

GENERAL QUESTIONS...

Obedience Training for PetPups/Dogs

What's the best age to start obedience training and why?

Pups are never too young to start training! If the pup is old enough to have 'not acceptable' behaviors, they are old enough to start learning 'correct' behaviors. The advantage for starting early is that a puppy mind is like a 'lump of clay' waiting to be molded. I can assure you, if you don't mold them....dogs will mold themselves (not always to your liking). These early months are the **IMPRINTING** phase and the most crucial (mentally & emotionally) in any dog's life! Whatever they learn in the imprint phase is *indelibly* etched in/on their mind...it becomes a part of them. It is up to YOU.... whether the behaviors that create the foundation of your pup's entire life with you are positive or negative.

Everything you teach your pup and everything they learn during this **IMPRINTING** phase will directly affect the way they relate to you & the way they will learn for the rest of their lives. You can build a solid foundation OR you can build on 'sinking sand'. If the foundation you build is solid and positive, yours and your dog's lives will be enriched. If you build on sinking sand and negativism, your dog will be the one to 'sink'!

When you train puppies, there are some basic ground rules:

- very short sessions a couple of times a day...3-5 min. per session. As the puppies get older, you can gradually increase the time of each session. Even adult dogs should be trained only 15-30 min. at a time (depending on the individual dog).
- ALL puppy training must be *play training*! No corrections...they don't (yet) know what they are doing. They are just enjoying *doing and learning* with mom or dad!!
- puppy training should be FUN, FUN, FUN...Early on, they don't have a clue they are actually LEARNING. After a while...abracadabra....they know, they understand...and is so exciting for them and for YOU!!!!
- you must be CONSISTENT,CONSISTENT,CONSISTENT. If you are not consistent in your training and expectations, you will create CONFUSION! This makes learning so much harder, takes the joy out of it, & makes training stressful. Have you ever tried to learn when you are stressed...all you want to do is AVOID it. It is no different for the pups/dogs.

NOTE: A dog is *NEVER* too old to learn. You *can* teach an old dog new tricks! This is not as easy as with puppies. Puppies are learning '*anew*'...older dogs are '*relearning*'. We all know how much harder it is for us to **change** an established behavior than it is to learn new behaviors. It is the same with your dog.

Do all dogs have attitudes? Does obedience training help or hinder a dog's natural

attitude/personality?

There are as many different attitudes/personalities in dogs as there are dogs. This is no different than with children. If you take 3 children and raise them IDENTICALLY IN ALL WAYS (if that were possible), they would still be totally *unique* unto themselves...so are dogs. Use your dog's uniqueness to help you find the best way to train them. If you will 'listen' to what they tell you about themselves, you will know what their positive and negative triggers are. When you know this, you can avoid the negative **triggers** and you can take advantage and use their positive triggers to get the desired results.

All dogs benefit from training. In fact, they NEED IT/THRIVE ON IT! The phrase '*Be all that you can be*' says it all. Again as with children, if you do not 'channel' their natural mental abilities (energy)...they will tend to react in one of two ways. They will 'act out' (often times, negative behaviors...just trying to keep themselves mentally stimulated) or they will, after a while, shut down/turn off mentally and even emotionally.

Dogs are born with a natural mental exuberance and they become increasingly frustrated when this is not CULTIVATED and USED...Ever heard the expression 'use it or lose it'? Well, dogs 'fight' not to lose it and will try on their own (not always to your liking) to keep 'using it'...but after a while, they will stop trying. This is so very sad... because if this happens, your dog will lose a very important part of who they are and who they could be!

Any dog (as with people) wants and needs structure, guidelines, and rules to live by. I can assure you that if you don't set those for your dog...they will come up with their own.

With the right kind of training (positive methods), they will flourish. They will be more fulfilled. They become more of who they are meant to be!. The reverse is negative training methods (coercion, harsh physical corrections). Dogs are very fair minded by nature. They expect and need you to be fair with them. Dogs will tend to BALK at unfair, harsh, coercive methods. Wouldn't you? If this is 'stubborn', then it is dog nature and human nature to be stubborn. This is not stubborn, this is 'smart'!

Are ongoing obedience classes necessary for your dog to stay trained?

Training particular behaviors does not necessarily mean training 'to show' in obedience or even attending obedience classes. **I highly recommend obedience classes for all dogs...and, for all Moms and Dads.** However, training 'behaviors' can just mean teaching your dog the structure, guidelines, and rules you want them to follow in their everyday life.

