

How To Stop Your Puppy Or Older Dog From Biting



By
Dog Training Institute

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Why Do Puppies Bite?

"For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction." Newton's third law of motion.

Don't be surprised that a book on dog training is starting with an old physics quote. It's from Newton but it's a natural law, which is applicable to other events including dog training.

I know you will want to ask: "Of what use is this law here?"

You see, lots of people are trying to find solutions to problems without actually knowing the cause of these problems.

Lots of dog owners have been trying to stop puppies from biting without even knowing in the first place why puppies bite. According to Isaac Newton, every action is a result of an equal and opposite reaction. Everything happens for a purpose and for a reason. Your puppy will bite because of certain reasons, which if you study will help you in creating a good old dog as a friend.

The main reason why puppies bite is as a result of TEETHING

The teething period is a state when puppies are cutting new teeth. This is mostly between the age of 4 to 6 months and the maximum age is 10 months. A nursing mother once told me about her experience when her toddler was passing through the teething stage too. How painful it was for her little baby girl. In the same way it is also painful for puppies passing through this stage of having loose teeth hanging in their mouths.

Puppies' jaws are weak and for them to inhibit the force of their jaws as a result of these new teeth they gnaw, mouth and even play-bite to sooth the gums around the teeth. The combination of weak jaws with extremely sharp, needle-like teeth and the puppy penchant for biting results in numerous play-bites, which, although painful, seldom cause serious harm. Thus, the developing pup receives ample necessary feedback regarding the force of its bites before it develops strong jaws - which could inflict considerable injury.

The greater the pup's opportunity to play-bite with people, other dogs and other animals, the better the dog's bite inhibition as an adult.

For puppies that do not grow up with the benefit of regular and frequent interaction with other dogs and other animals, the responsibility of teaching bite inhibition lies with the owner.

All puppies love to play by being mouthy and biting or chewing anything they can get their sharp little teeth into. These sharp teeth are the reason that it is crucial for puppies to learn bite inhibition (controlling the force of their bite) during the first few months of life.

Normally this is learned naturally and effectively through contact with mom and other littermates. If the puppy bites mom during nursing, mom can roll the puppy over to correct it or just get up and walk away.

Lack of socialization of puppies

It is very important to socialize your puppy if you want to have happy dog. Lack of socialization of your puppy between the ages of 3 wks to 3mths with your environment, your children, other people and other dogs can also lead to growling which can lead to biting. Thus proper socializing is important.

Apart from teething and socialization, always bear it in mind that puppies explore objects in their environment with their mouths.

Why Do Puppies Bite?

by Susan Bulanda, M.A.

All puppies will mouth, a behavior that some people mistake for biting. The best method to prevent puppy biting is to provide the puppy with the foundation for not biting. This involves leaving the puppy with it's mother and litter mates until they are at least 12 weeks old. This way the mother dog will teach the puppy it's most important lesson - bite inhibition.

If the puppy is taken away from its mother before 12 weeks of age or if the puppy tends to be very mouthy, the owner can do a few things to help the puppy learn this most important lesson. The first thing the owner must do is understand the nature of puppy biting.

The owner must realize that the puppy does not have hands such as humans do. Therefore all of the puppy's manipulation and exploration of its environment is done mainly through the mouth (much the same as a human baby). It is the responsible owner who learns the difference between mouthing and true aggressive biting.

Most young puppies do not aggressively bite. If they do, the owner should give very serious consideration about keeping such a puppy. This type of puppy may be dangerous as an adult if not properly handled.

Next the owner must realize that the puppy does not know how to act around humans. The puppy has not had much life experience outside of its interactions with its canine family. Therefore punishing a puppy for using its mouth is like slapping a child who is five for not being able to solve advance mathematical problems.

The next aspect of owning a dog that the owner must realize is that all dogs and certainly all puppies chew. They will chew almost anything that they can get into their mouth. Therefore the owner must puppy-proof the place where the puppy will spend its time.

Most puppies do not know what is safe and what is not safe. The puppy must be gently taught what the rules are for interacting with humans. To do this the owner must provide correct objects for the puppy to chew. Correct objects include anything that is not made of material that you do not want your puppy to chew.

For example, if you do not want your shoes chewed to shreds, then do not give your puppy leather toys to chew. If you do not want your furniture chewed then do not give your puppy toys that are

made of fabric or rope. For safety reasons, it is not a good idea to give puppies bones and other animal parts.

The best things to give your puppy are objects made of rubber for dogs to chew and objects made of a special nylon, made for dogs to chew. These items do not smell, feel, look or taste like anything in your home. By doing this the owner will make it easy for the puppy to distinguish what is correct to chew and what is not.

If your puppy should put any part of your person in its mouth, gently tell the puppy not to do this and give the puppy the correct thing to put in its mouth. The same applies to unacceptable objects that a puppy might try to chew. Do not try to yank or otherwise pull these objects from the puppy's mouth. You could hurt the puppy, even pull out a tooth or two. You will also trigger the puppy's grab reflex, which is not what you want to do.

Yanking things that are in a puppy's mouth could teach the puppy to have a pulling contest. When the puppy takes the correct object into its mouth and releases the wrong object, be sure to praise the puppy for doing what is correct. Remember, the puppy does not know what is right and wrong unless it is shown.

If a puppy shows real aggressive behavior, such as snarling, raised lips, glaring eyes and the body language that is stiff and threatening, the owner should consult a canine behaviorist immediately. Even if this behavior is somewhat accepted for the breed.

If the owner is in doubt, an animal behaviorist should be contacted. There are a number of organizations that have animal behaviorists worldwide. One such organization is the International Association of Animal Behaviorists.

Aggressive behavior will not go away on its own, nor will the dog get better with age. The biggest mistake that owners make is to excuse away aggressive behavior for their dog or puppy, and hope that the behavior is outgrown. However, the behavior only gets worse with age.

Do not try to correct a puppy that has true aggressive problems without help from a professional. Many people feel that enough love, or enough corrective behavior will fix the problem. Neither will take care of any aggressive behavior in a dog of any age. Especially when it manifests itself in a puppy that is under six months of age.

The owner of such a puppy is foolish to try to fix this problem by himself or herself. The successful dog owner will learn to identify the difference between mouthing, playing and true aggression.

Mouthing is learning on the part of the puppy and all puppies will play. As a puppy grows up some will express their affection toward humans, especially their owner with their mouths. The good owner will recognize this and develop a healthy relationship with the dog.

A responsible dog owner will not tolerate aggressive behavior from a puppy, a young adult or an adult dog. A well-socialized, bred and adjusted puppy or dog will feel no need to act aggressively. A dog that chooses to act this way demonstrates that there is a problem with the dog's relationship with humans. Often it is a case where the dog has been taught (from puppy hood) to act inappropriately in given situations. Or the dog decides that aggressive behavior is needed when it is not.

Never lose sight of the fact that dogs do what they feel is correct in any situation. The best way to avoid problems is to prevent them from forming.

Dog Bites: The underlying causes

It is important to understand the causes of dog bite injuries before you can attempt to think of the preventive measures or ways to at least reduce the bites if not completely stop the bites.

Having discussed the possible reasons why puppies bite we will now be discussing the reasons why dogs bite. However, you must surely know that a biting puppy that's not taught bite inhibition will almost certainly turn into a biting older dog. Dogs will bite as a result of the following reasons among others.

Dominance and Authority:

Dogs will bite to establish leadership and order within their rank. They're being assertive by using their teeth to determine who is the strongest, and will to power are genetic behavior traits, which are, peculiar to all canine groups.

This dominance behavior being demonstrated by dogs is as a result of survival instinct. They feel they are in charge and need to keep other members of their group along, without excluding other people, who in most cases will be the member of family of the dog owner and neighbors.

Warning Message:

Dogs usually send warning notes in the form of non-serious bites before any serious attack. If you step over a dog that's resting or try to move a dog off the bed for any purpose you should know what to expect.

Security and Protection:

Some dogs feel insecure as a result of some of human actions like invading a dog's territory, riding on his back like pony, showing off with ferocious displays, blowing puffs of air in his face, taking her food or disturbing a mother dog and her puppies. They believe these human actions can cause them harm.

It could also be from being continuously chained. Continuous chaining of dog can cause physiological problem and thus the affected dog may not know how to behave when it's released. So in order to protect themselves, they result to aggressive acts like biting.

Lack of good/positive training:

Dog bites are a result of the lack of good and positive training. Why do I say this? Some dog owners employ forceful, fear inducing and painful training methods. Your dog will perceive this as threatening their life and result to aggressive acts in order to protect herself.

Others will bite out of fun and when they are over excited. Both cases are mostly as a result of lack of positive training. So if you don't properly socialize your dog with people or other dogs, expect bites any time.

Fear Biting:

Just like human beings, if a dog is in any threatening situation they will feel the need to protect themselves. This is often directed toward strangers. Thus threatening a dog or it's family, bending over it when it's resting, hugging it when it's sleeping, teasing and awakening a dog will surely cause a bite as a response to these actions.

Physical Pain:

Depending on the degree of pain, a dog will bite a beloved owner, member of the family or neighbors when suffering from physical problems like chemical imbalances in the brain, external infections like otitis, tumor, hip dysphasia among others.

A fighting dog is sure to be in a serious painful condition and attempt to break the fight by pulling the dog will possibly result in a bite.

How to recognize warning signs?

Before any dog bites he will give warning signs, which, if apprehended, can prevent a bite. They usually make sure that these warnings are very clear using body language whenever they feel frightened or threatened by situations.

It's advisable to watch and listen to the warning signs a dog gives you when he is upset. Let me make it clear here once again that a healthy dog will never bite without being provoked. However, if your dog bites without provocation, seek professional help immediately.

Below are some of warning signs your dog gives, which you have to notice:

- When a dog's ears are pulled back against his head.
- When his legs are very stiff.
- When dog's fur is raised up, his ears erect and tail high.
- When a dog growls and barks aggressively with his teeth showing.
- When a dog is intensely looking directly at a human's face.
- When a dog licks his chops while you approach or interact with him.

- When a dog suddenly starts scratching or licking himself.
- When a dog lowers its tail (held stiffly) and wags it slowly.
- When dog is standing forward and up on its toes. (unclear)
- When a dog's body is stiff and leans forward toward the target.
- When snarling with its teeth uncovered.
- When the dog is cowering.
- When a dog's tail is tucked completely under his body.
- When a dog is ill or old.
- When a dog gets up and moves away from you.
- When a dog turns his head away from you.
- When a dog yawns while you are approaching.

How you can teach a puppy to stop biting?

Biting is a normal behavior for puppies and it rarely causes harm, however, it is highly important that this behavior is stopped before your dog reaches adulthood. As you know, at that stage a bite could inflict serious injury.

There are methods to inhibit biting in puppies; however, you should not expect this to be eliminated overnight.

You should begin training your puppy early when it is 6 weeks old and make sure that you attend obedience school when she is six months of age.

Below are a few training tips you can make use of. If your puppy becomes aggressive instead of backing off please see your veterinarian or professional trainer for assistance.

- The first and best way to start teaching your puppy to stop its biting is to do what his littermates would have done were they in the same position. Puppies usually learn bite inhibition from their mothers and littermates. Some people do get a puppy that's younger than 8 weeks which is not advisable as the puppy will not have had enough time to learn a bit of how to behave.

When a puppy bites its littermates, they will yelp and go away. You can apply this same method. As soon as your puppy starts to bite, you should give a loud, yelping OUCH! Glare at the pup, get up and move away. This way you can start ignoring behaviors you don't like. Be persistent with this method and advise your family to do the same. If your pup does not change then you can start applying the "Time Out "method. You just leave the room or take him into his crate.

- Another way to use this method is this; when your puppy bites, say "no" and gently hold its mouth shut. This will teach him to keep his mouth shut. Since the puppy is a social creature, saying no, yelping, holding his mouth or walking away will teach him that he will lose his playmate.

An important fact about the above two methods is to maintain eye contact with your pup when saying "no" and also watching the tone of your voice. Laughing and amused tones will hardly work.

Mouthing and biting in a puppy are as a result of "teething". Puppies mouth, chew and even bite to ease teething discomfort. Your duty as a puppy owner is to plan a response to active puppy teething that will soften the impact on you and your possessions.

- The best way to do this is to provide your pup better chewing alternatives instead of your fingers and limbs. You can buy toys like hard rubber balls, kongs, sterilized bones, nylon bones and knotted ropes from pet supply stores. In a low voice you can say "no" then remove her into a neutral area where you can give her any of the above stated toys or others to play with.
- Praising your puppy whenever she behaves well is one of the best ways to teach her what's right. She will surely want to continue getting the praise. So when she plays nicely and appropriately, praise the action.
- Another method is teaching what I call the "off" command. Here is how you do this. You get a puppy's dry food. Hold a handful and close your hand with it then say "off." Note what will happen. After a few seconds, if your puppy has not touched your hand, say "take it" and give him a piece of food. The lesson you are teaching him here is that "off" means 'not to touch.'
- Get your puppy to exercise daily and give him enough playtimes. To do this it is advisable to have a specific daily playing time. Your puppy will always look forward to this period and will be less likely to seek attention at anytime, thus limiting his biting behavior. This will boost his body system, speed his teething period and make him comfortable. Also you will be distracting his attention from biting by teaching him new tricks and taking him for a walk. You will be establishing a great bond with him doing this as well.
- Teach all your family members not to play any rough games like tug-of-war or wrestling, which may encourage aggressive behavior like biting. Also teach them to be consistent with the "no biting" rule. Remember, it's not a lonely war.
- A few puppies will not respond to verbal commands only. In that case I would advise you to try a method called "shake can". To apply this method, you need an empty can with a few pennies in it covered tightly. What you will do is this: when your puppy starts nipping, give the verbal command and at the same time shake the can and drop it next to the puppy. This will help to make your verbal command more effective. As soon as he stops, praise and give him a good toy to chew. He will like this.
- You can also apply something nasty smelling on your hands. Bitter apples, lemon juice, Tabasco sauce among others are good for this. Application of unpleasant stuff that she hates will teach her that biting your hand is not good.

