

## Chapter 1

# Raising a Puppy: Making Heads and Tails of It

---

### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Understanding the differences between puppies
  - ▶ Helping your pup settle in with the family
  - ▶ Training with your pup's age in mind
  - ▶ Dealing with the infamous puppy behavior
  - ▶ Taking care of your puppy
- 

**I**f you parallel your puppy's first year with the first 18 years of a child's life, you'll have a good sense of what's in front of you for the next 360 days. Civilizing a puppy is a lot like civilizing a child — fortunately, though, it only takes a year. And, your puppy won't ever wreck the car, max out your credit cards, or leave for college!

This first chapter lays the groundwork for what lies ahead. With these guidelines in hand, you'll have no trouble getting through the first year.

## *A Puppy Is a Puppy — Right?*

Wrong! Just as no two people are exactly alike, no two puppies are alike either. Even though you may see two puppies of the same breed and think “Wow! They look exactly the same” or see a litter and not be able to tell one from the other, remember that each puppy has his own unique take on life, which is shaped as much by the people who surround him as his breed's specific impulses.

If all this talk of breeds is sounding a little foreign to you, you're not alone. Until now, you may not have given dog breeds much thought. Instead, you may have thought that the only thing separating one pup from the other was coat color and size. Unless your plan is to choose a dog that compliments your couch cushions, you have to know a little bit about the types available.

And you're in luck because this section helps you with just that — it focuses on the difference between breeds and how those influences impact your life on a daily basis.



In addition to breed, a puppy's personality and temperament should influence selection. Like kids, each puppy has a personality that's markedly defined by the time he's 8 weeks old. However, unlike kids, you can pick your puppy's personality.

## *A word on breeds*

Before starting out, it's a good idea to get a handle on the word "breed." A *breed*, as defined by *Webster's New World College Dictionary*, 4th Edition, is more or less a group of animals descended from common ancestors. If you look to the *American Kennel Club* (AKC), they define a breed as "a line of dogs with similar ancestry." Ancestry, then, is the keyword here: By belonging to a certain breed, a puppy's lineage can be traced along a family tree. If you invest in a purebred dog (versus say, a mixed breed), you can decipher just where his great-grandfather lived and what made him so special, whether it be championship ribbons or obedience titles.

Most breeds can be traced back in history to the time of their conception. Generally a breed is created when a person or a group of like-minded advocates mindfully pair two dogs that have similar instincts or looks. For example, the conception of the Parsons Russell Terrier (also known as the Jack Russell Terrier) was the project of Rev. Jack Russell, who lived in the mid-1880s. Until that time, hunters carried a short-legged terrier on horseback to rush a fox from its hole after the hounds had cornered it. Russell sought to breed a dog with legs long enough to keep up with the hounds but with enough agility and drive to follow through with its task of rushing a fox from its hole. Russell's first breeding female, the queen bee so to speak, was a cross-bred terrier named "Trump," whom he bought from a milkman.

---

### **Your dog's ingrained need for a job**

A puppy's instinctual skills, with a few exceptions, are no longer necessary to human survival. But, please don't let your puppy in on this secret. His skills are his life's talent and employing them will give his life a sense of purpose. No sheep to herd? The neighborhood kids will do.

No snow in Savannah? Pulling a skateboarder will satisfy a Siberian Husky. No ducks to retrieve? A tennis ball will do just fine. Dogs love to work, and they can't quell their passions just because you have a late meeting.

---



Over time more than 420 known breeds have been developed worldwide. Each of these breeds has specific characteristics that allow the dogs to withstand the environment of the lands of their original decent. Each breed has a defined look, temperament, and interest that continues to get passed down from generation to generation.

## *Deciding what breed (if any) is right for you*

In Chapter 3, I discuss the difference between breeds, and I group them into seven categories as I explore the ideal home environment, as well as the necessary exercise, training, and socialization commitments of each. In addition, I look at the allure of mixed-breed dogs, which are made up of the latest designer breeds as well as the generic mixes who cost considerably less. A quick peek at the concept of *hybrid vigor* will help you to appreciate a dog who looks and acts unique.

You find nifty tables and personality charts to help you keep track of the ones best-suited to your lifestyle. Your heart's pick may be a high-energy breed from the sporting group, but if you're out most of the day and you prefer vegging to jogging, this puppy will lose his appeal when you find him climbing your walls.