After a behavior is *fully learned*, it is part of your dog. They can 'slip up'; just like you. How many times have you heard yourself say, 'I knew better than to do that!' or 'Now, why did I do that' or 'What was I thinking when I did that?', etc. But, for the most part LEARNED behaviors become a part of who your dog is. Keep in mind that 'learned' behaviors and reactions will be either positive OR negative. YOU completely control this. Therefore, you carry the sole responsibility for the "end result". Your dog is at your mercy.

If the 'end result' is what you want, then you are to be commended. If the 'end result' is not what you want...you really must look to yourself for the reason. You are in control. Do you need more help, more knowledge, more patience, more consistency, and/or more understanding? Whatever YOU NEED, you owe it to your pup/dog to get it. You hold their fate in your hands. This is not a responsibility to be taken lightly. WE ARE NOT...SHOULD NOT...BE A THROWAWAY SOCIETY!!

NOTE: In the learning phase, you must be **patient and consistent!!!!** A behavior allowed sometimes, but, not others or vice versa really 'muddies' the learning pool. Your dog will NEVER truly 'learn and understand' the expected/desired behavior. Getting upset at your pup/dog before they have truly learned and understand a behavior is unfair, stressful, and exceedingly disconcerting. Your pup/dog can get so 'flustered' and so 'unnerved' that they can't think straight and won't even remember the behaviors they do KNOW. You moms and dads know what I am talking about, because you have had this same thing happen to you.

It is said that behaviors that are *ignored* will EXTINQUISH themselves. This can be positive or negative behaviors. This mean, a positive behavior that is not *rewarded/reinforced* will tend to extinguish itself. So in that sense, you should continue to ASK your dog to GIVE you the behaviors you DESIRE from them (e.g. come, sit, down, stay, off, etc.) and reward, praise, treat for that behavior. This is very much a part of the structure, guidelines, and rules they want/need in their lives.

NOTE: Some behaviors are natural to dogs and are **self-reinforcing** (e.g. [barking](#), [digging](#), [chewing](#), etc.). These behaviors MUST be dealt with specifically and directly!

Personally, I am vehemently opposed to dog training facilities where you leave your dog for a couple of weeks and then expect to pick up a perfectly trained dog. First off, this is an entirely **unrealistic expectation**. It takes us (people) a month or more to 'modify' our behaviors. We cannot expect our dogs to come back to us fully trained in a couple of weeks. I know there are exceptions, BUT I have never seen one of these places that did not use varying degrees of AVERSION training. It does not matter what they tell you or what you may see on your 'random' visits, I can assure you that your dog will be exposed to methods I would NEVER consider exposing my dogs to.

More importantly, I believe YOU need to be directly involved in your pup's/dog's training!! This is beneficial to the entire learning process. Learning TOGETHER is wonderful for the pup/dog and for Mom/Dod. You will be more effective in continuing to 'reinforce' their learned behaviors... IF... you have learned these behaviors and their triggers TOGETHER!!!

Additionally, a tremendous BOND develops between you and your dog in a training/learning environment. This experience reinforces your role as alpha/boss. The dogs gain an added respect for you. This comes from you learning and teaching each other...not just because you are bigger. You and your dog will learn the wonderful nuances of each others' personalities. You will learn 'what' their emotional and mental triggers are...positive and negative. Every dog has their OWN personality and they will learn better, faster...when you 'adjust' your training approach to consider their

individuality and temperament. ALL DOGS CANNOT AND SHOULD NOT BE TRAINED THE SAME WAY. Each dog is unique & their training should be unique unto them, their personality and temperament.

Training together gives you and your pup/dog the opportunity to spend QUALITY time together. This is invaluable in your overall relationship!! Training should always be FUN and EXCITING and POSITIVE!!! It should never be a 'drudge' for you or for your dog and should never be boring. Have fun, enjoy each other and your time together.

REALIZE THAT IN THE TRAINING STAGE, WHEN YOUR PUP/DOG MAKES A MISTAKE...THIS IS NOT *BAD!* RATHER, A MISTAKE...OR NOT EXACTLY RIGHT... IS AN **OPPORTUNITY** FOR YOU TO 'TEACH' AND FOR YOUR DOG TO 'LEARN'!!!!!!

Relish in the process, enjoy your pup/dog, let them enjoy 'learning';...HAVE FUN!!!

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