More on Puppy Biting

Stop Puppy from Biting

Puppies bite. This is normal behavior and it is important for puppies to experiment with biting so that they can learn not to bite too hard and then not to bite at all.

They need to learn how to control their jaws and develop bite inhibition so that if they are in a stressful situation and they bite before thinking about it, they will be able to control the bite and hopefully not bite hard by mistake later in life.

Puppies learn about not biting too hard from their mother and littermates. If one puppy bites too hard and another one squeal, all the fun stops. If a puppy bites Mom too hard, the lesson may be a bit harsher.

The longer a puppy stays with its mother and littermates, the better. Do not take a puppy that has left the litter before 8 weeks of age and preferably wait until the puppy is 12 weeks old. This way, the puppy will learn from its mother and you will have an easier job. Also this puppy will have learned to communicate with other dogs and is less likely to fight or bite when it fails to communicate properly with other dogs as an adult.

The lessons a puppy learns from its mother cannot be taught by humans, so don't buy a puppy less than 8 weeks old and don't buy a puppy from a pet store. Pet store puppies may have been taken from the litter several weeks before you see them in the store.

Unless you can speak directly to the breeder and obtain the birth registration of the puppies you cannot know the age of the puppy. A good breeder will not let puppies go before 8 weeks and the really good ones will keep the puppies until 10 or 12 weeks.

You can squeal when the puppy bites you and this may teach the puppy that you are too delicate to take the bite. You can also substitute a toy that the puppy is allowed to bite so that the puppy learns that he can't bite human skin, but toys are OK.

This method works with some puppies, but other puppies become excited by the squealing and bite even more.

You can also withdraw attention from a biting puppy. Be a tree and ignore the puppy until it gives up on biting. Restore attention when the puppy behaves properly.

A way to speed up the process with a puppy that is determined to bite is to put cheese Whiz, or peanut butter (be sure puppy has no chance of licking an allergic child after the training session) on your fingers. Puppy will lick because this is the most efficient way to get the treat. You can then pair in the cue "kisses".

Is Your Puppy Biting? Have Patience

Okay, so yipping like a hurt puppy isn't working for you. It's not an *immediate* cure. Just like everything else with a puppy - patience, patience, and patience! Things take time to get into those little lemon brains.

- We've also suggested having a nice chewy toy to pop into puppy's mouth to redirect them from biting on you.
- There's the turning of the back, and tucking hands into your armpits. This is a calming signal!
- There's also the getting up and leaving the area where the puppy is.
- There's popping puppy into a crate for a quick time out - sorry biting doesn't work, no attention for you.

These are all things that you can do with your puppy - they *do* work. To get them to work you have to forget about your time schedule, and realize that you're working with a baby - a puppy, which does not understand human talk, has biting/mouthing as a behavior, that is hard-wired into their little systems.

It all goes back to 1) *time* and 2) *patience*.

Have the patience to give them the time to figure out what you are trying to communicate to them.

I've used all of the above with 10-month-old Norbert. He got it within a few weeks. He has a very soft mouth now - and since he's half terrier that is known to have very hard mouths - that's saying a lot! He *knows* his jaw strength - I see that playing with Nessa, and with our family.

He still 'checks' to see if Mom has that 'tissue paper' skin I built in his mind. Yup! She does - darn! I can't play rough and tumble - but she throws a mean ball! Cool!

Occasionally at night just before going to sleep he would want to 'nibble' on my thumb just light teething, kind of like thumb sucking. He seemed to find it comforting, it wasn't painful and he stopped after a few seconds of it.

Nessa, now 9 weeks old, after 2 weeks on the above program had a great compliment yesterday. Lindsay, someone through Clicker Solutions brought her dogs over for a play date. Nessa was mouthing her, and Lindsay complimented her on her 'soft' mouth. This from a baby who is still grasping all of the bite inhibition concepts!

Yes, she gets frustrated after a few of my hurt puppy yips! Goes off grumbling, and then pounces on Norbert for a play bout. I must be fairly convincing with these yips because I did while Lindsay's three were there, and they all had to come check to make sure I was okay! LOL!

Do I expect that she'll be perfect with her bite inhibition anytime soon? Heck no! Just about the time *I* think she might have it; she'll be knee deep in teething. So I'll buy stock in chewy toys and get through it, and know that in a few months I'll have a dog with good bite inhibition.

Patience people! Keep working the things we're telling that work. Progress will occur gradually, but it should occur. I say should because there are always exceptions to the rule.

My Puppy Keeps Chewing What Do I Do?

First, always keep in mind that it is natural for a puppy to chew. The puppy is not doing this to annoy you, but because it is a normal function of a puppy, just as it is in a human baby. Keep this in mind, and be sure not to ever hit or strongly punish the puppy for doing what is natural to it. Everything goes into the mouth, and everything is chewed.

Chew Toys!

What we need to do is to teach the puppy what is correct to chew on, and what is not. Be sure to supply your puppy with a variety of toys that are permissible for it to chew.

Nylabones are excellent, but stay away from the ones with the sharp points on them. Watch carefully! When the knobs on the end are gone, you have to throw it away.

There is also a Nylaring that costs a little more but lasts a lot longer. In recent years, manufacturers are making bones out of vegetables and meat flavors. These are even better because your puppy can eat the entire thing and the vegetable items are probably better for your puppy.

Another good item is the Kong, which is made of hard rubber and lasts a long time. Please keep in mind that cheap toys are not worth the money, the puppy can destroy them too easily and can choke on the pieces that it chews.

Chew ropes are also good, but again, watch to see if it starts coming apart. Take it away immediately at that point.

Squeaky toys are also handy, but again, you must be careful to throw it away when it starts to get a hole. The squeaker can choke the puppy.

Teach Your Puppy What it CAN Chew!

Always have one of his chew toys handy. Each time the puppy chews on something other than one of the toys, firmly tell the puppy "no" and give the puppy one of his own chew toys. When the puppy starts chewing on the proper item, say "Good Puppy" (Good boy or good girl is fine also.) This teaches it what is acceptable to chew on and what is not.

The "OUCH" Method

Anytime the puppy is biting, and especially during a play session, say "ouch" and immediately stop playing. This lets the puppy know that the biting is unacceptable. This method is called "ouching" and everyone in the family should do it.

The Puppy-Proof Method

Use your intelligence to help keep the puppy away from unwanted chewing. If the pup chews on shoes, keep them in your closet with the door closed. Keep books and other chewables out of the puppy's reach. Go through your home (on your hands and knees if necessary) and look to see what is tempting for your puppy to chew on. Eliminate any unsafe or inappropriate items.

The Bitter Apple Method

Another handy aide to help prevent chewing --is a product called Bitter Apple. It can be purchased at pet stores and through pet catalogs. Be sure to spot test it prior to spraying on a good piece of furniture. It must be reapplied daily, as it wears off in approximately 24 hours. There is also a Bitter Apple available for furniture that lasts longer than the 24 hours.

Puppy's Toy Box

You can have a toy box for your puppy and have all the toys kept in it. Then they are handy and you also know where to get one when you need one. The pup will eventually learn where they are and get a toy out by itself. Every once in a while put a little treat (milk bones are great!) in the toy box to get the pup used to looking in it.

Be sure to use lots of praise anytime the pup is doing something right, whether it is chewing on the right toy, eliminating outside, sitting when told, etc.

Teaching Puppies Not To Bite

A puppy likes biting and chewing on almost anything that enters its world. Just as with jumping, biting between littermates is their style of play. Biting also teaches them how to use their main hunting tool, their teeth. Unfortunately, this behavior often carries over into their interactions with the members of their new home.

Puppies have very sharp teeth and a bite or nip can hurt. Along with inflicting pain, a dog bite can be terrifying to small children.

There are several methods that are used to eliminate this unwanted behavior:

Holding the Mouth Shut

The simplest methods for handling this behavior is to very, very quickly grab the puppy's mouths and hold it shut. While holding the mouth shut, say a single, stern "No" in a low tone. Holding the mouth closed is usually done by placing the thumb over the top of the puppy's nose and the fingers below the bottom of the jaw.

Holding the mouth closed for 4 to 5 seconds is sufficient and the puppy usually whines. Don't try to cause them pain; there is no need to firmly squeeze the mouth. After releasing the puppy's mouth, don't make any further fuss but go on with whatever you were doing.

It will take a few sessions for the puppy to catch on, but the animal will soon put together the facts that the bite instantly causes his mouth to be held shut.

It's not recommended to bring children into this form of discipline. Children can get hurt or they can hurt the puppy.

Startle Response and Redirection

As soon as the puppy bites down, make a sudden, abrupt, high-pitched, loud "Yelp" sound. This imitates the sound that a littermate would make if bitten by the puppy. This sound should be so sudden and sharp that the puppy is immediately startled and stops the behavior. If done correctly, the puppy immediately removes his mouth and looks bewildered. At that point, quickly substitute a toy (such as a ball) for the puppy to chew on.

This method redirects the puppy's biting behavior to the ball. The puppy learns that it is no fun to bite; however, chewing the toy is ok. It may be necessary to repeat this process several times during the puppy's play period. If the "Yelps" make the puppy more excited, it's best to try another approach.

Stop the Action immediately (and dramatically) leave the room when the puppy bites. This is certainly a method children can use. After multiple times the puppy will learn that every time she bites she loses her playmate, and that's no fun at all.

Important! No matter what method you use, do not entice the puppy to bite you. Games like tug-of-war and waving your hands in front of the puppy may encourage him (or her) to bite.

How to Prevent Dog Bites?

There is no guarantee that your dog will never bite someone under any condition, which you may not even foresee. However, you can reduce the risk of a dog biting. The popular saying is that prevention is better than cure.

Since prevention of dog bites is not the responsibility of dog owners alone, here we will be discussing preventive measures that prospective dog owners, dog owners, parents and general member of the public can make immediate use of.

Preventive measures applicable to potential dog owners

The first thing you must do before you think of bringing in a dog to your household is to evaluate your environment and your lifestyle.

Though there is no breed that will not bite under any condition, it is still very important for you to consult professionals like a veterinarian, dog behaviorist or breeder to determine the breed that will be suitable for you, your family and especially that will be suitable for your environment. Obtaining breed specification will help you a lot in avoiding any possible trouble.

Prospective dog owners should not buy a dog that is younger than 8 weeks of age. Puppies below this age will not have the opportunity to learn bite inhibition from his littermates at all.

Buying dog that is over 4 months is a bit risky to be introducing into your home as you may not predict the dogs behavior. However, if you are to buy an older dog at all make sure that you did not purchase a dog with any history of aggression.

If any of your children exhibit any fear or apprehension of dogs, make sure you delay bringing a dog home. You should know this beforehand if you seek your children's opinion during your evaluation of your environment. However, if your child is not yet 6 years of age it is advisable to hold off on the purchase of a large dog.

Preventive measures for dog owners

The Humane Society of the United States reports that spayed and neutered dogs are three times less likely to bite. Thus it is highly essential for you to spay and neuter your dogs. Doing this will reduce their frequent aggressive tendency.

As a dog owner it is very important that you socialize your dog. If you socialize your dog well it will be much less likely that you will experience a dog bite. Socializing you dog helps boost it's confidence and reduces it's being nervous or frightened under normal circumstances.

So socialize your dog by introducing your dog to members of your family, other people, and experiences that could possibly cause nervousness and fear and could lead to biting in the future. Do this and make it feel at ease with people and other dogs.

Dog training will also help you in preventing dog biting. You have to learn proper training techniques by attending dog-training classes. Attending these classes will help you socialize your dog. Train your dog to respond to some basic commands such as "stay", "leave it" and "come".

Also train your dog to drop his toys on command. If you don't do this you will have to retrieve it from his mouth. Thus taking the risk of your finger being bitten.

- Teach your dog acceptable behaviors by enrolling in an obedience class. By attending this class your dog will be trained to be submissive and respect your leadership in the house.
- Games like 'tug-of-war', 'wrestling', 'sicking' the dog on another person, should be avoided as it encourages aggression.
- Make sure that you report any aggressive behavior to a professional, such as a veterinarian, animal behaviorist or reputable breeder for advice on what to do.
- Don't ever leave infants or small children alone with your dog. Don't allow your dog to roam without any supervision, to avoid the unexpected.
- Make sure that your dog is not allowed to run free, especially at the parks. Obey dog leash laws by making sure your dog is always on its leash. Allowing your dogs to move free in public is dangerous.
- Putting your dog in a situation where it feels threatened or teased is asking for trouble. Don't do this.
- As a dog owner you should maintain your dog's health with proper vaccinations against parasites. If your dog is in pain it's likely to bite. So make sure your dog is healthy.
- Using physical punishment to stop inappropriate behavior will only encourage your dog's aggression. So don't do this.

Preventive measures for parents

- It is a must for parents to teach their children to never approach an unfamiliar dog, especially when it's off its leash.
- Teach your children not to run or scream if a dog approaches them. If they run, naturally the dog will chase them. So teach them to 'stay still like a tree' with hands at their sides.
- They should avoid eye contact with the dog and they should not speak to the dog at this time.

Teach them not to play with a dog even if it's yours except if an adult is present. And if they are to play at all they should let the dog sniff them first.