After you've narrowed your breed choice, you're ready to begin the adventure of finding your puppy. First impressions count — make sure your puppy's first home, whether it's a breeder, shelter, store, or private home, is a safe, positive, and relaxed environment where you feel comfortable asking any pertinent questions and voicing your concerns. Many good breeders will question you because they want to find good homes for the puppies they love like infants.

As I said earlier in this chapter, puppies, like children, have distinct personalities. In Chapter 4, you find a temperament test that you can take with you when checking out a particular puppy. Visualize the ideal characteristics you value in a dog and list them in the margin. For example, do you want a dog who's devoted to making you happy and who's needy for attention and delighted to do your bidding? Or, are you more comfortable with a puppy who's affectionate, but independent? Maybe your heart's set on a timid puppy who needs patience, coaxing, and love to come out of his shell. Believe it or not, you can make accurate behavioral predictions such as these when puppies are just eight weeks old.

## *Helping Your Puppy Jump into the Family Groove*

You've been excited for days, weeks, and perhaps even years to bring your puppy home! Few things in life are as exciting as adopting a puppy.



Regardless of your mood, this initial trip can be scary and overwhelming for your puppy, who may be separating from his first family for the very first time. Plan ahead by organizing both the trip home and your arrival. Make your puppy-supply purchases, which are listed in Chapter 5, well in advance. Also, before your pup comes home, be sure to set up his first room, and explain your itinerary to family and friends. Having a plan puts your mind at ease, which will help your puppy get through this transition stage. Your puppy will bond to you and his new life in no time.

### *Understanding your puppy's point of view*

Your puppy will thrive on consistency and predictability, and so will you. In Chapter 6, I focus on your puppy's daily needs and how to structure a schedule around them. Knowing how your puppy likes to organize his day takes the guesswork out of this experience and humanizes many of his communication skills and dependency issues. In fact, Chapter 6 points out just how much a human toddler and a puppy have in common — from a routine bathroom and sleeping schedule to predictable stages of development. I offer several example schedules and charts to help you structure a realistic day and bring some regularity back into your life.

Further along in Chapter 6, I help you explore Doglish, which is, of course, your dog's language. Puppies need a lot of direction and feel most comfortable when it's given in a language they understand and by someone who's clear-minded and calm. Even though you may think your bossy, hyper puppy is having a ball, he's likely not. All puppies want someone to admire and please; otherwise, they feel lost.

Teaching your puppy is a lot like teaching a foreigner English — you have to translate your teachings into the person's native language. For example, as you know, your puppy doesn't understand English. So, to help your puppy understand your thoughts, you have to translate them first into Doglish, your puppy's native language.

## *Positively overdoing socialization*



If you want a well-rounded, gently mannered dog, there's one secret you must know: Overdo socialization in puppyhood! Overdo socialization even more so than training. Expose your puppy to everything — objects, surfaces, sounds (inside and out), places, and people of all ages, races, sexes, and sizes. Expose your pup to other animals and pets too. Even changes in weather patterns must be handled mindfully. If your puppy is startled or concerned, a soothing reaction from you may actually be misinterpreted as mutual fear. To teach him how to manage himself, reassure your puppy with your confidence and direction. Knowing how to calm him when he's stressed can make the difference between a pet who rolls with the changes and one who emotionally locks up or reacts defensively. (Chapter 7 gives the lowdown on socializing your pup.)



Until your puppy is fully inoculated *do not* take him out in public to socialize. Various life-threatening viruses are airborne and can be picked up by simply sniffing about. In addition, I've heard reports of young, playful puppies who have not had their rabies inoculation forcibly euthanized after nipping a stranger. Take precaution.

## *Raising a pup with children and within a neighborhood*

Bringing home a puppy to raise with your family or to entertain the grandchildren when they come to visit adds another dimension to your months ahead. Kids are often pigeonholed as other puppies and can be perceived as rivals for toys, food, and attention.

Chapter 8 offers a proactive (rather than reactive) approach to raising a puppy with children — from phrases to use to groovy games and activities to play. By organizing fun activities, you're giving the child license to both control and enjoy the puppy, while the puppy is learning respect for everyone who walks on two legs. If you already suspect sibling rivalry, the signs, symptoms, and solutions can be found in Chapter 8, too.

