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The ten golden rules of puppy care



Training resources:

## The ten golden rules of puppy care

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*Owning a puppy can be a lot of fun and highly rewarding - however, there are a lot of responsibilities involved. Here, we've compiled a list of 'golden rules' to help remind you of some of the more important things you need to know about raising a puppy.*

**Rule 1:** Training starts on day one.

Since dogs aren't born fully trained, your puppy will be looking to you for guidance. Good training plays a big role in ensuring a happy and successful relationship between you and your dog. Through training, your dog will learn to understand what their human companions expect of them and be better equipped to fit into their new environment. Likewise, the better you understand your dog's behaviour, the more rewarding your relationship will be.

**Rule 2:** A puppy needs a complete and balanced diet.

What you feed your puppy really matters. In fact, they need special nutrition with just the right amounts of protein, fats, minerals and vitamins. A puppy's diet must also be balanced so they receive the right amount of nutrients. Food should be concentrated to allow them to take in all the needed nutrients with a small amount of food. And always make sure your puppy gets plenty of fresh, clean water.

**Rule 3:** Keep your puppy well groomed.

Start grooming your puppy at an early age. The earlier your dog gets to know the procedure, the more readily they will get used to it. Create a positive association by pairing grooming with treats.

**Rule 4:** Puppies need regular dental care.

Taking care of your puppy's teeth now will prevent a lot of problems later on in life. In fact, the number one health problem for dogs, apart from being overweight, is periodontal disease (also known as gum disease). The accumulation of tartar and plaque and the resulting gingivitis can lead to more serious disease. So start brushing your puppy's teeth now, because most dogs over two years of age who haven't received regular dental care have these dental problems.

**Rule 5:** Exercise your puppy daily

Part of the normal routine for a healthy puppy is regular exercise. The amount your dog needs will depend not only on their size, but also on their breed. Don't make the mistake of over-exercising your puppy, however. A growing puppy's bones aren't yet strong enough to cope with the extra stress this puts on them.

**Rule 6:** Regular vet check-ups

Ideally, you should choose a vet even before bringing your puppy home. Then, once your puppy is home, you should take them in to the vet within the next day or so for an overall check-up. In the first few months, there'll be several visits to the vet for various vaccinations and spaying/neutering. Once your pup reaches adulthood, at least one visit a year is required to ensure their ongoing good health.

**Rule 7:** Give your puppy home health checks.

You can play a big role in keeping your puppy healthy by doing health check-ups at home. Checking their weight, coat and skin, eyes and ears, teeth and gums, and doing spot checks can prevent little problems from turning into big ones. This also helps your puppy become accustomed to being handled.

**Rule 8:** Introduce your puppy to other dogs.

One of the best ways to teach good canine manners is to allow your puppy to interact with an adult dog. Most adult dogs won't be aggressive toward a puppy though sometimes, a big dog will find a way to put a puppy in their place, perhaps with a growl or a snap. Don't prevent an adult dog from doing this, since this is how puppies learn to limit the strength of their bite and how to control themselves.

**Rule 9:** Reward good behaviour.

Positive reinforcement is a powerful way to make your puppy a well-behaved member of your family. Reward them with a treat or praise when they do as asked. This will encourage the repetition of good behaviour and will increase the likelihood that they will repeat the desired behaviour in the future.

**Rule 10:** Be patient.

Raising a puppy requires a lot of love and even more patience. Educate yourself by reading as much as you can about raising a dog, talking to other dog parents and communicating with your vet. This will eliminate many 'surprises' along the way, and will put you well on the path to building a strong, long-lasting relationship with your amazing puppy.

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