- Also teach them to never disturb a dog that is sleeping, eating or tending to puppies. Parents should never leave a baby or small child alone with a dog.
- Teach your children to not approach a strange dog and ask permission from a dog's owner before petting the dog.

As a parent, before you buy a dog make sure that your child is at least 6 years old.

General preventive measures for adults

- Don't approach an unfamiliar dog under any circumstances.
- Don't run away from a dog.
- Avoid direct eye contact with a dog.
- Any dog displaying unusual behavior should be reported immediately to animal control authorities.
- Don't disturb a dog that is sleeping, eating, tending to puppies or in any relaxed mood. It will view this action as a threat and you know the meaning of that.
- Allow a dog to sniff you first before attempting to pet the dog.
- Don't hug or kiss a dog. It expresses a sense of submission to the dog. This may lead to aggressive behavior because the dog will feel that it is in charge.
- Never try to intervene when two dogs are fighting.

How to Socialize - Critical Stage for Puppy

(This page is provided as a public service from Dog Scouts of America.)

Birth through 3rd week (1 - 21 days): Puppy needs mother and littermates. They can't regulate their own temperatures very well, so they must have a warm place to sleep.

Training is not effective at this stage. They have yet to open their eyes and ears and do much besides crawl around. Their instinct is to cry when separated from the warmth of the litter (so that mommy will save them). Do not handle more than necessary.

Fourth Week (21 days to 28 days): Eyes and ears should be open by this time. Ability to form an attachment to humans is forming at this time, so gentle handling is recommended. All handling should be supervised, and children should not be allowed to pick up the puppies. DO NOT remove the puppies from the litter. Do not wean at this age. If complications with the mother dog require early removal from the litter, do it BEFORE 21 days or AFTER 28 days Do not allow negative events to take place during this period. This could result in shyness or other unwanted qualities in a puppy.

Fifth through Seventh Week (28 - 49 days): The mother will be in the process of weaning the puppies. It is important that you let her do her job. If you abruptly remove the puppies from the mother, and begin feeding them puppy food, they will have missed out on a VERY IMPORTANT life lesson.

By allowing the mother to wean the pups, gradually, they learn that RESOURCES ARE NOT ALWAYS AVAILABLE. Sometimes the resource (mommy) is there, but is not available to the puppy (she's not in the mood to feed them).

You should supplement her feeding with moistened puppy food, during this time. But, if you go directly from mom providing food on demand to YOU providing food on demand, the puppies will get a distorted view of reality (they'll be "spoiled"), and will not easily accept the disappointment of limited access later in life.

Give daily individual attention to each puppy, getting him or her used to positive human interaction. Puppies at this age can begin to learn potty training, and will try to "hold it" until they can go on an absorbent material, away from their sleeping area.

If you provide them with such, housebreaking will be a breeze. DO NOT remove puppies from the litter. Wait until after 7 weeks of age to let the new homes take the puppies.

While it is important that the puppies get time separate from the litter on a daily basis, if you remove them entirely, they will lose out on more IMPORTANT LIFE LESSONS.

Puppies learn to inhibit their bites by biting their littermates. When they bite too hard, the littermate will squeal, and either bites back in retaliation, or ostracize the bully, and refuse to play with him. This teaches the pups not to be too rough, and while they'll still play fight and wrestle, they will bite down softly, not injuring the other puppies.

A dog that does not learn this lesson could cause serious harm to a person or child later in life. When they bite, they don't inhibit, and an uninhibited bite will require stitches.

A dog can do a lot of damage with its mouth, and it is important that it remain with the litter to get this "weapons safety course" from its brothers and sisters.

This training takes place between the ages of 6 and 7 weeks, so if the puppies are adopted before then, they are an accident waiting to happen. The puppy is also learning other very crucial skills at this age. He's learning to speak "dog."

He's learning the social skills that will enable him to interpret unspoken messages from other dogs and give appropriate replies.

Things like calming signals (a kind of a friendly, submissive gesture) are learned at this time, and this will help your dog to communicate with other dogs all through his life. If he is removed from the litter, unequipped with this vital information, he could possibly get "picked on" or attacked frequently by other dogs when they don't receive the information they need from him.

If he doesn't "speak the language", it will be hard for him to express himself. He could also become a "bully" himself, because he won't understand the signals to "back off" that the other dogs are giving him. This could also lead to a nasty fight.

The worst-case scenario is that the puppy would not understand that it is a dog, and would fear all other dogs (as if they were aliens or something, which basically they would be for him).

Eighth through 12th Week (49 - 84 days): At this age, you will take over the role of being the "mother" to your new puppy. The puppy will cry when separated from the only caretaker he has known for his entire life.

This is only natural. Especially when you consider that we as humans are a far cry from his doting canine mother. When he cries, she is usually there in a heartbeat, to see what is wrong.

Humans on the other hand, tend to bring home a puppy and just stuff him in a crate or in the garage the first night, and then wonder why the poor baby is screaming inconsolably non-stop.

To make the first few nights easier on your new puppy, I recommend allowing the puppy to be VERY near to you. I don't care what your future "hard-nosed rules" are going to be for the puppy, or even if he is going to remain an outdoor dog, separated from the family he will learn to love.

Those first few nights should hold as little trauma as absolutely possible. If you lock up your puppy away from you when you get home with him, he's going to assume he's been LOST or abandoned, and will cry to be rescued.

You merely have to assure him that he simply has a new home, with a human parent, and that you can be just as loving and comforting as his real mother (almost). By VERY NEAR, I mean body contact.

The choices are: " put your puppy in a crate or pen with open lid right next to your bed, with your arm dangling down into the pen to cuddle your puppy to sleep, where he can see, hear and feel you. " put your puppy in bed with you -(NOT RECOMMENDED)

This is difficult for multiple reasons: The puppy is not yet housebroken. The puppy could fall off the bed and injure himself.

The puppy could chew up your bedding The puppy could start to think that the bed is HIS bed if you continue this past a few nights (however, it is still preferable to listening to him squall, or terrifying him by abandonment) ~ Put your puppy's crate right in the bed with you (this prevents accidents, chewing, or falling, and gets the puppy used to his crate. You can still open the door and stroke or cuddle the puppy.

Once your puppy realizes that he merely has a new address, and that he has NOT been doomed to be locked up in a cold dungeon with no human contact for the rest of his life (what a dismal existence that would be!), he will not need to sleep on the bed with you, and his crate can be moved to another part of the house where it is more convenient for you.

The puppy is going to spend a great deal of his time in the crate, until he's old enough to be allowed full access to the house, unsupervised. So, you should put the crate where he can see you throughout the day as you move about the house.

If, for some reason you are foolish enough to let the sweet little furniture-eating, carpet soiling, electrical cord-chewing puppy loose to wreak havoc in the house, because you didn't think you needed a crate, then don't you dare be upset at HIM when the little cutie raids the garbage, shreds your possessions, craps on everything, and TP's your house.

The crate also acts as his personal playpen, keeping him from injuring himself doing things that little puppies have no business doing. Mothers can't watch babies or puppies ALL the time, that's why they gave us playpens (crates) to keep them contained out of harm's way. Tossing the puppy outside is NOT the solution.

Why did you get him in the first place? Even if you plan for him to be an "outdoor" dog, it is a good idea to socialize your puppy to being indoors, and potty train him, if later on in life he moves up in the world.

This is the start of the socialization period where puppies need to meet as many kinds of new "nouns" (people, places, and things) as possible. This means more than just the company you might have over, or the immediate back yard.

You must expose your puppy to all kinds of things in the world so that he will not fear them as an adult. The rule of Sevens says that you should introduce your puppy to AT LEAST seven new kinds of surfaces, seven new kinds of people, seven new kinds of foods, seven new kinds of sounds, and seven new places by the time he is 12 weeks old.

All new situations should be introduced in a neutral or positive way-nothing frightening or hurtful.

The puppy is experiencing his FEAR IMPRINT PERIOD between 8 and 9 weeks of age, and any traumatic encounters will stay with the puppy for his whole lifetime, if you allow them to occur.

You may think about postponing ear-cropping surgery or other traumatic events until after the ninth week. You should introduce your puppy to safe, calm children, and supervise the interaction carefully.

Do not let the child hurt or frighten the puppy. The best way not to let a child accidentally drop a puppy is to not let them pick it up in the first place.

They don't mean to drop it, but try to explain that to the poor puppy who is scarred for life, and now runs from children. Do not isolate the puppy from humans at this age.

To do so will create a dog that is maladjusted for life, and one who is not a good candidate for the bond with humans, which is a necessary part of training, and life in general with your dog. Now is the perfect time to reinforce the puppy's natural desire to be clean in the house.

The use of a crate, scheduled mealtimes, and a reward-based training regime will maintain the clean habits your puppy has already started to develop while with the litter. If you allow the puppy full access to the house, and do not supervise him, or do not make it beneficial for him to eliminate outside, you will cause the puppy to start to be confused about where to "go." So many people complain that they just can't get their puppy housetrained.

But, after playing foster mom to several litters of young puppies, I have come to realize that the puppies have themselves potty-trained before they leave the litter. It's when they get into their new homes that the new owners confuse the puppies about where they should go potty.

The new owners often take a perfectly clean puppy and teach him to soil the house by doing everything all wrong. NOW is when you should begin training your puppy. DO NOT wait until the dog is 6 months old.

The puppy is a learning "SPONGE" at this age, and to not give it structured training is to allow it to learn BAD habits.

Puppies have a full adult brain at 49 days of age. There is absolutely no reason to wait longer than that to teach the puppy proper behavior. It is much easier to install correct behaviors than to let the puppy grow up like a wild savage and then try to "un-train" the bad behaviors later!

In the past, I think people recommended that the training did not start until 6 months because many training classes used "punishment" methods to teach obedience. Now, we realize that positive methods are so much more effective.

Even a tiny puppy can learn the basics of sit, down, stay, come and heel without even putting on a collar or leash! The dog no longer needs to be 6 months old to withstand the harsh corrections given out in the name of "training." I

If you find a training class and discover that they use corrections to train, RUN AWAY! If they tell you that they use a "praise" method, also be very skeptical. Praise alone is meaningless for a puppy that does not speak English, and without pairing it with something positive (like food), it is worthless.

Many punishment trainers use "praise" alone as a positive reinforcement. In this context, the praise takes on the meaning of a "no punishment" marker. It's not really a positive reinforcement at all. It just means, "You're not going to get jerked right now."

So the dog is still working to avoid aversives. With positive methods, the dog is rewarded with something he actually wants, as his reward (imagine that!). He will work very hard to receive this reinforcement and will soon be doing exactly what you ask (gleefully). No punishment required.

Keep on socializing your puppy up to 16 weeks of age. You should also continue to socialize your dog after that time, but it is never more important than the time period of between 8 to 12 weeks.

Dog Scouts of America is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) educational and charitable organization. Our mission is to promote responsible dog ownership and educate people about the importance of the Human/canine bond.

You have a very brief window in which to get your dog acclimated to the big wide wonderful world. Don't let the grass grow under your feet! Get that puppy out! Not just to the puppy class once per week, either.

I mean really make an effort to introduce your puppy to as many positive situations as possible.

Here's a list:

- Take your puppy to the Vet when he doesn't need a shot. Just hang out and feed cookies and have fun! "
- Take your puppy to pet shops (most of them allow pets).

You'll meet a lot of dog-loving people who will be happy to introduce themselves to your pup. The puppy can possibly also meet other puppies and animals there. (Don't take your puppy close to any "for sale" dogs at a pet shop-they come from puppy mills, and they are often very sick. They could transmit something to your puppy.) "

- Take your puppy to a park (not a dog park-you don't know what manner of germy, psychopathic dogs with inattentive owners are running out of control at a dog park). "
- Take your puppy to a training class, or puppy playgroup. "
- Take your puppy to daytime outdoor sporting events (for short periods) "
- Take your puppy anywhere and everywhere that the proprietors will let him come in.

The important thing is that the puppy needs to get out for more than just a walk in the woods (or around the block). He needs to meet new people, sights, sounds, smells and environments every day.

You have to be particularly diligent about this if you have another dog in the house, or if you have adopted two young puppies at the same time. The puppies each need to spend time with you, separate from one another, so that bonding can occur.

If they bond to each other, what do they need YOU for? Sixteen weeks and beyond...

As I mentioned, you should continue to get your dog out to socialize with other dogs and people on a regular basis his whole life long. You don't want him to forget important social skills and proper greeting behaviors.

But you can never make up for a lack of socialization during that critical age of puppy hood (between 8 and 16 weeks). That's why they call it critical.

You may find your dog enjoys regular romps with some of his doggie buddies. Or, maybe he'd like to join a flyball team and become an athlete! He might enjoy a trip to dog camp with you. At the very LEAST, he'll want to accompany you on vacation. If you socialize and train him well, this should not be a problem.

Socialization is the KEY to a well-adjusted, calm and happy dog. Training is great, too, but contrary to the old "wives tale," you CAN teach an old dog new trick. You can't, however, give an old dog the socialization he should have had as a puppy. Knowing what you now know about socialization, it should be clear that it would be optimal to adopt a puppy that has had proper early socialization. If the puppy's past is unknown, as is often the case when you adopt a pup from a pet shop or a shelter, it's a gamble.

You could get lucky end up with a very confident dog, or you could get one who has many sensitivities (through no fault of its own). I'm not saying that shelter dogs are all automatically going to be liabilities.

I'm just trying to emphasize the important role that early socialization plays. Please don't misunderstand me... I've gotten "hate mail" over this.

I'm just trying to share information that will help you choose a dog that will have the best chance to do well living with a human family. I would be remiss if I did not share this material with you.

If you have already adopted a puppy with an unknown past, and are having good luck with it, well for you!