If you're raising your puppy in a neighborhood or urban environment, Chapter 9 gives you clever ways to stay on everyone's good side and shows you how to make a few extra friends to boot. Nobody likes to step in puppy poop on their way to work, so be a good neighbor and check out Chapter 9 to find out the best way to scoop a poop.

## *Enduring life changes*



Puppyhood is a time for many changes, both physical and emotional. During their first months, puppies go through different cycles: One day they'll love your neighbor and the next day they'll hide. One day they'll be bold and assured when entering your car and the next they'll put on the brakes and refuse to follow you. Don't worry, this behavior is nothing out of the ordinary — puppies have a lot of nuances to contend with. These periods are scary for any puppy, but they give you the perfect opportunity to strengthen your connection to him by managing his anxiety with concern and confidence. You become the Great Oz as you increase his trust and reliability in your judgment.

You also need to examine your own life and think about any anticipated changes that may affect your puppy in the near or distant future. Ask yourself: Are you single now but anticipate having children? Is this puppy your first pet, but you're hoping to introduce a cat or rabbit in the months or years ahead? Make the transition simple: Condition and socialize your puppy when he's young.

## *Tackling Training through Your Puppy's Growth Phases*

Think of this year as your golden opportunity to influence and civilize your puppy. The chapters in Part III introduce you to directions and problem-solving techniques that are age-appropriate and are designed to build your puppy's confidence, both in you and in the world surrounding him. Each chapter is broken into easily understandable exercises that are fun to do and easily repeated by others.

## *Knowing what you're in for*

Here's just some of what you have to look forward to as your puppy grows through his first year:

- ✓ **Infancy:** Infancy is a magical time for your puppy! Delightfully self-centered and curious, he's experiencing his world — and all the people in it — for the first time. This phase isn't the time to interject your opinion too strongly. Let him explore while encouraging positive behaviors and structuring your schedule and affections around his needs. Shouting "No" repeatedly is a turnoff: Like an infant, your puppy doesn't have the capacity to comprehend right from wrong.

- ✓ **Terrible Twos:** Before the terrible twos start, you may be convinced that you've adopted an angel. During his infancy, your puppy will follow you everywhere, sleep for hours, and run to you when you call. Then it will happen almost overnight: Your puppy will fall from grace. Suddenly you'll be under slipper assault, the nipping will be relentless, and racing away from you will be your pup's new game. During the terrible twos phase, you may dream about the day you adopted him and may fantasize about leaving him on your neighbor's doorstep. If it's any consolation, all his mischief is a wonderful sign of normal development. Your puppy is growing up. Knowing how to handle his behavior and how to control your own frustration is critical in getting through this trying time. Help is on its way.
- ✓ **Budding Adolescent:** Okay, by now you're getting a good glimpse of your puppy's personality. Is he needy, confrontational, strong willed, dependent, focused, obstinate? You get to the point: Your puppy is maturing faster than you can keep up with. This is the time to start fun, positive training routines and to increase games that encourage interaction. Bear in mind that cooperation at this age is not part of his emotional repertoire. Adolescents naturally test the limits of their guardians — no matter the species. Exploration and curiosity also come into bloom during this stage. Matched with a puppy's spiking hormonal and energy level, it's a wonder they behave at all!



Though you may dream of a puppy who comes consistently, don't put too much pressure on him now. Mindful obedience isn't a realistic goal for one so young. Your demands and rising frustration will not win you any brownie points either, although patience is noted and calm interactions are mirrored. The best approach for this age: prevention and playful lessons that highlight his focus and successes!

- ✓ **Puberty:** Experiencing puberty with your puppy may prompt a quick midnight phone call to your parents to apologize for your quirky behaviors during puberty. Random defiance, running off for hours, ignoring direction: Don't take any of your pup's frustrating behavior personally. Your puppy must challenge you in order to grow up. Through this age-appropriate behavior, he's testing your authority to ensure that he can trust your judgment. It's simply a part of nature.



Managing yourself is the most important concentration during this stage. Anger and frustration will spell your ruin — your puppy will view your loss of control as a weakness, and he'll either assert his control or become unsure and manic. Keep your puppy safe from his own impulses by keeping him leashed or in a contained space, and follow the exercises in Chapter 14. Lesson by lesson you'll shape his worldview, raising him into doghood with a tremendous respect for your confident attitude and levelheadedness.

