

## Puppy Training

**Get the whole family involved in puppy training.**

*Audrey Pavia*

So, you've decided to adopt a puppy! You are embarking on what will become one of your family's most exciting adventures. Cute, sweet and irresistible, puppies wiggle their way into the hearts of every family member in a very short amount of time. But as exhilarating as they are, puppies come with a huge set of demands. To optimize the happiness and comfort of both puppy and family, training must begin right at the start. Puppies are loads of fun, but are also a huge responsibility. The way your family handles puppy at its tender age will determine what kind of dog it will ultimately become. For this reason, it's important that everyone in the family be prepared for the puppy's arrival, and agree upon the rules and routines that will surround the care and training of the newest four-footed family member. **Family Meeting** If you did your homework, you have already determined what kind of dog you want and where you are going to get it. The next step is to educate yourself on puppy training and determine how you are going to handle the various puppy issues, that are sure to come up. If a family is united in its desire to own a puppy which it should be before you add one to the household all members must be ready for the work a puppy entails, says Liz Palika, a dog trainer and author of *The New Age Dog* (Renaissance Media, 2001). Caring for a puppy does not just involve sloppy kisses and a wagging tail; it also requires time and energy, and everyone in the family must understand what's required. The best way to ensure that everyone in the family comprehends the responsibility involved in owning a puppy is to sit down and have a family meeting to discuss the details. Before calling your family meeting to order, prepare a meeting agenda that involves the puppy's care, rules the puppy must follow and puppy rules for the humans to follow. Tasks that will need to be performed as part of the puppy's care include feeding it, making sure it has fresh water, taking it outside for potty breaks, playing with it, bathing and grooming it, and practicing its obedience commands. Keep in mind that young children cannot be expected to care for a puppy, and must only be given puppy care responsibilities if they are monitored closely. It's common for kids to forget or simply lose interest after a while. If no adult is around to make sure tasks are completed, the puppy will be the one to suffer. You will also need to decide who takes the pup to the veterinarian for its shots, deworming and other health maintenance care. This task is best left for the adults in the household. **Next Step: Talking Logistics**