If you didn't have this information, and ended up with a dog that has much sensitivity, your life with this dog may be a little more challenging. I'm not telling you to give up on the dog. I'm not necessarily promoting professional breeders, either.

I don't breed, and the last two dogs I adopted were mixes. But, sometimes breeders take special care to give their puppies the best socialization possible. Some breeders (not all) understand the importance of keeping the litter together until 7 weeks of age so that they learn bite inhibition and same-species socialization. Not all breeders are responsible breeders.

You don't have to have any knowledge or training to breed a dog (unfortunately). Many people do not know the information contained in this article. If they did not see to the proper raising of the pups (up until 8 weeks of age), then you could be worse off than if you got a puppy with unknown early socialization history.

My new bundle of joy is 13 weeks old as I write this. The breeder she came from raised the puppies outside. My guess is that food was given to the mother once a day, and that the puppies were not handled and cuddled much, or spoken to one-on-one by humans.

While I don't have to worry about her bite inhibition, because she stayed with the litter long enough to learn doggie social skills, I am going to have to work very hard to get her to pay attention to me, because I believe that she formed the early opinion that people are inconsequential and their words are meaningless. When students enroll in my obedience training classes, I require certain information on the intake form.

One question I ask is, "what age was your puppy removed from the litter, and what age did you acquire your puppy?" If the answer is that the puppy was removed prior to 7 weeks of age, I automatically "red flag" that dog's behavior profile.

Chances are, that dog will end up biting someone, and when they do, it will not be an inhibited bite. I do not handle people's dogs that have been removed from the litter too early. I also "red flag" any dog that was acquired after the age of 16 weeks, when the owner doesn't know where and how the puppy spent his critical socialization period.

For all we know, the pup could have been in a cage at a pet shop or puppy mill during much if not all of that period, being isolated from human contact except at feeding time.

This is definitely not an optimal situation.

People need to know this. Insurance companies need to know this. Instead of giving certain particular breeds of dog a bad rap for having a tendency to bite, people should face the fact that any fearful dog will bite.

And the less socialized, the more fearful the dog will be. Instead of banning Pit Bulls and Rottweilers, for homeowner's coverage, people should get a discount on their insurance coverage if they can determine that their dog was properly socialized!

What do you do if you've ended up with one of those dogs that lacked the socialization he needed as a puppy?

All is not lost. This article was meant to drive home the critical importance of early socialization, but I don't want to alienate people who may already have a dog with a "social setback."

I would be remiss if I did not try to help you rehabilitate and re-socialize your dog, but I'll do that in another article. I just want to say this: Don't give up on your dog! My favorite dog (an adorable Cattle Dog/Border Collie cross) in the whole world (next to my own dogs, of course), is such a dog. He was a raging monster.

He "went off" whenever another dog came within 50 feet of him. His owner was beside herself.

She enrolled him in my friend Brenda Aloff's "Re-Socialization" class. The progress he has made brings tears to my eyes. Just this past weekend, I ran into them at obedience trial, where he sat amongst hordes of dogs comfortably.

His owner continues to stay on top of things, and always carefully manages the dog's environment. He has come an awfully long way. I never thought I'd see him sitting calmly at ringside at a dog obedience trial.

My advice to you if you love such a dog is to seek the help of a knowledgeable, behavior consultant who uses positive reinforcement to rehabilitate dogs.

We hope to reduce the obscene number of dogs that are euthanized each year in shelters and pounds after they are dumped there, unwanted, by people who weren't up to the task of being responsible dog owners.

The statistics are grim for those dogs that enter the shelter as adults with behavior problems created by the previous owners. Over 80% are euthanized. To turn these statistics around, we can't just expect to find more adoptive homes for all of the nation's unwanted animals.

We have to prevent them from becoming unwanted in the first place. We must show people how easy it is to be a responsible owner of a family dog that is a joy, rather than a burden, to own. We also hope to have people appreciate dogs more for the important role they play in our lives. With educational in-school programs using dogs, we can teach non-violence, nurturance, and an attitude of stewardship toward our fellow animals, while we as humans enjoy the many benefits of this positive association with dogs.

More on Socialization Techniques

Puppy / Dog Socialization

Socialization is most critical for young dogs from 4 weeks to 4 months. However, maintaining your dog's socialization is a life-long process.

Your dog needs to be exposed to all sorts of people, environments, and different looking dogs. Socialization is accomplished by gradually allowing your dog to investigate different looking people, children, environments, objects, and dogs. It is critical that the dog is exposed to new stimuli on a voluntary basis and not forced to interact with beings or objects s/he is afraid of.

4week-16 weeks = Socialization

- During this period, puppies need opportunities to meet other dogs and people.
- By four to six weeks they're most influenced by their littermates and are learning about being a dog.
- From four to 12 weeks they're most influenced by their littermates and people. They're also learning to play, including social skills, inhibited bite, social structure/ranking and physical coordination.
- By three to five weeks they're becoming aware of their surroundings, companions (dogs and people) and relationships, including play.
- By five to seven weeks they're developing curiosity and exploring new experiences. They need positive "people" experiences during this time.
- By seven to nine weeks they're refining they're physical skills/coordination (including housetraining) and full use of senses.
- By eight to ten weeks they experience real fear -- when normal objects and experiences can alarm puppies -- and need positive training.
- By nine to 12 weeks they're refining reactions, social skills (appropriate interactions) with littermates and are exploring the environment, spaces and objects. Beginning to focus on people. This is a good time to begin training.
- Most influenced by "littermates" (playmates now include those of other species).
- Beginning to see and use ranking (dominant and submissive) within the pack, including humans.
- Teething (and associated chewing).

- At four months they experience another fear stage.

It is possible to accidentally force socialization on a dog. One way to do this is to cue a dog to touch something they are afraid of, or to use food to force them to go close to the being or object they fear.

Proper socialization is force free and completely voluntary on the dog's part. Many of us make the mistake of giving strangers food and basically forcing our dogs into a vulnerable position/

Just wait, patience is a virtue. Let the puppy /dog figure this out for itself. Stand and talk to a friend sit on the ground let the puppy just experience this in its own time. If it's a footing problem you can certainly toss food around on top of the floor but don't force the puppy to "Get IT".

Socialization is much more than just exposing your dog to your family and dogs and maybe a few kids in your neighborhood, this is a good start but not nearly enough for most dogs/puppies. Socialization is taking the dog/ puppy everywhere you go exposing the dog/puppy to hundreds of people young and old alike and all kinds of dogs.

You want your dog/puppy to meet many unfamiliar adults, young old in wheel chairs using crutches real life events school yards with lots of yelling and screaming kids, and dogs of all different sizes and colors. This socialization will need to continue throughout most of the dog's life. An under-socialized dog is more likely to bite and or become stressed in unfamiliar environments and situations.

The Puppy's/ or Foster Dog's Rule of Socialization

- Make sure all experiences are safe and positive for the puppy. Each encounter should include treats and lots of praise. Slow down and add distance if your puppy is scared!

By the time a puppy is 12 weeks old, it should have: (If your puppy or foster dog is over 12 weeks start right away with this socialization guide.)

Experienced many daily different surfaces: wood, woodchips, carpet, tile, cement, linoleum, grass, wet grass, dirt, mud, puddles, deep pea gravel, grates, uneven surfaces, on a table, on a chair, etc.

- Played with many different objects: fuzzy toys, big & small balls, hard toys, funny sounding toys, wooden items, paper or cardboard items, milk jugs, metal items, car keys, etc.
- Experienced many different locations: front yard (daily), other people's homes, school yard, lake, pond, river, boat, basement, elevator, car, moving car, garage, laundry room, kennel, veterinarian hospital (just to say hi & visit, lots of cookies, no vaccinations), grooming salon (just to say hi), etc.
- Met and played with many new people (outside of family): include children, adults (mostly men), elderly adults, people in wheelchairs, walkers, people with canes, crutches, hats, sunglasses, etc.

- Exposed to many different noises (ALWAYS keep positive and watch puppy's comfort level - we don't want the puppy scared): garage door opening, doorbell, children playing, babies screaming, big trucks, Harley motorcycles, skateboards, washing machine, shopping carts rolling, power boat, clapping, loud singing, pan dropping, horses neighing, vacuums, lawnmowers, birthday party, etc.
- Exposed to many fast moving objects (don't allow to chase): skateboards, roller-skates, bicycles, motorcycles, cars, people running, cats running, scooters, vacuums, children running, children playing soccer, squirrels, cats, horses running, cows running, etc.
- Experienced many different challenges: climb on, in, off and around a box, go through a cardboard tunnel, climb up and down steps, climb over obstacles, play hide & seek, go in and out a doorway with a step up or down, exposed to an electric sliding door, umbrella, balloons, walk on a wobbly table (plank of wood with a small rock underneath), jump over a broom, climb over a log, bathtub (and bath) etc.
- Handled by owner (& family) many times a week: hold under arm (like a football), hold to chest, hold on floor near owner, hold in-between owner's legs, hold head, look in ears, mouth, in-between toes, hold and take temperature (ask veterinarian), hold like a baby, trim toe nails, hold in lap, etc.
- Eaten from many different shaped containers: wobbly bowl, metal, cardboard box, paper, coffee cup, china, pie plate, plastic, frying pan, (tm) Kong, Treatball, (tm) Bustercube, spoon fed, paper bag, etc.
- Eaten in many different locations: back yard, front yard, crate, kitchen, basement, laundry room, bathroom, friend's house, car, school yard, bathtub, up high (on work bench), under umbrella, etc.
- Played with many different puppies (or safe adult dogs) as much as possible. Left alone safely, away from family & other animals (5-45 minutes) many times a week. Experienced a leash and collar many different times in lots different locations.

It is important to understand that there is a large genetic component in socialization training. Breed rescue volunteers have seen dogs chained in backyards that had no socialization that display gorgeous social behaviors toward all dogs and people.

But you see many hardworking trainers that spent many months socializing their pup only to have the dog grow up to repeatedly bite humans. If you are not sure about your dog's temperament have an evaluation done by experienced shelter worker or clicker trainer.

Always error on the side of caution, if your dog shows fear responses, know that s/he is much more likely to bite. Fear is the basis of almost all dog bites.

Ray and Lorna Coppinger in the book "Dogs - A Startling New Understanding of Canine Origin, Behavior, and Evolution discuss how 80 % of a dog's brain is fully formed by 4 months of age, from 4 months to a year the remaining 20% of the brain develops.

Most of a dog's brain growth occurs from 4 weeks to 4 months this is the most critical time and when socialization will make the biggest difference.

Once the brain's growth stops, it becomes far more challenging to "change the wiring". At birth a puppy has essentially all the brain cells it is ever going to have during its whole lifetime.

If the puppy brain has essentially the same number of cells as the adult brain, how can it grow ten times bigger? The answer is that brain growth is almost entirely in the connections between the cells.

Of all the brain cells present at birth, a huge number are not connected or wired together.

What takes place during puppy development is the wiring pattern of the nerve cells. (Coppinger, 2001) Coppinger's writing makes it clear that consistent socialization from 4 weeks to 4 months is critical for healthy brain development. So what are you waiting for!

Why is socialization so very important?

When Daisy was adopted at 8 weeks of age from a private party (a friend), she was a sweet puppy - a little shy, but friendly and bright. She approached her new owners readily enough at the friend's house and bonded with them quickly. Almost at once, they considered Daisy a beloved family member. Two years later, Daisy was a large, powerful dog that had snapped at, even broken the skin several times. She was wary and defensive towards everyone outside her family, and often growled or bit if she thought strangers might approach her or her owners.

Reaching out to pet her; moving through the living room; reaching over her fence; handing her treats: Daisy had come to view all these seemingly innocent activities as threats. What happened? Well, the simple answer is nothing.

Daisy's owners didn't abuse her; in fact, they were exemplary owners in nearly every way. But between the ages of 7 weeks and 1yr, Daisy just didn't meet very many new people. It's hard to imagine that this alone could cause serious aggression, but trainers see similar scenarios every day. The problem is that many puppies just never develop an extended view of their family "pack."

Working owners may be too tired when they come home to take the dog to the park or to have guests over. Families with small children may be too busy. But the end result is that since the puppy doesn't meet many people outside the family, she begins to distrust anyone not in her magic inner circle.

This is normal for wild canids, such as wolves, which live in small, tight-knit family groups and reject outsiders. But it's a sure failure for domestic dogs, whose behavior can signal their fates. The kindest thing we can do for dogs is to help them extend their concept of "family" to encompass any and all friendly people they meet. Even working people can do this by dealing with socialization proactively.

We call this technique the "Rule of Many." From the age of 4 weeks until 2yrs, a puppy should meet many new people every day.

Everyone he/she meets should give the puppy treats, or play with its favorite toy and as much variety as possible in terms of size, age, color, and personality type should be represented. The puppy should also go to 7 new places every 7 weeks (or at least one new place a week), and the places should be as different from each other as possible, such as a lake, a park, a shopping mall parking lot, the vet's office, a pet store, etc. And don't stop there!

These recommendations are minimum - the more people and places your puppy/dog experiences, the better adjusted she'll be as an adult.

Keeping track of the people your puppy meets and the places she goes can be fun for young children and will ensure that you meet your goals. Be sure the puppy is put on her own four feet for these introductions and visits; holding her in your arms can send her the wrong signals and prevent her from experiencing the world on her own.

The wonderful end result is that, by seven months of age, a puppy whose owners have followed the Rule of Sevens has met and received treats, pets and praise from at least 196 new people and has gone to at least 28 new places!

This lucky puppy will feel relaxed and happy around all types of people and at home almost anywhere. Best of all, whenever she meets someone new or goes to a strange place from now on, she'll tend to assume the best, rather than the worst. For the next 1215 years, she'll truly be a companion to her family.