✓ **Trying Teen:** During this phase, you have the perfect puppy — devoted, responsive, and mindful. Well, that's to say, most of the time. Sometimes your almost-adult puppy still tests his independence; sometimes that incorrigible three-month-old puppy reemerges and he's up to his old tricks. But, for the most part, you can see the light at the end of the dark tunnel.

If you're like many people, you'll experience a strong desire for off-leash control, and you may have a wanderlust for extracurricular activities, such as agility or pet therapy activities. This is an ideal stage to work on off-leash exercises, which are discussed in Chapter 15. Remember, though, you must practice patience with these exercises. Removing the leash is often as scary for your puppy as it is for you, and managing this experience well is the key to ensuring the invisible, human-puppy bond that lasts a lifetime.

No puppy, no matter what the extent of his training is, should be allowed to run free near a crowd or near roadway traffic. Too many unpredictable variables are present in these areas to risk the chance.



Does committing the next year to training your puppy sound like a project? Well, you're right — it is! Once you commit to the role of your puppy's teacher, he can learn all he needs to know throughout his first year — from where to potty and what to chew to polite greeting manners and how to conduct himself in a crowd. He won't learn these things overnight, however — like human school, puppy training is a stage-by-stage process.

## *Words your puppy should learn and love*

Familiar words make your dog or puppy feel directed, connected, and safe. Just think of being in a foreign country — you'd be most comfortable with those who spoke your language. Teach your puppy the words in Table 1-1 to better communicate your expectations and help your puppy feel most secure in your relationship.

| Table 1-1 Basic Instructions for Your Puppy |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <i>Word</i>                                 | <i>What It Does</i>   | <i>When and Where to Use It</i>  |
| <Name>                                      | Your puppy's name should have a positive, magnetic association. Connect with food in 8- to 10-week-old puppies. | Use to encourage your puppy's attention for positive interaction and motion directions like "Come" and "Heel." |
| Let's go                                    | "Let's go" is a loose walking direction encouraging your puppy to follow you.                                   | Around the house, on loose lead walks, and in a field.   |



| <b>Word</b>   | <b>What It Does</b>   | <b>When and Where to Use It</b>   |
|---------------|---|---|
| Wait and Okay | “Wait” is about impulse control. It encourages your puppy to stop and look to you for permission before moving ahead. “Okay!” releases him. | Use this combo when going in or out of doors and cars, crossing curbs, or on stairways. Also use with food and toys to encourage gentle mouth habits. |
| Excuse me     | “Excuse me” encourages spatial respect and reminds your puppy of his manners.   | When your puppy blocks your path, leans against you uninvited, steps on you, or ignores a direction.  |
| Stand         | A level 1 containment position.   | Great for grooming, bathing, or steadying your puppy in a crowd or at the doctor’s office.  |
| Sit           | A level 2 containment position.   | This is the ‘Say please’ position. Use it before offering your puppy something positive — a toy, treat, pat, dinner, and so on.                       |
| Down          | A level-3 containment position — lying down on the ground or floor.   | Use “Down” when sitting quietly or when at a cafe, friend’s house, and so on.   |
| Settle down   | Use “Settle down” to direct your puppy to a certain area (preferably on a mat/bed).   | For repetitive quiet times, such as dinner, homework time, or TV.   |
| No            | This direction discourages inappropriate behavior.  | Best used when catching a thought in process. Should be said in the same tone as any other direction.   |
| Ep, Ep        | “Ep Ep” works best for puppies under 4 months. It discourages inappropriate behaviors.  | Use to discourage interest in garbage, objects, rooms, or counters.   |

Chapter 14 provides detailed advice on how and when to teach your puppy these words and instructions.

## *Different strokes for different folks*



There are many approaches to training and as many gadgets to help you convey and emphasize your directions, from clickers and target sticks to training collars and leashes. If you randomly try these objects or mix and match your approaches simultaneously, you’re likely to confuse your puppy.

Read through Chapters 5 and 11 to discover all the equipment and gadgets available to you before analyzing which make the most sense for you and your puppy. Before heading out to the pet store and setting an educational plan for your puppy's first year, consider the following:

- ✓ To treat or not to treat?
- ✓ What's a clicker and how do you use it?
- ✓ How do you use treat cups, target sticks, and snack packs?
- ✓ Should your puppy's breed or temperament influence your training approach?
- ✓ What about all these different collars and leashes?

