

PET TALES

Puppy, no!

By DR. MARTY BECKER
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Universal Press Syndicate

As adorable as puppies can be, anyone who's raising one will tell you they can drive you crazy. To get through those sometimes trying months and come out with the dog you want, always remember two things in dealing with puppies: Be patient and be positive.

Every puppy needs to be guided on the road to good behavior, and along the way many a puppy strays off the path into trouble. The best way to avoid problems is to set up your home and your handling of the puppy so his only choice is to do what's right and get praised for it.

But what if your puppy makes a mistake? A verbal correction, properly timed and correctly delivered, is usually all you need. Speak low and sharply, but don't yell at your puppy. Really, all you need to do is to provide a distraction to stop and then redirect the errant behavior.

Here are two more ways to send a clear message of disapproval:

- Distract and redirect. Especially useful for the young puppy, this technique stops a behavior you don't want and guides the puppy to one that's acceptable. For example, if your young puppy is chewing on your nice leather shoes, make a noise to startle and distract him — slap the counter or clap your hands — and then give him something you do want him to chew on, such as a toy. When he takes it, praise him for redirecting those sharp puppy teeth.



Puppies need a lot of time and energy to become well-mannered pets.

With older puppies, you can often stop a bad behavior by asking for a better one, and praising him. Ask the puppy who's jumping up to "sit," and praise him or give him a treat for doing so. Tell him once, and if he doesn't mind you (to be fair, be sure he understands what you want), gently guide him into a sit, and then some praise and a treat.

- The time-out. Puppies thrive on your attention, even if it's negative. The time-out removes this reward. This technique is especially good for a puppy who doesn't want to keep his mouth to himself, a bad habit for any dog to get into where people are concerned. When the puppy starts nipping, tell him "no," and then clam up, pick him up and put him in a crate or other small, safe area for a few minutes.

Ignore the cries and whimpers. After a few minutes of quiet, let him out without fanfare and let him hang out with you gently for a while. The message: When the teeth touch skin, it's "game over."

If your puppy has been running around for a long time and just seems bratty, he may be tired. If that's the case, put him down for a nap in a crate or small area, along with a chew toy. Again, ignore his fussing. Chances are, he'll be asleep in a few minutes.

Corrections have their place in puppy-raising, but in general, a positive approach is preferred by today's dog-training experts. Positive dog-training isn't about letting your puppy or dog be boss, but rather about setting limits without yelling or hitting. If you find yourself

resorting to any of these techniques constantly, you could probably do with some help from a trainer to spot what you're doing wrong with your puppy and to make some constructive suggestions.

Don't let your puppy grow up to be a monster. Be patient and positive, and be fair with corrections. And don't forget: Get help at the first sign of trouble, and you'll save yourself a lot of trouble down the road. ■

Pet of the Week

>>Chuck

(#427493) is a young German shepherd mix who is ready to keep someone company, play with the kids, be your exercise companion on daily walks or a friend that will listen when you've had a bad day. Unconditional love is his specialty.

>>Skittles

(#429538) is an affectionate, beautiful, dilute calico cat with gorgeous yellow eyes. She's between 1 and 2 years old and was abandoned. Do you need someone to snuggle with and greet you at the door? Skittles is qualified!

To adopt a pet

Lee County Animal Services' Home 4 the Holidays Adoption Campaign continues through December. Adopters can register to win a pet bed in a weekly drawing. There are many dogs and cats available at the Lee County Animal Services shelter at 5600 Banner Drive, Fort Myers. Call 533-7387 or visit the agency's Web site at www.leelostpets.com. Adoption applications may be downloaded or completed at the shelter, which is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday. Please use the animal's ID number when inquiring about it. Adoption fees for dogs are \$25-\$95. Cats are \$25-\$75.

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