And what about Daisy? Since no effort was made when she was a puppy to ensure that she experienced as many new people as possible, Daisy ended up with a first class case of defensive aggression.

Fortunately, she isn't a lost cause, and she's come a long way with behavior modification. Every new person she meets plays ball with her, which is her favorite game.

But as her owners now realize, what happened to Daisy could have been prevented if they had known about and followed the Rule of "many" right from the start.

They'll definitely be following it next time around. This is a fictional story based on 100's of dogs I have worked with. (this is a common occurrence of the many, many dogs and puppies that I have seen come into the shelter over the past 6 yrs..)

Whether socializing, play training, or just hanging out around the house, being consistent with your dog will make a big difference in helping you achieve your goals with your dog.

Dog Bite Injury Prevention - Socialization

Socialization and puppy training are of utmost importance as puppy hood is the most important and critical time in your dog's development. What you do and do not do right now will affect your dog's behavior forever.

A properly socialized dog is well adjusted and makes a good companion. It is neither frightened by nor aggressive towards anyone or anything it would normally meet in day-to-day living.

An un-socialized dog is untrustworthy and an unwanted liability. They often become fear-biters. Often they like to fight with other dogs. They are difficult to train and are generally unpleasant to be around.

Un-socialized dogs cannot adapt to new situations and a simple routine visit to the vet is a nightmare not only for the dog itself, but for everyone involved. Don't let this happen to you and your dog. Start socializing your new puppy NOW!

The Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine agrees that the socialization period lasts up to about 12 weeks (3 months) of age. However, at 12 weeks, the puppy must continue socialization to refine its social skills.

Socialization most easily occurs before the puppy is 3 months old. Any later than that and it becomes an excruciatingly difficult and time-consuming process that very few owners have the time, energy, money or patience to cope with.

Socialization Do's

Make sure that each of the following events is pleasant and non-threatening. If your puppy's first experience with something is painful and frightening, you will be defeating your purpose.

- In fact, you will be creating a phobia that will often last a lifetime. It's better to go too slow and assure your puppy is not frightened or injured than to rush and force your pup to meet new things and people.
- Invite friends over to meet your pup. Include men, women, youngsters, oldsters, different ethnic backgrounds, etc.
- Invite friendly, healthy, vaccinated dogs, puppies and even cats to your home to meet and play with your new puppy. Take your puppy to the homes of these pets, preferably with dog-friendly cats.
- Carry your pup to shopping centers, parks, school playgrounds, etc; places where there are crowds of people and plenty of activity.
- Take your puppy for short, frequent rides in the car. Stop the car and let your puppy watch the world go by through the window.
- Introduce your puppy to umbrellas, bags, boxes, the vacuum cleaner, etc. Encourage your puppy to explore and investigate his environment.
- Get your puppy accustomed to seeing different and unfamiliar objects by creating your own. Set a chair upside down. Lay the trash can (empty) on its side, set up the ironing board right side up one day and upside down the next day.
- Introduce your puppy to new and various sounds. Loud, obnoxious sounds should be introduced from a distance and gradually brought closer.
- Accustom your puppy to being brushed, bathed, inspected, having its nails clipped, teeth and ears cleaned and all the routines of grooming and physical examination.
- Introduce your puppy to stairs, his own collar and leash. Introduce anything and everything you want your puppy to be comfortable with and around.

Socialization Don'ts

- Do not put your puppy on the ground where unknown animals have access. This is where your puppy can pick up diseases. Wait until your puppy's shots are completed.
- Do not let your pup socialize with dogs that appear sick or dogs that you don't know that may not be vaccinated.
- Do not reward fearful behavior. In a well meaning attempt to sooth, encourage or calm the puppy when it appears frightened, we often unintentionally reward the behavior. It's normal for the puppy to show some signs of apprehension when confronting anything new and different.
- Do not allow the experience to be harmful, painful or excessively frightening. This can cause lifetime phobias in your dog.
- Do not force or rush your puppy. Let your puppy take things at his own pace. Your job is to provide the opportunity.
- Do not do too much at one time. Young puppies need a lot of sleep and tire quickly. It is much more productive to have frequent and very brief exposures than occasional prolonged exposures.
- DO NOT WAIT!! Every day that goes by is an opportunity of a lifetime that is lost forever. You can never get these days back. If socialization does not happen now, it never will.

Seven Things You Should Do If Your Dog Bites

- The first thing that is very important for you to do, as a dog owner is to make sure that you act responsibly for the actions taken by your dog. Once your dog is pointed out as a biter, the first thing you need to do is act responsibly. There is enough time for you to complain later.
- Second, immediately make sure that you give the dog immediate house arrest. Restrain your dog immediately by separating it from the scene of the attack.
- Third, you have to check on the victim's condition. Show that you care. If the wound is not serious, help in washing the wound with soap and water. Then call for the attention of professional medical personnel for further treatment.
- The fourth step you should take is to help the medical personnel with information about your dog, especially on rabies vaccinations recently taken and the date. This will help the medical personal and save the victims from suffering from unknown germs.
- Fifth, in case the bite or attack is a serious one, make sure that you alert your insurance company immediately.

- Sixth, make sure that you comply with the local animal control official that's responsible for the investigation of the situation. In case it is required for your dog to be quarantined, strictly follow the requirement.
- Lastly, it's very important that you seek professional help to prevent your dog from biting again. You don't know who the next victim could be if you don't do this in time. To prevent a future occurrence consult your vet, behaviorist and trainer.

Advice to Dog Bite Victims: What you should do if you are attacked or bitten by a dog

If you are attacked by a dog you can try to avoid being bitten; don't run or scream, stand still with your arms at your sides. You should avoid eye contact or speaking to the dog, instead curl into a ball and put your hands over your ears, especially if you are knocked to the ground. Make sure you teach your children how to do this too, especially if you suspect any such incidence in your area.

Depending on the level of the bite or the attack, the first thing that you should do is to make sure that you can identify the dog. Being able to identify the dog will help you in giving the necessary report to the authorities, telling them everything you can about the dog.

Give the authorities the owner's name, color of the dog, the size and where the incident occurred. These details will help the animal control officer in your area to locate the dog and at the same time take necessary measures to avoid future occurrences to other people.

If the bite is not serious and the dog is yours, confine it immediately and call for the assistance of professionals like a dog behavior specialist, trainer or veterinarian.

In case you are not the owner and the bite is serious, first get medical attention immediately. If you are not treated, a dog bite can lead to serious injury or even death.

After you have been properly evaluated by medical personnel then you can consider consulting with a dog bite lawyer specialist. However, certain information will be needed by the lawyer to execute his job. If you are unable to provide this information you can consider bringing in a witness or neighbor that was at the scene.

Although nobody will pray that a dog bite his or her children, it is advisable to always admonish children to tell you when they have been bitten by dog. When you are told of a bite, wash the wound with lots of soap and water and then report the case to animal control or the police so that they can find the dog. Then consider getting medical attention for any necessary further treatment.

Guest Expert Articles

Baby on the Way - Prepare Your Dog

What you can do before a baby arrives to prepare your k9 family member.

- Review and firm up obedience: Parents should practice giving commands comfortably in any position. Ex: sitting back on a couch, lying in bed, sitting on the floor.
- Be consistent with commands.
- Socialize your dog around children in a positive and controlled environment.
- Observe and become aware of how the dog seeks your attention.
- Know your dog's sensitivities. Research the breed or mixes. Does he startle with fast motion, noises etc

Begin a baby schedule that includes:

- Varied feeding times.
- Crating or "dog zone" times
- Vary exercise routines
- Ignore attention seeking behavior
- Allow your dog to become familiar with the baby equipment.
- Teach your dog the behaviors you want around the equipment vs. what you do not want. Doing this ahead makes a world of difference!
- Parents can use the baby carrier they plan to use with their baby and put a teddy bear in it to get the feeling of what it will be like moving with this.
- Work with your dog while you wear this.
- Walk your dog with an empty stroller or one with some weight to it to get a feel for this and what needs to be worked on NOW.
- Use a CD of baby noises to introduce and create a positive experience prior to the baby's arrival.

- Get the smells lotion and put it on the baby carrier, car seat etc. and the teddy you carry in the sling. Bring the same lotion with you to put the same familiar scent on the baby's clothing for the dog to be familiar with.
- Have Dad bring home a blanket with the baby's scent on it. Although Dad will have the scent all over him. The blanket can go in the car seat, swing etc.
- Schedule your vet visit well ahead of time to be sure to have all meds available.
- Familiarize your dog with the person that may care for them.
- Plan a good and safe spot for your diapers!

What you need to know about bite prevention.

In a perfect world: All children would be taught to respect a dog's space and never approach a dog without asking the owner (if there is one present).

All dogs would be temperamentally sound, calm and stable around children, letting them into their personal space to poke and prod without fear or defensiveness. The first ideal is what dog owners would wish for. The second is what parents of small children would hope for.

The fact is that neither one of these ideal situations is often the case in the REAL world. Most parents don't take the time to educate their children in respecting animals and not approaching them at all or at least approaching them intelligently.

And most dog owners don't realize the importance of properly socializing their puppies to become well-adjusted, confident dogs that do not fear new environments, situations or people. The end result is that dogs bite a lot of children.

Society currently deals with bite prevention by talking to the kids in school for a half-hour each year on how not to get bitten, and by locking up (or euthanizing) "dangerous" dogs.

This is a lot like trying to deal with crime prevention by teaching victims how not to get shot in a hold up, and locking bank robbers away in the penitentiary. It's not going to save the people who have already been shot, and it doesn't prevent the human race from pumping out more new bank robbers every year.

This is what I want to address: The new bank robbers. But, since this is an article about dog training, we're going to talk about potential biting dogs. Humans and dogs are driven by consequences.

These bank robbers probably started out when they were 8 years old, stealing candy and gum from the corner store. Somehow, they got away with it (where were their parents?). So the child learns a lesson: "The consequence for stealing something, rather than paying for it, is that I get the candy, and I get to keep my money." The child is beginning to develop a reward history for thievery.

This goes on until, as an adult, this human becomes a felon-a menace to society-someone who must be locked up away from others to prevent harm to the innocent masses. The biting dog starts out at 8 weeks of age with the new owners.

Like the child, his is a blank slate. If he experiences no positive interactions with SAFE, non-threatening children, or worse, is allowed to be subjected to groping, hurtful "attack children," he will develop a fear or perhaps a strong dislike for children.

Because he either doesn't know what children are (never having been exposed to them during the critical period of socialization) and thinks they could harm him, or he KNOWS they are evil and he is SURE they will harm him (having been allowed to have a previous frightening consequence of being approached by children).

Where were his "parents" during this critical stage of his development? The dog, like the child, is forming positive and negative associations, based on the consequences he has experienced in life.

Obviously, if we want to have fewer dog bites, we need to stop leaving it up to the children not to get bitten. It is every dog owner's responsibility to socialize their puppies to children and all other kinds of humans during the critical socialization period.

Once this period is passed (after 16 weeks), you will make little or no impression on the beliefs your dog holds to be true about the universe. I cannot stress this point strongly enough. Socialization of your puppy is the first step in becoming a responsible dog owner.

If you are there to guide your pup through the critical stages of his socialization by introducing him to as many kinds of people, places, sights, sounds, smells and surfaces as possible in a positive and non-threatening way, your dog will not fear novel stimuli as an adult.

At the same time, I implore all parents to please CONTROL young children. They are not capable of controlling themselves. During their early socialization periods, they simply do not know better than to do many "dumb" things. Any dog can bite.

I know that insurance companies think that it is the "breed" (Pit Bulls and Rottweilers) that is responsible for the tendency to bite, but this is absurd.

It is the fear from lack of socialization or bad early experiences that makes a particular dog a prime candidate for a defensive biting incident, not the dog's breed. You can't tell by looking at a dog what kind of socialization it has had as a puppy.

Even the cute ones could be potential fear-biters, so parents need to keep their toddlers AWAY from all dogs, unless they know the dog and know how it will react to the sudden movements of the child.

The dog that is near and dear to my heart must be watched like a hawk when small children are near. She would never go out of her way to go after a child. She wants to distance herself from children as much as possible.

I must always be sure that she has an escape route when children are present. As long as she can get away, she has no need to defend herself from the "attack child." When she was almost 9

weeks old (at the end of her fear imprint period), I had her out in a store trying to socialize her to as many new things as possible.

The problem was that I had a broken leg and I was in a wheelchair at the time. A friend was holding my puppy's leash, when suddenly an uncontrolled toddler came screaming at my puppy. The kid literally trampled my little baby puppy, as I watched from 20 feet away. To this day, she thinks that all toddlers are going to hurt her and kick and stomp her to death. Silly, I know, because she's bigger than a toddler and should not be afraid, right? Wrong.

What happens during a puppy's critical socialization period stays with it for the rest of its life. I felt so bad that I wasn't at the other end of the leash to get between the rampaging toddler and my innocent, impressionable puppy. Trust me, I would have done ANYTHING to deflect this child from inflicting permanent psychological damage on my puppy.

If I could go back in time and change one event of my life, it would be that moment. Because, despite my best efforts to continually expose my dog to calm, safe, non-invasive children, she remains terrified at the sight or sound of an approaching toddler.

The people responsible for puppies and small children need to act more responsibly. It is my fervent wish that all "parents" of new puppies exposed their young charges in a positive way to safe, calm children, which are under control. And that all parents of small children expose their toddlers to safe, calm canines which are under control, so that the two kinds of "kids" will form positive associations with one another.

This will lead to fewer dog bites, lower insurance rates, and a better society as a whole. Oh, and if you happen to be the parent of a human child, do society a favor and don't let him go into the corner store unsupervised...

