

Training the Golden Retriever Puppy

A solid education in obedience and leadership is essential to teach your Golden Retriever the rules of his new human world.

Timing

All dogs learn their lessons in the present tense. You have to catch them in the act (good or bad) in order to dispense rewards or discipline. You have three to five seconds to connect with him or he will not understand what he did wrong. Thus, timing and consistency are your keys to success in teaching any new behavior or correcting bad behaviors.

Successful puppy training depends on several important principles.

1. Use simple one-word commands and say them only once. Otherwise, puppy learns that come (or sit or down) is a three- or four-word command.
2. Never correct your dog for something he did minutes earlier. Three to five seconds, remember?
3. Always praise (and offer a treat) as soon as he does something good (or when he stops doing something naughty). How else will your puppy know he's a good dog?
4. Be consistent. You can't snuggle together on the couch to watch TV today, then scold him for climbing onto the couch tomorrow.
5. Never tell your dog to come and then correct him for something he did wrong. He will think the correction is for coming to you (think like a dog, remember?). Always go to the dog to stop unwanted behavior, but be sure you catch him in the act or your dog will not understand the correction.
6. Never hit or kick your dog or strike him with a newspaper or other object. Such physical measures will only create fear and confusion in your dog and could provoke aggressive behavior down the road.
7. 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 whiny "No, no!" or "Drop that" will not sound too convincing, nor will a deep, gruff voice when you say "Good boy" make your puppy feel like having fun.

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.

Next step: Games to Play With Your Golden Retriever Puppy

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