior towards other cats, heightened emotionality characterized by abnormal levels of fear and aggression. The kittens lost balance more often, indicating possible abnormalities in their motor development. Undernourished kittens under six weeks of age eventually achieved normal body size after receiving an adequate diet, but exhibited a number of behavioral abnormalities and differences in brain development.

When making the decision to live with a cat or add an additional cat to your household, it is important to consider all factors including age and background. Can you give the undernourished stray kitten the extra care and attention that he will need in an effort to help him become confident and well adjusted? Will he still fit in if he does manifest some of the behavior problems that are associated with his less than ideal background? Reading upon feline behavior can help you make behavioral adjustments in an informed way.

By Micky Niego
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