The Happy Dog Training Academy

Introducing a new puppy

**Are you thinking of getting a Puppy, and have an Adult Dog?**

Getting a new puppy is so exciting, for the family. But in some cases, the dog of the house doesn't think the pup is a welcome addition, however. Almost everyone who gets a new puppy believes, that the adult dog will just accept the new puppy into the family home. Everything will be harmonious from day one, the adult will become a good mommy or daddy to the new puppy. People get very disappointed when things start to go wrong, there have unrealistic expectations.

Just knowing in advance what to expect in most cases can help the family to adjust the older dog, making the process of introducing the new puppy to the house as easy as possible. But any adjustments should be Suttle and in all cases with the adult dog in mind.

**Experience**

We have had the unique experience of introducing 14 new puppies into our family over the last few years, with many more over the time span of my career as a dog behaviour consultant. We have four dogs ourselves, and each new puppy addition has taught us more about how adult dogs and puppies integrate.

* None of my male dogs has ever welcomed a puppy with open paws.
* All of the boy dogs we have growl and snap and move away from the puppies. With each new addition one or other of the girls have taken to the puppy and begin to mother them from day one, but it has always been just one of the girls we have.
* NONE of the dogs has ever hurt a puppy.

These observations are pretty normal. Every new puppy has had the same welcome, year after year, from my dogs. While the occasional dog will delight in welcoming a pup into the house, in my experience most dogs don't open up the "welcome wagon" when a new pup enters the family.

**Communication skills**

Puppies are just learning how to communicate with one another. Usually, pups have only had experience reading their own littermates and mother. Their communication skills are still very limited, and they don't know the "rules” when it comes to interacting with new and different dogs. Not only do puppies have limited experience with other dogs, but they also have very limited experience with other humans in most cases. Breeders have been taught for many years not to allow human interaction, until they have been vaccinated. One thing I myself have never done, our puppies have full interaction with as many people, adults, and children as I am able to.

Puppies even have different play styles than adult dogs. When you compare the way puppies play to the way adult dogs play, the differences are vast. Dogs follow a prescribed set of rules. There is a certain way to greet one another. There is a specific way to invite play. There is a way to stop play. There is an entire manner of structure that adult dogs subscribe to, and it makes their social interactions predictable and enjoyable. There is a shared language between dogs, and adult dogs are fluent in that language.

Puppies don't follow the rules that the adult dogs depend on for good solid doggie communication. Puppies don't even know that rules exist! When littermate puppies play together, the only rule is: *Don't hurt one another*. I've watched a gleeful puppy jump on his sleeping littermate's head with reckless abandon. Upon waking, that littermate joyously engages in play with the head-jumper. With that kind of feedback, it is easy to see why puppies don't understand that the world has rules.

When a pup arrives at a new home without another pup in sight to play with, naturally he picks the next closest thing, the adult dog, or the human that has not shown any alpha standing, in a lot of cases this may well be children. The pup does what he has done with his littermates launches on the head of the sleeping adult dog or child. Puppies may even grab out at the little fingers or feet. "What a rude awakening," says sleeping dog! And the snarl that comes from the adult dog is wholly unexpected and startling to the new puppy. Occasionally, if the snarl isn't enough to deter the puppy from re-launching himself onto the sleepy dog, a full display of teeth along with the most guttural growl you've ever heard will normally convince the pup to cease and desist.

According to our adult dogs, puppies have really poor social skills and have lots to learn. Our adult dogs have been valuable teachers to the puppies we have hosted, and we are grateful to them. The first lesson the puppy learns is where the lines are drawn. There are a lot of DON'Ts that our dogs teach the puppy:

**An adult dog communicates to a puppy  
that he has crossed the line.**

* DON'T jump on my head.
* DON'T steal the toy I'm playing with
* DON'T put your face in my bowl when I'm eating.
* DON'T walk on me.
* DON'T bite my ears or my tail.
* DON'T sit on me.
* DON'T bark in my face.
* DON'T come any closer.
* DON’T run around me barking.
* DON’T disturb me when I’m sleeping.
* DON’T touch my bone, or chews.

As long as the adult dogs' behaviour is appropriate (they don't connect with the pup, for instance), everything is fine, and the pup begins to learn the new rules of this new house. After about three weeks, some play between the adults and the puppy begins, although with two of our four dogs it takes maybe five to seven weeks before they will choose to play with the pup.

**Supervise!**

Supervision is essential. Because the pup doesn't have the same set of social skills as the adult dog, I'm around for all of the interactions between the two. I want to be there to help guide the puppy toward appropriate social efforts and to keep the peace for the adult dogs. I also want my adult dogs to know, that I'm there for them, they can count on me to keep the puppy from becoming too much of a nuisance. The more I supervise, the fewer opportunities the dogs have to snap, bark, or growl at the puppy.

Too often, the adult dogs in the house are expected to take whatever the puppy can dish out. That's akin to expecting patrons of a restaurant to accept a stranger's child crawling under and climbing on their tables! Those expectations set up the puppy for trouble. The puppy won't learn the vital social skills he'll need to navigate the doggy world he lives in. It's also not fair for the dogs that live in your house. The adult dogs may accept it for a short period of time, but then the puppy's behaviour reaches a tipping point. In those circumstances, the dog may strike out with more force than he would have if he had been allowed to tell the pup to knock it off much earlier in the process.

