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Homework for Puppies

1. Continue to socialize your puppy:

Even though your puppy is under 16 weeks old and does not have all of his shots yet, it is important that you expose the puppy to different environments. Puppies go through a “fear imprint period” between the ages of 7 to 12 weeks old. If the puppy does not have good experiences at this time, many behavioral problems can develop. Problems that can develop include aggression, lack of confidence, phobias and others. More dogs are euthanized because of behavioral problems than all the diseases combined. Many people who adopt or rescue dogs and find aggressive issues say that they think the dog was abused. In many cases this is true. However, more likely, it is because of a lack of socializing at the delicate age of the “fear imprint period”. You can socialize your puppy by taking him to areas like a mall, a child’s soccer game, to a friend’s who has a grown dog that has had its shots. Take a ton of treats and ask a friend or bystander to give a treat to your puppy. Let the puppy get used to looking at all types and sizes of people. For example, expose the puppy or dog to kids, babies, ladies with big hats, people carrying umbrellas, people carrying bags, etc. If you think your puppy is getting fearful do not comfort it, this will only exaggerate and validate his feelings! If you have a “purse” puppy, do not carry it everywhere. It must learn to walk on its own next to you. This is a common reason why small dogs of this type have aggression issues. Have other people take turns holding your dog. Give them treats for good behavior. This will allow your puppy to trust and enjoy others.

2. Learn how to be a pack leader right away!

I have written an article about relationships and pack leadership. Please refer to it. It will help you avoid problems in the future. This may help you avoid problems that will require consulting with a dog trainer. (www.thek9gameplan.com - click “articles”. They are free downloads.)

3. Make sure you are doing OK with housebreaking:

Please let me know if this is an issue. Dogs can tell if you are disappointed with them. The relationship will suffer if they are confused with elimination issues. It is instinctual to go to the bathroom. Puppies really are not in control of this for the first few months of their life (ages vary with size and circumstances). So it is really your fault if there is a problem (unless there is a medical issue, of course). I have also written an article on this subject as well. "if you take the time it takes, right in the beginning, it will take less time"

4. Puppies are not possessions, they are living beings:

You will have a great companion with unconditional love if you continue to nurture your pup. It is hard work though. Do not give up on your dog. It will be hard in the beginning but you will be successful. Chewing, digging, barking, licking your face and jumping up on you, running aimlessly, are all self-rewarding pleasures to a dog. There are ways to deal with these behaviors. If you need help with any of this, please let me know. I would love to help you! Please be aware of a typical trap, dog is getting on owners nerves because dog wants attention and owner is too busy. Owner puts dog outside. Dog sits and scratches at the door because dog wants in with its pack. Now owner is more frustrated with dog. So the dog does not get any closer to getting attention. A flat spin develops. When the dog is brought back inside it is so happy it is out of control jumping on owner and being hyper, so dog goes back outside. The dog needs interaction, exercise and discipline. This will contribute to the avoidance of typical traps. Keep in mind the dog wants to be apart of your family. It is in his DNA make-up to satisfy this need.

5. Play games with your puppy:

Teaching you dog to fetch is a great way to give him activity with you. Walks can also be the key to well being! Hide and seek are fun for a pup as well.

6. Massage and practice touching your puppy's legs, back, tail, tummy, face and mouth.

A puppy will be safer for the groomer and vets if he is used to being touched.

7. When your pup gets diarrhea, you may be in trouble:

There are three ways to describe diarrhea. There is pudding diarrhea, water diarrhea, and normal stools. If you have water diarrhea, your dog can dehydrate within 12 hours. This is an emergency. Call the vet.

8. Teach obedience right away:

Puppies are capable of learning by the time you have taken possession of them. Use positive reinforcement methods until at least 6 months of age. It would be great if you can always use positive methods, but sometimes we have to pull out a few tricks to enable a dog to live in its home successfully and avoid being taken to the pound.

So, here you are ...doing the right thing! I am impressed and I thank you for your effort.

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