

## Proper Handling and Touching of Your Puppy

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**Goal:** To have your puppy comfortable with handling and really enjoy being touched!

### Necessary Tools:

- A quiet environment
- Some really good treats
- A relaxed person and puppy

Even if your puppy is already comfortable with touching and handling, it is beneficial to do these exercises. By teaching your puppy to relax with handling, you will also be helping him learn how to remain composed whenever you need to touch or handle him.

The other benefit of doing this exercise is that it teaches your puppy that hands are not chew toys, and the more your puppy is reinforced for not biting, the faster he will stop the biting stage that most puppies go through.

Always keep in mind that touching your puppy should be something he really enjoys, so start this training when your puppy is feeling relaxed and content, which is often when he is sleepy. Working with a puppy that is a little bit hungry is also a good idea, but not so hungry that he is frantic about the food.

### **How to do it:**

Sit on the floor and begin with dropping a few treats near you so your puppy can find them. This will convince your puppy that being near you is a great thing! His only job at this point is simply to eat the treats, so it is best to not ask him to do anything. Once you have completed a couple of repetitions of this, you will then invite your puppy to sit or lay near you by patting the ground or the spot next to where you are sitting. Be sure you take some nice deep breaths to relax both you and your puppy.

Reward your puppy with several treats for being next to you, while saying in a calm, quiet voice, “Good puppy, good girl” or “good boy” as he is eating.



Once your puppy is comfortable sitting near you, begin with a simultaneous reach toward the side of your puppy’s face while popping a very high value treat into his mouth as you touch (avoid reaching over your puppy’s head at this point). Do this several times until you see that your puppy is starting to anticipate your reach toward his face. Take a short break by announcing, “All done.”

Resume this exercise for a couple more treats, then change the exercise to reaching first, touching the puppy and then following with the treat. Repeat this several times. Touching your puppy’s face should be gentle and short. The treat should be kept near you until you have made the contact with your puppy.

Once you believe your puppy is doing well with this part, and you can touch your puppy without showing him the treat first, it is time to move to the next step of touching him in different places, including his feet. Always go at your puppy’s pace, however, ending every session by saying, “All done,” if he starts to leave. The goal should be to do a little at a time, with your puppy relaxed before moving to new areas of touching his

body.. Save the areas that might worry your puppy for last since it will be easier to touch those areas after you have established this series of repetition and reward.

Whenever you are going to touch your puppy in new places, start with the simultaneous touch and treat before you proceed to withholding the treat until after the touch. Look for the anticipation of the treat as your indicator to move to the next step. Be sure to take lots of breaks and let your puppy know when you are done with each segment by announcing, "All done."

The final step is to add duration and slight pressure to this touching exercise. Always begin each session with a few treats on the floor before asking your puppy to sit near you. Be sure to take several deep breaths each time you begin.

Go back to touching all the areas that you have already worked on before, but now add a little pressure and a tiny bit of time. Watch your puppy for any signs of stress and take breaks as you go. Be sure to limit the time of each session (one to three minutes is a good average).

**Trainer's Tip:** Always be sure to allow your puppy to leave if he is feeling uncomfortable with any of this training. Be sure to let your instructor know if you are having any problems with this. It may be that you will need to break this exercise down into even smaller steps before actually placing your hands on your puppy. Our Behavior Trainers can explain how to do that if needed.

## **Puppy Training Secrets**

### **Respond Positively to Behaviors You DO Want to Encourage**



In order to recognize the "good" behaviors, you have to keep your eyes open and your treats handy. Calm behaviors like sitting or lying down are always appropriate choices for your puppy to make; however, if they go unrewarded, your puppy may soon choose behaviors that do tend to get lots of attention, such as chewing, barking, running wildly, etc. It's important to keep reminding yourself that puppies will continue to do what works, and behaviors that are repeated have resulted in some sort of reward for your puppy.

On the other hand, if you were to praise or treat your puppy every time he made a good choice, he will quickly learn that those are the things that work and he will repeat those behaviors more often while the undesired ones grow less strong.

### **Refuse to Respond to Behaviors You Don't Want to Encourage**

This can be challenging because these are usually the behaviors that are the most annoying! If you don't want a puppy to bark for attention, you shouldn't acknowledge him or go to him when he is barking. On the other hand, it's equally important that you do acknowledge him in the absence of the unwanted behaviors. Don't leave your puppy "hanging" if he stops barking; be sure to reward, several times, the absence of his barking.