The ideal application and the benefits and drawbacks of each object or approach are found in Chapters 5 and 11. If you have family members involved in your pup's training, have a group discussion to ensure that you're all on the same page. Consistency is oh-so-reassuring to your puppy.

## *Day-to-Day Frustrations — and More Serious Problems*



Your puppy's naughty behaviors — the ones that frustrate you to tears — aren't such big issues to him. In fact, he sees many of the routines as games and will repeat them whenever he's bored. Habits are formed at these most aggravating moments, leaving you stranded and in a vicious cycle. Ironically, this cycle is your own creation. Sure it feels like you must do something when your puppy tears off with your napkin, but screaming and isolating him just don't impede repetition. And, think about it: If cruising the counters brings you back into the room, your puppy will repeat this tactic no matter the consequences.

There are of course more serious issues: what I call “red flag” issues that warrant concern and reaction. Aggression comes to mind, as does separation anxiety and destructive chewing. Bear in mind a puppy who exhibits this behavior isn't happy; your corrections won't lighten his intensity. Find a more cheerful approach, modify your behavior, and help your puppy develop a more cheerful, go-with-the-flow attitude. You'll all be a lot more relaxed.

You and your puppy are two different species with two very different views on morality. Take the time to understand your puppy's mindset and try a whole new approach to resolving your differences. In Chapters 16 and 17, I show you this new approach by reconstructing several frustrating behavioral

situations so that you can teach your puppy the concept of “No” when appropriate and refocus him on more appropriate activities. You never know — this new approach just might work!



Your puppy can’t understand the concept of “No” until he’s more than 4 months old. Even though a young puppy may look like he knows what you’re talking about when you shout “No,” his reaction is really only fear and confusion. Nobody wants to scare their puppy. In Chapter 14, I discuss how to teach your puppy the concept of “No.” Until your pup is ready for the “No” direction, follow the techniques in Chapter 14 to convey your disapproval effectively, and tidy up your home until he’s truly old enough to contain his impulses.

In the chapters in Part IV, I dissect all areas of frustration from nipping and jumping to the more serious infractions, such as aggression. Even though this book doesn’t take the place of a professional when your situation is dire, use it to shed light on everything puppy — from a wagging tail and puppy breath to adolescent defiance. Here are two aggravated reactions explained:

- ✓ During infancy your puppy may nip when exhausted. If you physically reprimand him for this behavior, you’ll confuse your puppy, and he’ll view you less as a nurturing parent and more as a challenging puppy.
- ✓ If you hear a slight rumble in your puppy’s throat when your neighbor pays a visit, this is a clear signal that he simply doesn’t know how to handle this situation and doesn’t know who’s in charge. This behavior is your cue. Yelling at him will only escalate his tension, so don’t do it. Instead, follow the instructions (in Chapter 17) to teach Back and Stay, and your pup will feel assured in the strength of your direction.



There is a sensible reason for every puppy behavior, whether it’s counter sniffing or jumping on guests. Investigate and understand why your puppy is reacting in a certain way. Then, juggle the variables to meet his needs as you redirect him to more appropriate activities.

## *A Clean Bill of Health*

If you take care of the inside of your puppy, the outside can better take care of itself. Chapters 19 and 20 help you make pertinent health care decisions, balance your puppy’s diet, stay on top of his daily hygiene, and understand his healthy vital signs so you can react calmly in an emergency.

A sick puppy is like a toddler: When he’s ill or troubled, your puppy is unable to articulate it in words. He will, however, respond in ways that would be

obvious to another dog. So, in Chapters 20 and 21, I help you decipher your puppy's signals so that you know how to both keep him healthy and happy and how to respond to him when he's ill.



These chapters don't take the place of regular checkups or consultations with a veterinarian. Your veterinarian has a medical degree and may recommend tests or blood work to determine a specific ailment. Use these chapters to educate yourself on what signs and symptoms to watch for and how to read what your puppy is saying to you when he's unwell. Sharing this information with your veterinarian is more than invaluable — it could save your puppy's life.

Spaying and neutering your puppy is crucial. I have yet to share my life with a dog who has not been altered before their first year: It's a responsible action and our duty to stem the growing overpopulation and hence widespread euthanasia that seems to be the only other solution. Even though controversy abounds on subjects that include age, surgical choice, and aftereffects, knowing the facts will give you the ability to choose your course of action wisely.