



Canine Learning Centers *Doggie News*

“Spring 2007”



Selecting the right puppy for you!

Finding a dog that is right for you is the key to a happy future together. It is not uncommon for people to have their hearts won over at the sight of a puppy and then, when the time comes to bring the puppy home they realize they have chosen a more difficult dog than they had bargained for. Even when a puppy is only a few weeks old you can analyze its behavior and get a good idea of what type of dog it will be when it grows up. It is important to understand this early behavior so you know how to choose the puppy that is best for your lifestyle.



Things to consider before getting a puppy:

How active are you? Do you have a lot of time to devote to exercise or are you more of a couch potato? Do you have a lot of previous experience with dogs or is this your first one? Do you really have the time to devote to a young puppy or would it best to get yourself an older dog that has already gone through the difficult puppyhood stage? Would you like a cuddly dog, or one that is more independent? Do you have small children in the house or do you plan on having children in the future? How big should your dog be?

The next few things may seem superficial but are actually very important to consider:

Do you mind if the dog has a tendency to drool? Do you mind if the dog has a long shaggy coat that will shed? Will you mind having to take your dog to a groomer on a regular basis?

If you choose a purebred puppy make sure you really research the breed. Take the time to get to know a few dogs of that breed. Go to a dog show and talk to owners, handlers and breeders. Call breeders and discuss common personality traits of your preferred breed. Although going with a purebred can give you a good idea of the type of dog you are getting it is not a guarantee. For example not all Labrador Retrievers are friendly, not all Golden Retrievers are good with children, not all German Shepherds are good guard dogs. Personality will vary greatly among specific breeds. Be diligent about finding a reputable breeder. Never go through the newspaper or pet stores because these puppies have most likely come from puppy mills. Check out the American Kennel Club website for dedicated breeders @ www.akc.org.

Don't forget about the mutts at your local shelter. Although you may not know the specific outcome of these dogs when it comes to breed tendencies, size and genetics, mixed breeds often have really great temperaments and can make incredibly faithful companions.

Before you begin your selection process make sure that the puppies seem healthy. Eyes should be clear and shiny, not crusty or runny. Their nose should not be runny; their teeth should be white and clean, not yellow and stained. Their coat should be thick and healthy looking, not patchy, thin, dry or greasy. Look at the puppy's movement; it should not be limping.

Ask the animal shelter or breeder if they do any temperament testing and if so what the test has revealed about the dog. This may be a very good indicator of whether or not the dog is suitable for you. It's also important to note that the organization you adopt or buy from takes time to match dogs and humans appropriately.



Try getting a history of the dog. Ask how big the parents are. This can give you an idea of the potential size of your puppy. Find out when the puppies were weaned from their mother, the answer should not be before 3 weeks and preferably around 6 weeks. Find out when the puppy was separated from its litter, the answer should not be before 6 weeks and preferably around 8 weeks. If the puppy is weaned or separated from its litter too soon, it will miss the opportunity to learn important lessons from its mother and siblings, it will therefore never have "normal" doggie social skills.

Now you can begin evaluating individual puppies:

1. Is the puppy adaptable?

Take the puppy by itself to a new quiet area and set it down on the floor.

- a) The puppy stays frozen; it runs away and hides?
- b) It slowly starts to walk around and explore its new surroundings?
- c) It runs up to you, climbs all over you and nips at your clothes and hands?

2. Will the puppy come over to you when you call it?

Bend down low and call the puppy to you with a happy tone of voice. Make quick repetitive movements and sounds, such as kissing and tapping your hand on the ground. Praise the puppy if it comes to you. Move to different locations and repeat 3 times.

- a) The puppy is still hiding and won't come at all.
- b) The puppy won't come at first but does in time. The puppy becomes more comfortable as time progresses and more responsive with repetition.
- c) It charges at you and starts nipping your clothes and hands.

3. Is the puppy affectionate, does it accept touch?

Stroke the puppy gently from head to tail and talk to it in a happy tone of voice.

- a) The puppy offers itself to you, rolling over onto its back. It urinates submissively.
- b) It puts its paws on you, stays close, and it may lean on you or lick you.
- c) The puppy is overly mouthy, and bites down hard. Or it acts as though you don't exist or checks in with you for a moment and then walks away.

