

Triple Trouble with Double Puppies

Raising two puppies can be extra challenging.

By September Morn

Q. I wanted a companion for Luna, my seven-month-old Pomeranian/Chihuahua mix, so I just got another puppy, Julie, a four-month-old Yorkie, and things are not going well. The new puppy is a mess—she pees and poops all over the house.

Luna used to be very good about doing her potties outside, but since Julie came Luna is being a bad girl. She does not want to do what I say like she used to, and she is peeing all over the place like Julie does. Also the two of them fight all day long.

Unless I can fix this problem I'm going to have to let Julie go. It will break my heart to do that, but I don't know what else to do. I've tried everything I know to housebreak Julie, but nothing works with her. Luna learned quickly, but Julie just drives me crazy. And the worst is that Luna is doing the same as Julie now. I give them the same attention so I just don't know what is going on or what I'm doing wrong.

A. Training two puppies at the same time is three times as much work as just one. A new puppy tends to copy the behavior of the older dogs in the family, but at seven months, Luna is barely past toddler-hood herself and doesn't yet have the maturity to set a mature example.

When two puppies play it's easy for them to get so wrapped up in their game they forget to ask to go out until it's too late. When one of them pees or poops, that usually reminds the other she needs to do it too, and if you're not right there to escort both of them to the potty area, there will be messes to clean up.

You'll need to interrupt their play at least once per hour and calmly take the pups out to the potty area. Wait with them until you've seen each of them relieve themselves. Some pups need to pee or poop a couple of times before they're finished, so be patient and allow for that.

If Luna and Julie won't quit playing when you take them to the outdoor potty place, you'll need to separate them at potty time. A folding wire or plastic "exercise pen" (available at any well-stocked pet supply store outlet) will make your job much easier. Set the pen up in the outside potty area and put one pup in it while you take the other, on leash, a short distance away. They'll be able to focus on "business" better that way, instead of romping with each other.

As for the constant fighting, it's normal for two pups to squabble occasionally about whose turn it is with a toy or bone, but what you're perceiving as "fighting all day" is more likely just rowdy play. You could interrupt this by calling both pups to you and giving each one a small yummy treat, then let them go back to playing (unless you think they might need to go potty). Interrupting their play by calling them to you for a treat reward will have two positive results - you'll improve their desire to come when you call and you'll give them a brief break from their rowdiness.

Play is fun and good exercise, but constant play creates too much stress for both the pups and for you. Crate training both pups would be a big help there. Having their own crates would give each pup a safe and private cozy "den" where they could settle down and take a nap every few hours. That would give you a nice chance to rest from their antics as well.

Puppies mature rapidly, and the challenges you're encountering now—including the potty messes—are only temporary, so hang in there! Before you know it you'll have two well-behaved adult dogs.