

Steps for Puppy Training Success

Help your puppy learn the difference between right and wrong.

By September Morn

Q. How do you teach a 10-week-old puppy that you mean “no” when you say it to him instead of watching him go back to the same thing you scolded him for? If we carry him away from that spot he continues to go back two or three times.

A. You didn’t say exactly what your pup keeps doing that makes you so upset, but dealing with a 10-week-old pup is in some ways similar to parenting a 2-year-old child. Your puppy is a toddler – he’s active, inquisitive, lives totally in the moment, and is only able to think about one thing at a time. Pups this age learn about life by testing everything at least a few times. It’s not stubbornness that causes this; it’s just a normal developmental stage.

It’s likely that when you scold your puppy he still isn’t sure what he’s supposed to do instead of the undesired behavior. Just scolding and removing him from the “scene of the crime” isn’t enough. You have to help him learn what he’s allowed to do instead. For example, let’s say he’s chewing on the sofa. You could calmly tell him “no-no” (don’t yell it) then gently remove him from that area and give him a fabric puppy toy to chew on instead. You’ll also need to manage your pup and the environment so he can’t go right back and repeat the unwanted behavior. Baby gates are helpful for that.

Don’t allow your pup full run of your home – he’s simply not mature enough to handle that kind of responsibility and will make all kinds of mistakes if not guided. Keep him in the same room with you – tether him to yourself with a leash if necessary, so he can’t wander out of sight and get into trouble. Provide him with chew toys he enjoys and whenever he chews (or looks like he’s about to chew) on your belongings, refocus his attention to one of his toys and praise him warmly for chewing that instead.

Raising a puppy requires patience, repetition, preventing behaviors you don’t want, and rewarding him for behaviors you like. Set your pup up for success, make it easy for him to do “right,” and make it difficult-to-impossible for him to do “wrong.” This will help him form good habits for life.