4. Will the puppy follow you?

Stand up and walk around. You can try coaxing the puppy to follow you by making kissing sounds and tapping your leg as you walk away.

- a) The puppy freezes and will not follow.
- b) The puppy is interested in you and follows you.
- c) It turns and walks away.

5. How trainable is the puppy?

Using a treat as a lure, bring the puppy's head upwards until it falls into a sit position. Repeat 4 to 5 times. If it is not interested in the food, lift the chin upwards with one hand and slide your other hand down its back to its rear until it sits.

- a) The puppy is not responsive and tries to get away.
- b) After a few repetitions the puppy is focused and working.
- c) The puppy is overzealous and jumps and grabs at the treat.

Be careful not to confuse lack of food motivation for lack of trainability.

6. Is the puppy's activity level suitable to yours?

- a) Low: Walks, sometimes sits, doesn't always have to be moving.
- b) Medium: frisky, moves around, trots, occasionally runs, pounces, wiggles.
- c) High: Runs continually, pounces, paws and wiggles, always busy.

7. Is the puppy's level of self-confidence suitable for you?

- a) Low: Never nips or mouths, avoids eye contact, is gentle when you handle him.
- b) Medium: Mouths gently, may be frisky and active, but doesn't bite, may fleetingly make direct eye contact, but doesn't stare.
- c) High: Nips, mouths, bites, runs you down, barks back, gets under foot, always tries to take control, may act wild.

The above examples and exercises are just to give you an idea of the type of personality the puppy might have, but nothing is set in stone...

If your answers are often a) the puppy may be slightly fearful or submissive and is likely to need a patient owner willing to use a lot of positive reinforcement during its younger days to encourage it to be more courageous and self-confident. This type of puppy may become bolder when you bring it home and once it gets used to the new people and surroundings it may start acting very differently then when you first met it. This proves that these tests are not always an accurate picture of type of dog you may end up with but can give you some idea of what you are dealing with.

If your answers are often b) this is good middle ground puppy. Not too bold or overbearing, social, trainable, not too excitable etc... This is likely to be a good dog for most people.

If your answers are often c) this puppy will need a lot of guidance and work. It is best for this puppy to have a knowledgeable owner with lots of experience with dogs. With work and patience and lots of leadership it has the potential for becoming a good dog. In the wrong hands however, it can be a serious handful and may be a little too much to handle for the average pet owner looking for a dog that will easily assimilate into their daily life.



Once again, it is important to mention that these examples and exercises will give you a good idea of what you are dealing with, but again nothing is set in stone. Dogs are not often strictly a), b), or c) but more often a mixture of the 3. It is up to you find the traits that are most important to you, and to choose a puppy accordingly. For example if you have small children, it is probably best to choose a dog that is a little submissive, but not too submissive, fearful or shy. It is probably not a big deal if this dog is a little independent, still it is best if it doesn't mind being touched and handled. You definitely don't want a nippy, mouthy, overly excitable dog around small children. If you are a very active person and go camping and hiking or spend a lot of time outdoors, get yourself an energetic dog that will keep up with you. On the other hand, if you are slightly lazy make sure your pick is low energy. If you are a first time dog owner don't get one that is impulsive or difficult to handle, leave these dogs for a more seasoned hand. Choosing your best match will make a world of difference. If you are thinking of getting a dog or know someone that is, consider having a trainer join your search. A trained eye may have a better idea of what dog will make you happiest. Happy hunting and good luck!

Preventing Dog bites

The Humane Society of the United States offers these tips:



How to avoid being bitten by a dog:

- Never approach a strange dog, especially one that is tied or confined behind a fence or in a car.
- Don't pet a dog, even your own, without letting him see and sniff you first.
- Don't turn your back to a dog and run away. A dog's natural instinct is to chase and catch fleeing prey.
- Always assume that a dog that doesn't know you may see you as an intruder or a threat.