Bite Inhibition

If you watch a litter of puppies playing, you will notice that they spend much of their time biting and grabbing each other with their mouths. This is normal puppy behavior.

When you take a puppy from the litter and into your home, the puppy will play bite and mouth you. This is normal behavior, but needs to be modified so you and the puppy will be happy.

The first thing to teach your new puppy is that human flesh is much more sensitive than other puppies and that it really hurts us when they bite. This is called bite inhibition. A puppy has very sharp teeth and a weak jaw.

This means that the puppy can cause you to be uncomfortable when mouthing or puppy biting you, but can not cause severe damage. An adult dog has duller teeth and a powerful jaw. This means that an adult dog can cause significant damage when biting.

ANY DOG WILL BITE GIVEN THE RIGHT OR WRONG CIRCUMSTANCES! If a small child falls on your adult dog and sticks a finger in the dog's eye, you should not be surprised if the dog bites.

If you do a good job teaching your puppy bite inhibition, you should get a grab and release without damage. If you don't, you may get a hard bite with significant damage.

It is simple to teach a puppy bite inhibition. Every time the puppy touches you with its teeth, say "OUCH!" in a gruff tone of voice. This will probably not stop the puppy from mouthing, but over time should result in softer and gentler puppy biting.

The commands necessary to teach a puppy NOT to mouth are easy and fun. Hold a small handful of the puppy's dry food, say "take it" in a sweet tone of voice, and give the puppy one piece of food. Then close the rest of the food in your hand and say "off" in that same sweet tone of voice.

When the puppy has not touched your hand for 3 to 5 seconds, say "take it" and give the puppy one piece of food. We are teaching the puppy that "off" means not to touch. You should do this with the puppy before every meal for at least 5 minutes.

After a couple of weeks of the above training, here is how you are going to handle puppy biting or mouthing:

- Unexpected mouthing (you don't know the puppy is going to mouth, until you feel the puppy's teeth): "OUCH!"
- Expected mouthing (you see the puppy getting ready to mouth you): You say "OFF" before the puppy can mouth you.
- The puppy is mouthing you because of a desire to play. You have to answer the question, "Do I have time to play with the puppy now?" If you do, then do "sit", "down", "stand" or other positive 'lure and reward' training.
- If the answer is "No, I don't have time for the puppy, right now," then you need to do a time out (crate, or otherwise confine the puppy, so the puppy can't continue to mouth you and get in trouble.

I believe you will find the above much more humane than yelling at the puppy all of the time.

The Complex World of Canine-Car Relationships

(Originally written for Dogwatch, a newsletter for the general public from the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine)

What makes dogs behave so differently in cars? My dog Wallace loves the car whether we're riding or he's there alone while I run errands. Cammie, my sister's dog, loves to ride in the car, but tears the upholstery apart if my sister leaves her alone there. My neighbor's dog, Dilbertina, acts fine alone in the car, but barks and paces incessantly if her owner is with her. Another neighbor's dog acts like he'll rip your face off if you get anywhere near the car, whether his owner is in the car or not. Meanwhile my parents' dog hates the car so much he begins shaking and drooling the instant he sets foot inside it.

Analyzing seemingly complex and contradictory canine behavior in terms of the dog's strongest drive establishing and protecting the territory-often provides the best clues.

Dogs who feel secure in their territories can relax and enjoy themselves whereas those who feel threatened respond fearfully, and freeze, fight, or try to run. However, the dog's basic personality plus any limits posed by the environment may cause these three responses to manifest in a wide variety of ways.

Unfortunately, a lot of times when we think of a dog's "territory," we immediately think of a physical place, such as a house or a car. However, animals also may view other animals and people as their territories, too.

Granted, we don't often think of canine mothers relating to their pups-let alone us! -The same way they relate to their favorite fuzzy toy or an old bone. However, like all dogs who lack confidence, they may mount an equally or even more aggressive fear-based response when someone or something threatens those animate possessions or when they are separated from them.

Because dogs can and do lay claim to both animate and inanimate objects, to properly analyze canine-automotive interactions we need to consider what a particular dog's behavior tells us about its relationship to the car and what that behavior reveals about the animal's relationship with the owner.

For example, Wallace's love of the car under any circumstances tells us that he feels quite secure in that space. Whatever or whoever comes along, he can handle it so he needn't muster any show of force to frighten passers-by.

He also feels confident that his owner possesses the wherewithal to take care of herself, so no need exists to worry when she leaves him alone in the car, either.

Cammie, on the other hand, lacks Wallace's confidence in both herself and her owner. As long as car and owner stay with her, she can cope. However, when her owner leaves, she reacts the same way a timid bitch would when separated from her pup in a threatening environment.

Thus for Cammie, rather than serving as a secure haven, the car becomes a prison that keeps her from protecting her owner. Naturally, she tries to dig and chew her way out of it.

Another variation on the theme takes the form of Dilbertina who feels quite capable of protecting her owner's car, but goes to pieces at the idea of protecting the car and her owner.

In her owner's presence, she feels obligated to pace and bark to warn off would-be threats to that person. Interestingly, she may show little, if any, response to those same stimuli in her owner's absence.

In spite of what their owners might want to think about their pet's "courage," dogs who routinely respond hostilely to others who approach their vehicle are just plain scared.

They mount those energy-intensive displays in hopes that they can frighten any real or imagined threat away because, unlike Wallace, they don't have the confidence to face it.

If such behavior only occurs in the owner's absence, the dog respects that person's leadership.

On the other hand, if the display occurs in the owner's presence, the dog views that person as territory, too. Similarly, dogs that drool and shake in the car also communicate that they lack faith in their own and their owner's ability to handle the situation.

By recognizing the cause of the negative behaviors, we can design and implement human-canine training programs that make car trips fun for everyone.

Canine Bloat and Temperament

(Originally written for DogWatch, a newsletter for the general public from the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine)

When I took my rottweiler in for her annual check-up, I asked my veterinarian about bloat because her litter mate died from it and I wanted to know what I could do to prevent it. We discussed different feeding strategies, but he also told me fearful dogs were at higher risk. Can my dog's personality really affect her health?

The study of gastric dilatation-volvulus (GDV or bloat) in dogs conducted by Lawrence Glickman and his team of researchers at the Center for the Human-Animal Bond at Purdue University did indeed show that dogs judged nervous or fearful by their owners were at higher risk than happy, easy-going ones.

But how could this be? Unfortunately, currently studies of disease or injury don't take the role of the animal's behavior or its relationship with the owner into account. However, hopefully the increased interest shown in the links between behavior and health by human health professionals and the general public will stimulate more research in this aspect of veterinary medicine, too.

Beyond that, though, we can get some hints regarding what might occur in domestic animals from what we know happens in wild ones. When frightened by a predator, a wild animal will immediately empty its bladder and defecate to decrease its weight to enable it to fight or run more efficiently.

Consequently, the normal fear response involves a period of hypermotility or increased activity of the gut to empty it, followed by hypomotility, which allows the animal to channel maximum energy to the skeletal muscles for flight or fighting. In the wild, the prey animal that finds itself in this situation usually either gets away from the predator or gets caught and eaten within a relatively short time.

If the animal gets away, normal gut motility becomes re-established and may remain so for a fairly long time. Although nature films sometimes give the impression that animals spend most of their time fighting or fleeing predators, such encounters make up a comparatively small part of the wild animal's day.

Compare this to the life led by the average timid dog in a complex suburban environment. Every time fearful Freddy hears a strange noise during his owner's absence, he wants to run and hide. Shortly after his owner goes to work, the sound of the school bus sets him off. His ancestral brain sends a message to the smooth muscle of his gut to empty out and prepare for the great fight or escape.

However, house-trained Freddy wouldn't dream of doing that, or maybe his gut is empty because he only gets fed in the evening. Whatever the reason, the hyper motile phase comes to a

screeching halt when he bolts for the door and begins barking frantically. Freddy survives that assault and his gut starts functioning normally again. But then an hour later the mail arrives.

An hour after that, the UPS man leaves a package. Then the kids next door start playing ball, and a dog starts barking on the next block. Each time something frightens him, Freddy's gut speeds up, shuts down, then starts up again. Perhaps after repeated episodes of this, it loses its ability to contract normally and dilates, just like a balloon that's been repeatedly inflated and deflated eventually loses its elasticity.

But what about dogs like Clementine who drool, vomit, or get diarrhea when they get scared? Instead of their guts shutting down, they go into overdrive. In reality, Freddy's and Clementine's responses probably represent variations on the same theme. Freddy can muster the courage to get beyond the gut-emptying freeze state, but Clementine remains stuck there. Perhaps her gut just keeps churning until it can't churn any more.

In both cases though, when the dogs eat that night, the digestive juices flow as usual but their stomachs don't contract to mix things to aid digestion and gas builds up. At some point before or during this process, and added by a body type that lends itself to this, the stomach flips and GDV results.

Again, this all remains speculation based on wild animal behavior. Still, it serves as yet another good reason to keep our dogs' minds as healthy as their bodies.

Compulsive Canine Behaviors: Too Much of a Good Thing

(Originally written for DogWatch, a newsletter for the general public from the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine)

I sometimes think that my black lab, Karl, would retrieve sticks until he dropped if I'd let him. My mom says this is addictive behavior and that I should stop playing with him this way before he develops serious problems. My feeling is that he's far more likely to develop problems if I don't allow him this outlet for all of his energy. Who's right?

So much media attention has been showered on addictive or compulsive behavior, we often lose sight of the fact that mammalian brains possess both addictive and non-addictive centers, and that the two function quite differently.

Once experimental animals learn hit a key to stimulate their addictive centers, they'll continue doing this even when researchers disconnect the apparatus. In similar experiments involving self-stimulation of the non addictive center, however, the animal may try to trigger the pleasurable response a few times after the stimulator is disconnected, but it soon gives up and does something else.

In the most general of terms we may say that the addiction center triggers the recognition, "I feel happy because I'm pressing this key," whereas the non-addictive center triggers the message, "I feel happier when I'm pressing this key."

From this we can see that, if Karl's retrieving triggers the addiction center, he'll see retrieving as the cause of any positive feelings he may experience. Because of this, when he can't do that he'll feel frustrated and out of sorts. That, in turn, will cause him to do everything in his power to get his owner, or someone, to throw a stick for him to relieve those negative feelings.

On the other hand, if the behavior stimulates his non-addictive center, he'll relish a game of retrieving just about any time, but when his owner says, "Time to quit" or simply ignores him, he'll find some other way to amuse himself because he doesn't depend on the game for his feelings of well-being.

Unfortunately, research into the workings of the non-addictive center far lags that of the addictive, but it does appear that the two may work in tandem. For example, Karl may initially retrieve sticks because his Labrador breeding programs him for it and he enjoys it, a non-addictive response.

However, suppose Karl's owner feels compelled to throw every single stick that Karl drops at his feet and lavishly praises the dog for retrieving it. Under these circumstances, what begins as Karl's random celebration of his normal lab retrieving genes could evolve into a stylized ritual that carries a much stronger emotional charge.

In this case, Karl might become so dependent on that positive interaction with his owner that he feels devastated when his owner can't play the game. That, in turn, might lead him to relentlessly pester people to toss sticks for him. If denied this, he may attempt to relieve the resultant tension by chewing on the stick, or even his feet or the rug if he can't find any sticks.

One owner described how her male German shepherd dog made such a strong connection between retrieving and his mental health that he would automatically reach for his ball indoors or a stick outdoors if anything upset him. If he couldn't immediately locate a stick outdoors, he'd leap up and snap branches off trees.

While such an image might make us laugh, this very observant owner could tell from her dog's tense body language and expression that this wasn't a game to the dog at all. He needed whatever mental fix retrieving those sticks gave him.

Because of all this, we need to evaluate Karl's seemingly compulsive stick-retrieving in the context of his other behaviors, his relationship with his owner, and his environment. If ending the game obviously distresses the dog, this canine response could presage more serious behavioral problems down the line. If Karl can accept the end of the game, but his owner feels compelled to continue it, then the owner should reevaluate his relationship with his pet. And, finally, if Karl becomes seemingly obsessed with fetching sticks because these represent his only viable outlet for his energy, then providing him other options will allow the game to serve as a canine celebration rather than an obsession.

Desensitizing Possessive Behavior Parts I & II

Part I

Dogs are wonderful companions. They're loyal, friendly, affectionate, and fun to be around. Why then, are there so many dog bites in this country, most of them inflicted on children?

Trouble is, we humans don't like to admit that in addition to the fine qualities mentioned above, dogs are also aggressive, territorial animals with strong teeth and jaws and a hard-wired "bite or flight" instinct.

In other words, a dog that bites a child who takes a toy from him is behaving normally.

This is hard for people to accept, but it's necessary if we are to reduce the number of dog bites and the ensuing anti-dog legislation that is becoming more common every day. And there is something we can do about it.

In Culture Clash, Jean Donaldson says that "dogs are unaware that they've been adopted into a culture where biting is considered a betrayal of trust and a capital offense"

Dogs don't consider biting a betrayal; it's just communication to them. How is a dog to understand that we can't accept that in relation to humans? The simple answer is that you can't explain to a dog that biting a human being may get him killed or cause him to lose his home.

If you try to do so (using the so-called "alpha" techniques involving mild to moderate aggression towards the dog) you will actually increase the likelihood that the dog will bite you or someone else. Aggression tends to lead to aggression.

What you can do, however, is recondition the dog to accept what he normally would not accept. Through reconditioning, you can actually cause a dog to think that having toys, contraband items, and even food taken from him is good -that it's likely to result in reinforcement, just like sitting for petting or lying down.

Here's an example of how I used positive reinforcement training to recondition my own dog.

