

## Labrador Retriever Puppy Training

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

### Word Association

Use the same word (command) for each behavior every time you teach it, adding food rewards and verbal praise to reinforce the positive. The puppy will make the connection and will be motivated to repeat the behavior when he hears those key words. For example, when teaching the pup to go potty outside, use the same potty term ("Go potty," "Get busy" and "Hurry up" are commonly used) each time he eliminates, adding a "Good boy!" while he's urinating. Your puppy will soon learn what those trips outside are for.

### 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 your puppy or he will not understand what he did right or 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, your 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 your puppy 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 call your dog to you to correct him. This will defeat the come command in short order. He will think the correction is for coming to you, and why would he want to come to you if he is to be scolded? Always go to the dog to stop unwanted behavior, but be sure you catch him in the act or your correction will not be understood.
6. Never hit your dog or strike him with a newspaper or any other object. Such physical measures will only create fear and confusion in your dog and could provoke aggressive behavior down the road. Use your voice as your method of correction and keep your paws to yourself!
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 that says "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. So never argue in front of the kids—or the dog!

Next step: Games to Play With Your Labrador Retriever Puppy

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