

AKC Unveils S.T.A.R. Puppy Training

The program was created as a puppy version of the Canine Good Citizen program.

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Before a dog becomes a Canine Good Citizen, he must first be trained to be a good puppy, according to the American Kennel Club. That's why the organization recently unveiled its newest program, the AKC S.T.A.R. Puppy.

The training method created for puppies and their owners seeks to reward responsible dog owners who take the time to train and socialize their new purebred or mixed-breed puppies. The program is a natural precursor to the organization's Canine Good Citizen test.

"S.T.A.R." stands for socialization, training, activity, and a responsible owner, the things a puppy needs to have a good life, according to the AKC. To get started, owners enroll in any puppy or basic training class that is at least six weeks long and instructed by an AKC-approved canine evaluator.

Classes include training tips for puppy owners — such as how to housetrain — and lessons on practical skills for puppies — such as coming when called. The program is open to all dogs.

Puppies can begin training as soon as they have the necessary vaccines, and they can enroll in S.T.A.R. Puppy at any point up until the age of 1 year. At the end of the course, the evaluator administers the S.T.A.R. Puppy test.

Upon passing the exam, owners and their puppies are enrolled in the AKC S.T.A.R. Puppy and receive a program package that includes a certificate, an AKC S.T.A.R. Puppy medal, an AKC Puppy Handbook, discount enrollment in AKC Companion Animal Recovery, and a subscription to a monthly e-mail newsletter that includes training tips.

Dr. Mary Burch, AKC CGC director, said the new training program helps make sure puppies live a good life. "Early training and socialization along with teaching the owner the necessary skills is the key to having a well-behaved, well-adjusted dog and ensuring that dogs don't end up in shelters because of behavior problems," she said.