

Training the Maltese Puppy

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

Any young puppy needs time to adapt to his new surroundings, and the Maltese is no exception. After all, your tiny puppy will be entering a strange new world, where nothing is familiar to him. Sights, sounds and smells will all be different, so when the youngster first arrives home, begin by getting him used to the members of your family, allowing him time to take stock of his new environment. Be sure to instill confidence into your puppy to help with his early socialization. Soon enough, you will be able to introduce him to people outside the immediate family. It is important that your Maltese puppy is not bombarded with too many new people and situations all at the same time.

Depending on the age of your puppy, and whether his course of vaccinations is complete, you may or may not be able to take him out in public places immediately. Whichever the case, I would still advise you to allow him to settle down at home for the first few days before venturing further. There will be lots you can do with your Maltese puppy at home. You will surely have a lot of fun, but please allow your puppy to get sufficient rest, too.

If restricted to your home territory for a little while, you can play games with him with suitably safe soft toys,

but do not allow him to tug on anything too strongly, as you do not want to cause chaos to the tooth formation. Check regularly that sharp or unsafe parts, such as squeaks, do not become detached from or torn out of the toy. These can cause injury, and your puppys teeth will be very sharp and capable of easily damaging soft toys.

Whether or not you plan to show your Maltese, it is always good to do a little early training, getting him to stand calmly on a table and to lie on his side to be gently groomed. Both will be helpful on numerous occasions, including visits to the vet, when it is much easier to deal with a well-behaved dog, and you will be so proud of your clever companion!

Accustom your puppy to being on a lead, which is always a strange experience for a tiny youngster. Begin by putting just a simple collar on him, not too tightly, but not so loose that it can be caught on things, causing panic and possible injury. Just put it on for a few minutes at a time, lengthening each period slightly until your puppy feels comfortable in his first item of clothing. Don't expect miracles; this may take a few days.

Then, when he is comfortable in his collar, attach a small lightweight lead. The one you select must have a secure catch, yet be simple to attach and release as necessary. Until now, your puppy has simply gone where he has pleased and will find it very strange to be attached to someone who is restricting his movements. For this reason, when training my own puppies, I like to allow them to take me for the first few sessions, then I begin to guide them gently. Soon enough, training can start in earnest, with the puppy coming with me as I lead the way.

It is usual to begin training the puppy to walk on your left-hand side. When this has been accomplished to your satisfaction, you can try moving him on your right, but there is absolutely no hurry. If you plan to show your Maltese, you will generally move your dog on your left, but there are occasions when it is necessary also to move him on your right so as not to obstruct the judges view.

Next step: Basic Obedience for Maltese Puppies

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