**Crates, gates, and pens**

I like to put either the adult dogs or the puppy in the crate, behind a gate, or in an exercise pen, for some quiet time. Imposing periods of predictable, scheduled, and consistent separation between the puppy and the adult dogs goes a long way toward a harmonious life together. Puppies tend to be persistent and energetic. They don't give up quickly and may pester an older dog for much longer than the dog would allow. By setting up scheduled separation opportunities, both the pup and the dog are getting the breaks they need from each other.

**Escape route**

It's essential for both the dog and the puppy to have an escape route and a "safe house." I taught my dogs how to move away from an annoying puppy very early in our training and breeding years. I would call out "BED" if my dogs were beginning to become annoyed by the puppy. They would run to their crate, I'd put a frozen stuffed Kong inside, and I would close the door. The dogs could enjoy a special treat *and* be rid of the annoyance. Very quickly, they began self-crating when they had enough of the puppy. I reinforce that decision to self-crate almost every time with the delivery of a treat.

**Avoid**[**punishment**](https://www.clickertraining.com/glossary/17#term244)

Growls are a form of communication. Because puppies have immature communication skills, they frequently miss the more subtle signals your older dog shows, and the dog may need to resort to growling. Resist the urge to correct your dog for growling. Growling may be what the puppy needs in order to recognize that the dog doesn't want to interact. If you find yourself correcting either the puppy or the dog, supervise more instead and use the crates, gates, and pens as ways to manage the interactions between the two.

**Reinforce the behaviour you like**

You can teach your dog to tolerate the new puppy using the same principles you use to teach your dog to sit and lie down. If your dog ignores the puppy instead of snarling, reinforce that, Ignoring and watching you is always better than snarling, right? Just like in obedience classes, after your dog is reliably ignoring rather than snarling, raise the bar and expect a little bit more from your dog. You might reinforce tolerance next. Say your dog doesn't growl or get up and move if the puppy lies down beside the adult dog. Reinforce that behaviour.

**Using the brain training, can help an older dog understand what behaviour you would like to see from him in relation to the new puppy.**

Using this can help an older dog understand what behaviour you would like to see from him in relation to the new puppy. A healthy side effect of using the brain training, it will ease the transition for the existing dog and make a happy association with the new puppy. When the new puppy comes around, the older dog will get the opportunity to earn treats.

Think about what behaviour you'd like to see from your dog that isn't too hard to accomplish. Using the example above, doing anything *other than* growling at a puppy might be a good behaviour to treat. Remember it is your responsibility to the older dog to keep the puppy far enough away that he can't annoy. It's up to *you* to ensure that the existing dog is able to get treated easily, so be sure to use crates, and gates to help your dog earn a treat. Continue to treat appropriate behaviour from the existing dog until he's tolerating appropriate puppy antics.

As the older dog gets more comfortable with the puppy and tolerates appropriate puppy interaction, I treat the older dog for making the decision to excuse himself from the situation voluntarily. I would much rather that my dog simply walks away from an exuberant puppy than escalates his behaviour to match the puppy.

I won't put the older dog in a position where he resists his natural "doggie nature" to walk away, to endure unpleasant puppy interactions just to earn a treat. I ensure that my older dog is enjoying the interaction and is patient and tolerant because he's starting to enjoy the time with the puppy, and not just enduring it.

Using the reinforce behaviour training, along with limiting the pup's access to the adult dog, translates into setting up both for success. Manage the situation and provide training with guidance as to what's appropriate for both the puppy and the older dog.

**Warning signs.**

Not every dog likes puppies. Some dogs don't tolerate puppies at all and may have over the top reactions that could harm the puppy. It's important to keep a watchful eye on the interactions and intervene when body language and communication escalate to an unsafe level. Even these dogs may learn to play with the puppy as it grows, once the puppy learns what is acceptable play and what’s not. As your training begins with the puppy you may fined your older dog begins to except the puppy more and interaction begins.

**Happy together**

If during the process of play the puppy yips or squeals, and your dog response is to carry on with the play, you should definitely intervene. Dogs well versed in dog communication understand that yip or squeal is the equivalent of the pup crying "Uncle!" and should back off from the puppy. If you see the opposite the cries of "Uncle" lead to increased agitation in your dog separate the two immediately.

**One big (happy) family**

After what seems like an eternity but is really only about three weeks, you'll begin to notice some signs of harmony between the dog and the puppy. If you have done your part helping the dog and puppy develop their communication skills, this is the beginning of a fabulous friendship or at least a peaceful co-existence. Not all dogs love each other, so don't be disappointed if your dog doesn't fall head over heels in love with the new dog in the house. There is enough love for both, and comfortable cohabitation is a fine accomplishment. Of course, within every family there is always occasions where trouble is brewing, and you as the leader should be able to control each dog. When you see any behaviour that is inappropriate.

All the above behaviour also equates to when you bring your new puppy home, without any other pets in the house. You should treat any children as if there the older dog and not allow the puppy to play inappropriately with children. Of course, this is also recommended for you and your children, not playing inappropriately with puppies. It is just as important for new owners of puppies to have the hole family respect them. Giving them time to be puppies and to rest. Give your new puppy a place, to rest one where the children a not allowed to play with the puppy, cuddle or touch them. Puppies need their rest. In some cases, your new puppy can sleep up to 10 hours a day. Many owners allow children to play with puppy whenever they like. This is just unfair; Children have to and need to learn to respect them. So many owners end up giving puppies to rescue centres, because the puppy has bitten or scratched the child. Puppies as we have said previously don’t understand boundaries you have to teach them, so teach your children.

These are just guidelines that I keep in mind when either having a puppy to train or when we have our own.