

Puppy Class 101: Dalmatians

Follow these simple rules when training your Dalmatian.

3. Always praise (and offer a treat) as soon as he does something good (or stops doing something naughty). How else will the puppy know that he's a good dog? When praising or correcting, use your best doggie voice. Use a light and happy voice for praise, and a firm, sharp voice for warnings or corrections. A pleading, whiny "no, no" or "drop that" will not sound too convincing, nor will a deep, gruff voice make your puppy feel like he's a good dog. Your dog also will respond accordingly to family arguments. If there's a shouting match, he will think that he did something wrong and head for cover. So never argue in front of the kids or the dog!

4. Be consistent. You can't snuggle together on the couch to watch TV today, then scold him for climbing on the couch tomorrow.

Given the Dalmatian's intelligence and strong desire to please his owner, he is a good student who learns quickly. Thus, puppy kindergarten and ongoing lessons in obedience are the best course to keeping his stubborn streak under control.

Puppy Games

Puppy games are a great way to entertain your puppy and yourself, while subliminally teaching lessons in the course of having fun. Start with a game plan and a pocketful of tasty dog treats. Keep your games short so you don't push his attention span beyond normal Dalmatian puppy limits.

"Puppy catch-me" helps teach the come command. With two people sitting on the floor about 10 or 15 feet apart, one person holds and pets the pup while the other calls him, "Puppy, puppy, come!" in a happy voice. When the pup comes running, lavish him with big hugs and give a tasty treat. Repeat back and forth several times, but don't overdo it.

You can add a ball or toy and toss it back and forth for the puppy to retrieve. When he picks it up, praise and hug some more, give your puppy a goodie to release the toy, then toss it back to person No. 2. Repeat as before.