

Kindergarten for Puppies

Early training classes start puppies off right.

Jennifer Quasha

Puppy kindergarten is nursery school for dogs. Just as children delight in playing with friends, being social, and learning basic behaviors, puppies do, too. Puppy kindergarten is the first step in obedience training classes that begins when your puppy has all of her shots, at around 12 weeks of age. There are three important components to puppy kindergarten. First, as a dog owner, you will learn more about your puppy what to expect from her at this age and how to best work with her for your desired result. Secondly, your puppy will learn how to walk on a leash and basic commands, such as Sit and Come. The third, and most crucial reason to take your pup to kindergarten, is socialization. "Socialization is critical," says Chris Onthank, a dog trainer in Norwalk, Conn. "You want to expose your dog to as many sights, sounds, smells, and surfaces as possible." Puppies need to learn how to interact with people and other dogs once they have been removed from their puppy pack. Coming into contact with a variety of breeds and sizes of dogs and various ages of people will help your puppy adapt to different situations as he grows up. Socialization is the only way to make him a safe companion while you are out and about together. Find a reputable class by asking other dog lovers, your veterinarian, or groomer, or checking with your local pet-supply store. Sign up for a class at a time that will make it easy for you to attend. Encourage family members to go with you - especially your kids. Older kids will enjoy the experience and learn about pet care. Plus, they will get to play with and help socialize other puppies. Puppy kindergarten can help the entire family adapt to the responsibility and enjoyment of having a new puppy.

- Get More Puppy Training Tips -