

Training the Poodle Puppy

Learn fast facts on training your Poodle dog breed.

Let's begin your puppy's education with two basic but vital lessons. We are going to teach your puppy to come to when called and to accept a collar and leash. The come lesson can be reinforced by playing games with your 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 puppy limits.

The puppy catch-me game is ideal to teach your puppy the come cue (recall). With two people sitting on the floor about 10 to 15 feet apart, one person holds and pets the puppy while the other calls him in a happy voice. When the puppy comes running, lavish big hugs on him and give him a tasty treat. Repeat back and forth several times, maybe adding a ball for the puppy to retrieve.

Another fun game that teaches the come lesson is hide and seek. Play this game outdoors in your yard or some other confined area. When the puppy is distracted, hide behind a tree, a bush or other large object. Peek out to see when he realizes that you are gone and comes running back to find you. As soon as he gets close, come out, squat down with arms outstretched and call him to come to you. This is a good technique and teaches the puppy to depend on you.

To introduce your puppy to the leash and collar, rely on your positive training techniques. You have purchased a nice new nylon collar and leash and you're going to show them to the puppy. He's not going to be all that thrilled to meet his first of many restraining devices, but let's pretend this is fun for him. Look, Prince. A collar! Good collar. See, good boy, good leash! Puppies are impressionable, so surely your dog's tail is wagging by now. With no further fanfare, put the collar on the puppy with the leash attached and walk away. Many a puppy will panic and try to remove the collar (he can't) and soon enough he'll stop squealing.

Now begin to play one of your games. Hide and seek works well here. You can also just have the puppy follow you around for a treat. After 10 minutes, remove the collar and leash, and repeat the routine tomorrow. By the third day of the puppy's following you around, you are ready to take the lead. Now let the puppy lead you around the house or the yard. The leash is no reason to be afraid, so don't start scaring your dog by tugging him around the block.

By the fourth or fifth day, you can take the lead and start asserting your leadership role. Lead him around gently, without tugging. This is not his first heeling lesson, just an introduction to his new nylon friends. We'll teach him to heel in a couple of weeks.