

## Training the Weimaraner Puppy

### **Early training of a Weimaraner helps get him to a good start.**

If you want to live in harmony with your Weimaraner, you have to be the top dog in his life. The Weim is a strong and powerful dog who is famous for his stubborn streak, so early training is especially important for a Weimaraner. Puppy kindergarten should start the day you bring your puppy home.

Before your puppy left his breeder, all of his life lessons came from his mom and littermates. When he played too rough or nipped too hard, his siblings cried and stopped the game. When he got pushy or obnoxious, his mother cuffed him gently with a maternal paw. Now his human family has to communicate appropriate behavior in terms his little canine mind will understand. Remember, too, that from a canine perspective human rules make no sense at all.

When you start the teaching process, keep this thought uppermost: The first 20 weeks of any canine's life are the most valuable learning time, a period when his mind is best able to soak up every lesson, both positive and negative. Positive experiences and proper socialization during this period are critical to his future development and stability. We'll learn more about socialization later, but know this: The amount and quality of time you invest with your Weim youngster now will determine what kind of an adult he will become. Wild dog—or gentleman or lady? Well-behaved or naughty dog? It's up to you.

Canine research tells us that any behavior that is rewarded will be repeated (this is called positive reinforcement). If something good happens, like a tasty treat or hugs and kisses, puppy will naturally want to repeat the behavior. Canine behavioral science also has proven that one of the best ways to a pup's mind is through his stomach. Never underestimate the power of liver!

This leads to a very important puppy rule: Keep your pockets loaded with puppy treats at all times so you are prepared to reinforce good behavior whenever it occurs. The same reward-him-if-he's-good reinforcement principle also applies to negative behavior, or what we humans might consider negative (like digging in the trash can, which the dog or puppy does not know is wrong). If pup gets into the garbage, steals food or does anything else that makes him feel good, he will do it again. What better reason to keep a sharp eye on your puppy to prevent those normal canine behaviors?

You are about to begin Puppy Class 101. Rule number one: Puppy must learn that you are now the alpha dog and his new pack leader. Rule number two: You have to teach him in a manner he will understand (sorry, barking just won't do it). Remember always that the pup knows nothing about human standards of behavior.

Next Step: Learning Word Associations

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