If a dog that may attack you approaches you, follow these steps:

- Remain motionless, hands at your sides, and avoid eye contact with the dog.
- Slowly back away until the dog is out of sight.
- If the dog does attack, “feed” him your jacket, purse, or anything else that you can put between yourself and the dog.
- If you fall or are knocked to the ground, curl into a ball with your hands over your ears and remain motionless. Try not to scream or roll around.

What to do if bitten by a dog:

- Immediately wash the wound thoroughly with soap and warm water.
- Call your physician for additional care and advice.
- Report the bite to your local animal care and control agency.

The Great Outdoors

Good weather is soon to be upon us, which means we will all be planning to do more things outdoors. When we go hiking or camping, it only seems fitting to have our canine pal at our side. Before you set off into the wilderness, plan ahead, follow the rules, and keep your furry friend under good control.

Before you plan a destination, make sure that dogs are welcome. Dogs are not allowed on National Park trails, and although they are permitted on some National Forest trails, it is not without exceptions. Bringing your dog will certainly limit the places you can visit. If you do find a park that allows dogs, be respectful of the rules. The last thing we want is for our dogs to be regarded as a nuisance, being able to bring them into these parks is a privilege we really don't want to lose.

It is best for everyone enjoying these wilderness areas if you keep your dog on a leash at all times. It is also very helpful to have some basic obedience under your belt before you set out into these open spaces. Your dog should be able to *walk on a loose leash, sit-stay, heel and leave-it*. Not everyone out for a hike is comfortable



with dogs. If your dog runs up to a stranger, even just for a friendly greeting, it may really terrify them. Keep your dog from greeting people on the trail unless the person asks if they can interact with them. The same goes for running into other dogs. Since not

all dogs are “dog friendly” it is highly recommended that your dog not approach a strange dog on a trail unless it is communicated that both dogs are friendly. If the other person has poor control over the dog, place your dog in a sit-stay and block it with your body to prevent an ugly interaction from occurring. Wait until the unruly dog has passed and has gained some distance before continuing on your way.

One of the reasons dogs are discouraged to enter certain wilderness areas is because of their instinct to chase prey. Do not under any circumstances allow them to chase wildlife. Although our dogs rarely catch these animals, it is unfair for them to have to exert the extra energy to run from our dogs when they really need it to run from their predators. The same goes for livestock. It is perfectly legal in all states for landowners to shoot and kill any dog found chasing their livestock. So, keep your dog on a leash, it is not only safest for everyone involved (including your dog), but it will give those of us enjoying the outdoors with our dogs a better reputation.



Make sure your dog is somewhat fit before you go; just like humans they need to get in shape gradually. Don't take an overweight, under exercised dog on a sudden backpacking trip. Take the time to get them into good condition. The terrain on a hike can be rough and rocky and in hot weather the ground can heat up considerably causing pain and damage to sensitive feet. You can protect the soles of their feet with specialty dog booties. Bring a small Tupperware container or collapsible bowl and offer water frequently to keep them well hydrated. Dogs have more of a tendency to overheat than humans due to their higher body temperature and fur coat. Heat exhaustion can be fatal so be mindful of your dog's behavior, excessive panting or running for shade are signs that you need to take a break. You can cool your dog off by pouring water down the inside of its legs and underside of its belly. Be sure to bring a first aid kit along with you in case of emergencies.



Lastly, leave nothing but footprints; dog waste is harmful for the environment. As always pick up after your pet, don't leave it around for others to step in; we don't want hikers to resent us “dog owners”. Otherwise enjoy the great outdoors together, be safe and happy trails!

Pet Nutrition Course

With the recent pet food scare a lot of us have become more concerned about our dogs' well being. Take a closer look at your dog's nutritional needs through Canine Learning Center's "Optimum Nutrition and Behavior Training Course".

The course focuses on the following topics:

- Pick the right food for your dog
- Proper use of supplements
- How to properly feed raw fresh food
- How your dog's digestive system works
- The affects of stress and diet on your dog
- What your dog is telling you when he eats grass/licks/chews/bites/scratches

Locations:

Del Mar: Thursday, May 24th @ 7:30 p.m.

Carlsbad: Saturday, June 2nd @ 10:15 a.m.

\$25 prepay required

For more information call Canine Learning Centers @ (760) 931-1834 or email laura@k9lrng.com