While crated at an agility show last summer, my Australian Shepherd Tucker managed to pull a zip-lock bag containing my daughter's make-up stuff (which we had foolishly left within reach) into his crate.

Tucker was happily chewing the make-up and was about to start on the blush and metal barrettes (yup, Aussies will eat anything!) when two strangers noticed what was happening. They opened his crate, and removed the contraband from his mouth. Tucker's response was to wag his tail at them, willingly give up the stuff, and smile happily, as if to say, "Hi there - whatcha got?"

The people were amazed. And their admiration of Tucker's good manners was great positive reinforcement for me. Why? Because Tucker is an extremely confident, even pushy, representative of a confident, pushy, breed. I had not raised him from a puppy; in fact I had adopted him from Aussie Rescue 1-1/2 years ago and the first time I tried to put him in a crate he had growled at me. Here he was on his own turf, approached by total strangers. Why did he just let them take what he was so obviously enjoying?

Because from the time we've had him, we have worked with him regularly on two exercises:

Object exchange and food bowl games.

He had been reinforced so many times for handing things to us that he never even thought twice about allowing someone else to open his crate and reach into his mouth. Most other dogs would have bitten or at least growled - normal dog behavior.

But Tucker's reconditioning enabled him to accept what does not come naturally to dogs. By reconditioning his natural possessiveness, he now believes that giving up an object means getting something better.

In Part II of this series, I will explain how you can go about reconditioning your puppy or adult dog to accept what most dogs will not. Please keep reading, and plan to work with your dog on these exercises. Remember that in today's society, if a dog bites someone more than once, chances are high that he'll be euthanized. So making a commitment to reconditioning may just save your dog's life!

PART II:

Recondition Possessiveness with Object Exchange

In part one of this series, I discussed the fact that normal behavior for dogs includes not only the loyal affection they are admired for, but also several behaviors (biting and growling) that human beings can't accept.

Preventing aggression by reconditioning your dog with positive reinforcement is the humane solution required of us when we bring these "aliens" into our homes. And it's relatively easy to do, especially if you're starting with a puppy.

First, work on "object exchanges." As carnivores, dogs defend their "kill" from others (whether its a caribou carcass or a tennis ball). However, we can recondition the dog to feel relaxed, rather than aggressive, about giving up a toy by offering to exchange with the dog for something better.

Start with a toy the puppy feels lukewarm about. Show him a treat, and when he drops the toy to take it, use your clicker (or a word, such as "yes!") and give him the treat. Once he's doing this consistently, add the cue "out" or "drop it."

Then try it with a more popular toy. Once this is going very well, touch the toy with your hand and say "out," reinforcing heavily with food. Also teach your dog cooperation by playing the "two toy game". Uses two (or three) of the exact same toy, then throw one toy. Your puppy will run out for it, and as the puppy returns, show him a second one.

Toss it in the air and catch it yourself or slap it on the floor to make it seem more attractive than the one he's got in his mouth. When he drops the first toy, throw the second, then pick up the first and repeat the whole thing. He'll quickly figure out that dropping the toy makes you play, while keeping it makes you quit.

It's also very important to work on "food bowl games". I don't agree with forcing dogs to allow people to take food from them or risk punishment. This is asking for aggression from the dog, and eventually, you'll get it - if not towards you, then towards a child or a stranger.

Instead, as with object exchange, you can recondition the dog to think that hands near bowls are harbingers of good things, while never provoking a bite or a growl. After you put your puppy's bowl down, add a few really tasty treats (different from her regular food) as she eats.

After a few days of this, keep your hand in the bowl for a few seconds while the puppy eats the treats (not his entire dinner). Occasionally (once a week or less) pick up the food bowl, add the treats, and immediately put it back down.

The puppy should soon look happy and expectant when you approach her bowl, not distressed. If she appears nervous, you need to back up to step one. Add treats regularly until the dog is at least a year old, and occasionally throughout the dog's life to keep her response to your approaching her bowl one of anticipation of good things to come.

WARNING: These suggestions are for use with puppies under 16 weeks of age. If you are starting with an older puppy or adult dog, you may be taking risks with these exercises and should consider working on them with a trainer who uses positive reinforcement methods.

Reconditioning training is never a chance to prove who is the boss. If you turn it into a power play, you may well get bitten. You aren't exerting your "control" over the dog in any way, but instead are making your presence around the dog's possessions a sign that even better treats are coming.

Children should, of course, be closely supervised around dogs, regardless of the dog's training or reconditioning. Given the range of behaviors both kids and dogs exhibit, it isn't possible to make a dog completely "kid proof". But by changing your dog's motivation to guard objects, you are increasing the chances that if something happens beyond your control, he'll have a relaxed response rather than an aggressive one. And that could save his life.

The Large Dog and Children

- Do not allow the child, however small to, tease the dog either physically or verbally. The child who shrieks and leaps incessantly beside a nervous puppy may drive him to snap out in fear as quickly as the child who grabs it's tail or sits on it. If a child is persistent, remove him. Do not even once allow him to continue.
- Do not let a small child to pick up or carry a puppy. Puppies, like babies are afraid of falling. They will often squirm and fight to free themselves. If successful, they may break a leg. (Vet bills are not cheap.) If panicked they may even bite. Remember, in this case, it is not the puppy's fault, but yours for allowing the situation to progress to the point where the puppy can no longer cope with it.
- Encourage the child to get down on the puppies level, i.e., the floor for fun and games. They can play all they like without either one getting hurt and the puppy is free to move

away when he has had enough. A child may not realize the fact that he has inadvertently cornered the pup and set in motion a series of instinctive behavior mechanisms.

- Do not expect the pup to absorb endless punishment in the form of constant noise or teasing. He will learn to defend himself unless he has some place to go such as a crate, bed, corner, or run where he can go when he does not want to be disturbed. Make certain that everyone understands that he is not to be disturbed there, and then make sure that he is not. He will come back out when he is ready to.
- Do not leave your dog unattended in the yard with small children no matter how trustworthy you may think your dog is. Although Rottweilers enjoy children more so than many other breeds, they are not a miracle dog and must be treated the same as any other large dog when around children. A dog may not mean to hurt a child, yet it usually seems to turn out the other way.
- Do not buy a dog until you have a fence for him outside where he can be safe from:
 1. Teasing by small children
 2. Dognappers
 3. Stray dogs
 4. Mishaps on the road
 5. Dogs, which are tied, become defensive, bored and irritably aggressive.
 6. A fence is convenient, durable and safe.
- Enlist the help of your child in the training of the dog. It will increase his sense of self-importance, his concern and knowledge of animal behavior. "If Max wakes up, take him outside right away so he won't make a mistake in the house. You watch, Billy, in case I don't notice, okay?"
- Do insist that neighborhood children who come to play abide by the same rules that you expect of your own. "Stuart, we don't hit Max with sticks. Here, throw it for him instead. Look how happy he is now! I think he likes you." If Stuart delivers a sly kick instead, stop him. (A little knowledge of gentle collar control is useful with children, as well as dogs).
- Put the dog in his run or crate and see to it that Stuart leaves him alone. If Stuart is uncooperative, send him home, nicely but firmly. If you get angry, he will be angry and defiant too. When he learns that he simply cannot play at your house if he continues, he will probably stop if he feels that you basically like him and that it is only his specific action that you dislike.

Here again, take two minutes to give the child and the dog something constructive to do. Let the child have the opportunity to receive a warm response from the dog and he may become your staunchest ally. "Hey Mrs Jones! I just saw Max down the street. Someone must have left the gate open."

- Do teach the dog to sit before he is given food or a treat, and to wait for an okay to take it. The Rottweiler pup will grow quicker than your toddler. If the sit stay becomes automatic, you will find him sitting before a baby with food, hoping but never touching.

Parents of visiting children are less than understanding when your 75 lbs pup grabs for a cookie and their child goes tumbling. Many fears of dogs are traced back to just such an incident. They will not only remember that it was a large dog but also that it was a Rottweiler. Never allow a small child to take the pup's food or bone as this could create a problem later when the pup has grown into adulthood.

- Do give your Rottweiler simple obedience training so that he will be spared random scoldings and confusion. "DOWN" and "SIT" are pleasant commands to a pup if their young master rewards them with a brushing or a tummy rub.
- Don't expect the dog to be patient with your child unless you have taught him to be. He will learn not to defend himself, if he realizes that you consistently rescue him before he gets hurt. Conversely you must teach the small child to be patient with the dog. Don't reinforce his fears if he inadvertently takes a tumble by telling him what a big, mean, naughty dog that is.

Be matter of fact, pick him up, staunch the blood, and say, "Here, help me teach Max to be more gentle." Help the child learn to cope with the situation, reinforce his confidence with small things that he can handle, and be there to handle a situation that proves to be more that he can control.

- Do not expose an innocent passerby to your dogs protective tendencies. Do not leave your Rottweiler and your small child outside a store and expect them to take care of each other. Some well-intentioned stranger may be bitten.

Even though your dog may do exactly what you wish him to do under different circumstances, he will be the one put down while you face an expensive lawsuit. Never assume that the public understands dog behavior. The fool who puts his hands inside your car or the boy who pokes at the dog through a fence, obviously do not, but you may end up paying the doctors bills.

- Do increase your child's sense of responsibility and pride of achievement by letting him help as much as he can. Do not expect him to know what to do. Guide him. "Here is Max's dish, Billy, tell him to come.

That's it, now tell him to sit." (You help max sit. He is just learning that he must also obey Billy too.) "Good, now put the dish down. Tell him okay. There, see how nicely he obeyed you!" Billy will leave with the distinct impression that he is the worlds smartest dog trainer and that his dog is the smartest dog on the block.

Dog and Puppy Biting, Mouthing, Teething

Biting and mouthing is common in young puppies and dogs especially in play and while teething. It's up to you to teach your puppy or dog what is acceptable and what is not. Biting dogs are generally loving, sweet, adorable, affectionate and wonderful 99% of the time. Only 1% of the time does something specific happen that makes the dog bite. This article will discuss the causes of biting and what you can do to prevent your dog from biting.

Inhibit Biting

First of all, dogs must learn to inhibit their bite before they are 4 months old. Normally, they would learn this from their mother, their littermates and other members of the pack. But, because we take them away from this environment before this learning is completed, we must take over the training.

Socialization Prevents Biting

By allowing your puppy to socialize with other puppies and socialized dogs they can pick up where they left off. Puppies need to roll, tumble and play with each other. When they play, they bite each other everywhere and anywhere.

This is where they learn to inhibit their biting. This is where they learn to control themselves. If they are too rough or rambunctious, they will find out because of how the other dogs and puppies react and interact with them.

This is something that happens naturally and it is something we cannot accomplish. It can only be learned from trial and error. There is nothing you can say or do to educate them in this realm. They must learn from their own experience.

Another major advantage of dog-to-dog socialization besides the fact that it will help your dog to grow up not being fearful of other dogs is that they can vent their energy in an acceptable manner. Puppies that have other puppies to play with do not need to treat you like littermates.

So the amount of play biting on you and your family should dramatically decrease. Puppies that do not play with other puppies are generally much more hyperactive and destructive in the home as well.

Lack of Socialization Causes Biting

A major cause of biting is lack of socialization. Lack of socialization often results in fearful or aggressive behavior. The two major reactions a dog has to something it is afraid of are to avoid it or to act aggressive in an attempt to make it go away.

This is the most common cause of children being bitten. Dogs that are not socialized with children often end up biting them. The optimum time to socialize is before the dog reaches 4 months. With large breed dogs, 4 months may be too late, simply because at this age the puppy may already be too large for most mothers of young children to feel comfortable around.

For most owners, the larger the dog is, the more difficult it is to control, especially around children. If there is anything you do not want your dog to be afraid of or aggressive towards, you must begin to socialize your puppy with them before it is 4 months old.

Trust and Respect Inhibits Biting

There are many other reasons your dog will bite and you will have to take an active role in teaching them. However, before you can teach your dog anything, there are two prerequisites that are essential.

They are trust and respect. If your dog doesn't trust you, there is no reason why he should respect you. If your dog does not respect you, your relationship will be like two 5 year olds bossing each other around. If your dog does not trust and respect you, then when you attempt to teach your dog something, he will regard you as if he were thinking, "Who do you think you are to tell me what to do?"

Use of Reprimands and Biting

Never hit, kick or slap your dog. This is the quickest way to erode the dog's trust in you. Yes, he will still love you. Even abused dogs love their owners. A unique characteristic of dogs is their unconditional love. You don't have to do anything to acquire your dog's love. But you must do a lot to gain your dog's trust and respect.

Another area where we destroy our dog's trust in us is when we scold or punish them for house soiling mistakes and accidents. When housetraining your puppy, there is never an appropriate time to punish or reprimand. If you catch your dog in the act, just head for the towels and cleaner. You have no right to scold him, because if he is going in the wrong place, it is your fault, not his. If you find an accident after the fact, just clean it up.

Summary Tips on Biting

- Reprimand alone will never stop biting.
- 2. If no respect exists, the biting will get worse. If you act like a littermate, the dog will treat you as one.
- 3. If trust is not there, the dog may eventually bite out of fear or lack of confidence.
- Inconsistency sabotages training. If you let the dog bite some of the time, then biting will never be completely eliminated.
- Don't forget follow up. The dog must understand that it is the biting that you don't like, not the dog itself. Make up afterwards, but on your terms, not the dog's.

Most owners wait until a bite just "happens to occur" before trying to deal with it and are therefore totally unprepared when it happens - and do all the wrong things, thus making the problem worse. If your dog already has a biting problem you might want to order the book "Help! My Dog Has an Attitude."

Litter Mate Behavioral Variation: A Multi-Ingredient Stew

Two friends and I all got pups from the same litter and we all took them to puppy kindergarten and obedience class. Now my dog, Skeeter, is totally trustworthy with everyone and obedient most of the time. However, his littermate, Zip, acts really edgy around certain people even though he's very obedient. The third dog, Clyde, is afraid of everything. How can three dogs with the same background turn out so differently?

Even though the battle over whether genes or the environment determine how organisms respond physiologically and behaviorally has raged for decades with no end in sight, fewer and fewer scientists consider this an either/or situation. Most recognize that a combination of genetic and environmental factors contribute to how a particular individual develops. The wild animals most likely to survive are those who possess that combination of physical and mental characteristics that allow them to succeed in their particular environment.

Behavior in domestic animals, and especially in our pets, must take into account the effects of the human-animal bond, too.

Additionally, the interplay between genes and environment that might explain the differences among littermates begins on a cellular level even before the pups are born.

Because female dogs remain receptive to males for a week or more, pups in the same litter may have different fathers, a process known as super fecundation.

Second, this extended mating period means that some pups may spend several more days developing than others. Third, studies indicate that an animal's position in the uterus may determine how the maternal hormonal changes associated with the process will affect that pup's physiological and behavioral development.

Once born, a pup then faces a whole new set of environmental circumstances that test the range of its genetic capacity. For example, we can safely say that certain behaviors-such as the freeze, fight, or flee fear responses-evolved to provide the wild dog with the widest range of options when threatened.

We can also understand how it would benefit the dog to use one approach more than another in certain situations. A mother with pups who chooses to fight to protect her offspring will have a better chance of adding her genes to the canine gene pool than the female who flees when a predator attacks her young.

On the other hand, single dogs smart enough to freeze or flee rather than fight a larger predator could both conserve energy and prevent injury to themselves by taking this approach.

Although the checks-and-balance system that results from the interplay of genetic potential and environmental challenge works beautifully in the wild, domestication and the human-animal bond can complicate things enormously. Many people view the fear responses emotionally and project those emotions onto their pets' behavior.

Some owners see the fight response as "courageous" and praise the dog for displaying it, mistakenly thinking it communicates the animal's desire to protect them rather than its fear.

Needless to say, though, when a strange dog displays a fear-based fight response toward those same people, they see it as far more hostile than brave!

Dogs who freeze or flee tend to evoke two quite opposite human emotions, too. Some people feel so sorry for these animals, they want to baby them. Others see the freeze and flee responses as "cowardly" and want to punish the animal who responds this way.

In addition to these most fundamental survival behaviors hardwired into all dogs, we can add all those related to specific breeds. Digging shallow cooling holes and a sophisticated vocal communication system served the primitive northern breeds very well in the environments they were bred to work in. However such inherent behaviors may lessen a husky or malamute's chances of survival in upscale suburbia.

In all of these situations, how the owner interprets the dog's behavior will influence how they relate to the dog; and how they relate to the dog will influence the dog's behavior.

Put another way, the relationship between the genes and environment is dynamic rather than written in stone. So if you don't like the way your Clementine behaves, don't blame it on her genes or her environment. Instead, use your knowledge of both to help her become the pet you want her to be.

Ten Rules for Buying a Puppy

- Be sure a pet fits your present and future lifestyle before you buy one (or accept a free one). That cute little puppy is going to grow. That kitten may use your furniture as a scratching post if not provided with a suitable substitute.

Are you planning on moving in the near future and are uncertain whether you could take animals with you? This is no excuse to kill a pet or turn the responsibility over to someone else. Did you know that veterinarians are asked to euthanize more pets for behavioral reasons than for medical reasons?

This reflects a failure on the part of owners, not of pets. Pets are demanding of your time, and deserve to be when you make the conscious decision to bring one into your home. Be honest with yourself - don't "give it a try" and see what happens. What happens over 1800 times every hour of every day in the United States alone is that these animals are killed.

- Be sure you can be a responsible pet owner. Although everyone considers himself or herself responsible, the facts say otherwise. Do you believe that cats should always be able to roam outdoors? Wrong! Do you think it is a pity not to have at least one litter from your current pet before it is neutered?

Wrong! Is it all right to let your dog out without a leash because it always listens to you? Wrong! Pets need our attention, our protection, and our concern. They are not disposable when they misbehave, get older, or outlive their entertainment value.

- Be sure you can afford a pet before you get one. Pets have needs and it is short sighted to think that the purchase price is the last expense other than food. Pets need routine health

care, vaccinations, spay/neutering, dentistry, training, and licensing. Most would agree however that a pet gives much more than it could ever cost. Should economic constraints arise, there are many public service organizations that will see that you can have your pet neutered at low or no cost. Failure to take advantage of these programs is a reflection of irresponsibility, not poverty.

- Never buy a pet on impulse. Most puppy/kitten mills thrive on this behavior. Do you want to rescue that poor puppy from that enclosure? Can't stand to see those kittens kept in that unclean cage? Your intentions may be honorable, but you are directly contributing to more of these animals being produced and sold that way.

If you want to break the chain of events that makes this happen, don't buy a pet from these outlets, and caution others against it too.

- If you do not need a pet for show purposes, consider adopting an animal that needs a home. Breed rescue organizations do their best to place animals in good homes and they will be familiar with the breed and be able to tell if they have a suitable pet for you. If you don't want a purebred, visit the local shelters. Not all shelters are created equal.

Only deal with ones that have the best interest of the animals at heart. Responsible shelters will want to make sure that the animals are going to an appropriate home, that you understand about vaccinations and health care, and that you agree to have the animal neutered if it has not yet been done.

- If you do want a show quality pet or think you may want to breed it someday, deal only with a reputable breeder. Reputable breeders will undoubtedly be affiliated with the appropriate breed clubs, have health care information available for several generations of their animals, and if applicable, have had these animals screened for genetic problems.

Call the breed clubs and ask for information and a list of breeders they might recommend in your area. Many good breeders spend more time scrutinizing you before they will trust you with one of their animals than you'll spend assessing them. A good rule is not to buy any purebred where you can't see at least one of the parents and have access to the medical history and performance record of both.

- If you intend to buy a purebred animal, check with your veterinarian as to the potential heredity problems in that breed and if they can be determined before purchase. Breeders that are truly interested in the breed will be happy to discuss these concerns with you, and, if possible, will provide proof of being clear, or can give a guarantee.

The same cannot be said of indiscriminate breeders and many pet shops. What is their policy if your new pet has a hereditary defect? An exchange-only policy is common for pet-sale outlets but they know that once an animal has been welcomed into a family, most people can't return it. These problems can also happen to reputable breeders occasionally and how they are handled is a mark of just how responsible they are. Always enquire before you buy. Caveat emptor - Let the buyer beware!

- Be reasonable when it comes to purchase price. You can buy a pet with 'papers' for \$25-\$2500. Either could be disasters. Ask yourself what your money is paying for. Has there been excellent prenatal care for the mother and proper health care for the puppies/kittens

or are you paying for freight and cage space for an animal shipped in from a distance location?

Were the parents champions (documented), did they hold titles in obedience, and are they clear of heritable disorders? Are the animals kept in clean, hygienic quarters and have they been well socialized? These are much more important questions than does it have papers, or how much does it cost? Support those breeders that care enough to do the job right and expect to pay more.

- Immediately after acquiring a new pet, make an appointment with your veterinarian and bring along with you all information you have about its previous health care. It is also wise to bring a stool sample since parasites such as worms are not unusual but will require proper diagnosis and treatment.

Puppies and kittens need a series of vaccinations when young and then regular boosters annually. And, make sure you have your new pet spayed or neutered as soon as your veterinarian recommends. Do not wait for the first heat or the first litter. Did you know that you can significantly diminish the risk of mammary tumors in bitches by spaying them before their first heat? Neutered males are also at reduced risk of experiencing prostate problems later in life.

- If you're truly interested in pets and THEIR welfare, take time to understand the issues and why so many pets are destroyed each year. Give a home to a pet in need. Don't accept a pet that doesn't fit your lifestyle.

Don't buy a pet as a whim. Don't support irresponsible pet sales. Don't become a backyard breeder or buy a pet from one. Make sure that your pets have been neutered. And, if you know somebody who doesn't know better, tell them, or give them a copy of this.

A dog is a huge investment in time and love; please, make sure you educate yourself and invest wisely.

Two most important things you teach your children

- Dog's Do Not Like Hugs and Kisses -we cannot stress this strongly enough. Say it over to yourself 1000 times. It doesn't matter if your dog is a Newfoundland or a Yorkie. Don't think that your dog is an exception to this - because you are wrong and you are setting your child and your dog up for potential tragedy.

Teach your kids not to hug or kiss the dog on the face. Hugging the family dog or face-to-face contact are common causes of bites to the face. Teach your kids to scratch the dog on the chest or on the side of the neck - most dogs do enjoy this. If your child is a toddler or does not follow instructions, then do not allow access to the dog unless you have your hands on the dog. Click to see why this is so important

- Be a Tree if a Strange Dog Approaches -teach kids to be a tree. Trees are boring and the dog will eventually go away. This works for strange dogs and even your own dog if he is getting too frisky or becomes aggressive. All children should learn to be a tree and to do this when a strange dog approaches, their own dog is getting too frisky or any dog is bothering them. Dogs are excited and stimulated by movement and will chase a child that

runs. The erratic movements and high pitched sounds that children make can cause some dogs to view them as prey and a chasing or wrestling game can suddenly become deadly. Do not allow children to play rough games with dogs.

Three Most important things Dog Owners can do

- Spay or Neuter Your Dog - Neutered pets are calmer, healthier and less likely to be aggressive than if they are left unaltered. Neutering prevents unwanted dogs that may end up in shelters or in less than ideal conditions where they may grow up to be poorly socialized or aggressive.
- Condition Your Dog For the World - You can't prepare the world for your dog, but you can prepare your dog for the world. Give your puppy lots of new positive experiences. Train using positive methods and do not pin, shake, roll or otherwise act aggressively with your puppy or dog. These methods can result in a dog that redirects its aggression toward weaker family members such as children. Learn to read your dog's body language.
- Supervise Your Dog - Supervise your dog at all times around children - even if the dog knows the children. Do not allow children to hug and kiss or otherwise maul the dog. If visiting children are bothering your dog, put the dog away or send the children home.

The Ins and Outs of Canine Guilt

(Originally written for DogWatch, a newsletter for the general public from the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine)

Whenever my dog does something wrong, I know it immediately because she looks guilty. My best friend says I'm making that up because dogs don't feel guilt. Who's right?

If you want to see the fur fly, just put a group of scientists and pet-lovers together and bring up the subject of animal emotions! It does seem safe to say, though, that as with animal thoughts, animal emotions probably differ from ours. However, whether animals experience guilt or any other emotion carries less weight than how our belief that they do may affect our relationship with them.

Consider a typical case. Heather goes off to work, leaving her new pup, Zippy, alone.

Shortly after she departs, Zippy hears a motorcycle roar down the street. The frightened pup squats and pees to mark his territory, then gnaws on his toys for a while and dozes off. When Heather comes home, Zippy rushes to greet her at the door, but she immediately spies the puddle on the floor, yells at him, and swats him with a rolled up newspaper.

The next day Heather leaves as usual, the motorcycle roars by, and Zippy marks his territory, then plays with his toys and dozes off. However, this time when he hears Heather's key in the lock later, he thinks, "Gee, I was really happy to see her yesterday, but there was something about the way I

greeted her that made her mad. This time I'm gonna put my ears back, tuck my tail tight against my tummy, and make myself look as small as possible so she'll know I just want to please her."

Heather looks at her pet and yells, "Well, geez Zippy, if you knew it was wrong to pee on the floor, why the heck did you do it?" And she whaps him with the rolled up newspaper again.

Although we can never know for sure what went through Zippy's mind, we do know that the posture he assumed is one dogs routinely use to communicate submission. When Heather interprets this as evidence of canine guilt, a breakdown in communication occurs on two fronts that could undermine their relationship.

First, Heather associates Zippy's "guilty" body language with the pee on the floor, whereas her pet assumes that position in an attempt to ward off the angry way she greeted him when he bounced up to meet her the day before. Consequently, no matter how much she yells at or whaps him, he may never make the connection between his marking and her anger. Instead, he'll act more and more submissive in his attempts to placate her.

If scoonching down doesn't work, he may dribble a little urine. If that only makes her angrier, he may roll on his back. If that fails, he may roll on his back and urinate. Sadly, because Heather doesn't understand dog language, she views the addition of urine to the display as evidence of her dog's spiteful nature and disciplines him even more harshly: "I can't believe you're so mean and stupid that you'd pee right in front of me when you know how much I hate it!" she screams. In reality, though, Ziggy's displays evolve from the fact that, after bitches nurse their pups, they flip them over and lick them around the rear end to stimulate them to urinate and defecate.

The bitch then laps up the waste products to keep the pups and their nest clean. Thus the first act a pup performs in response to an authority figure is urination and defecation and thus Zippy's response to his owner makes perfectly good sense to him.

The second problem with assigning canine guilt is that this creates a dead-end. If Heather decides that Ziggy's body language communicates that he knows not to pee and does it just to irk her, then she's left with a spiteful, mean, and stupid dog. On the other hand, if she realizes that his marking communicates a perfectly normal canine attempt to protect his territory in her absence, then she can look for ways to relieve him of this burden, such as involving him in more training to build his confidence and offering him access to a crate in her absence.

So when you find yourself thinking your pet looks guilty, stop and think about what the results of that belief will be. If it leads you to learn more about what caused the canine behavior and ways to prevent it, fine. But if that guilty look merely elicits other emotions -good or bad-that do nothing to resolve the underlying problem, lose it.
