

Sunshine Hill Goldens

Thank you for purchasing an Sunshine Hill Golden! If this is your first Golden Retriever, I hope you are ready for an exciting and loving relationship. I believe that Goldens are the most intelligent, biddable, affectionate, and reliable large family dog available today. They are normally extremely gentle and trustworthy around even wee children. Most are intensely loyal to their families and make excellent watchdogs without being a liability.

I have prepared this booklet detailing the early care of a new puppy and I would like to share it with you. I hope you find it a quick but informative read and in this way I hope you can avoid some of the mistakes that I and many others have made.

FEEDING. Your pup has been weaned on what is referred to today as a “Super Premium” kibble. I have given you a small supply to give you time to locate a similar food in your area.

I don't recommend ANY generic or bargain brand for a puppy. They typically contain corn or wheat, two grains that are low cost ingredients but are difficult to digest and have a high occurrence of food allergies associated them. Top end brands such as Iams, Purina ProPlan, Nutro, Canidae, and Solid Gold are much more digestible and well worth the price.

Like most infants, puppies are prone to diarrhea. A sudden change in food will usually cause this, so introduce new kibble in gradually increasing amounts as the amount of my food decreases. This process should take at least a week.

A change in water can also cause diarrhea. As long as pup seems normal in every other way, give it a few days to resolve itself before becoming concerned.

If your pup gets diarrhea and it does not resolve in a few days, or if it gets worse or if you see blobs of mucous and/or some flecks of blood in it, suspect an intestinal parasite called coccidia. It is very common and can lay dormant until your pup or dog is stressed (such as when going to a new home, changing foods, and changing water!). If your vet wants to test for coccidia, he will need to remove a small stool sample from your pup right in his office and float it right away. Stool brought in from home won't work. Other symptoms of coccidia may include anorexia (loss of appetite), weight loss, and in more advanced stages, lack of energy. Fortunately coccidia is readily treatable and not normally life threatening in an otherwise healthy and well-nourished puppy.

Loss of appetite is usually the first sign of MANY puppy maladies, some of which are not too serious (such as coccidia, or ingesting sticks or debris) and some of which are literally deathly serious (such as parvo). Consequently one of your most important jobs the first few days after pup comes home is to make sure pup eats.

While still with their littermates, Mother Nature ensures that puppies eat well by providing them with an instinctive “competition trigger”... they instinctively try to eat as much as they can hold or their littermates will surely eat it all and they will starve to death! Once removed from the litter situation, that instinctive trigger is removed, and your pup may be so distracted by all the new sights and smells in your home that he will literally forget to eat. A bowl of dry kibble on the kitchen floor will go completely unnoticed. A few missed meals and pup will begin to lose weight, depleting the reserves he will need in the event he does come down with coccidia, parvo, or some other debilitating puppyhood condition.

To encourage pup to eat, mix one cup kibble with a Tablespoon of Pedigree canned dog food (chopped beef seems to be a favorite) and a dollop of dark molasses or maple pancake syrup. Mix well with a little hot tap water. Offer this to him morning and evening and make sure pup is not distracted by loud noises or goings-on while he is eating.

Pup may walk away to relieve himself or get a drink of water and then return to finish eating, but if he walks away and loses interest, he's done. Pick up whatever is left and discard. Mix fresh for each meal. When pup cleans the bowl and looks around for more, increase the kibble at the next meal by about a quarter cup. When he eats all THAT, increase it again, until he is eating about two cups at each mealtime.

Offer pup a cup or two of dry kibble for “lunch” during the day. He will like the crunching sensation of the dry kibble and this will do his teeth and midday munchies good. When pup loses interest in his dry “lunch” (this can happen anytime from now on up to several months from now), discontinue offering it and just prepare his regular breakfast and dinner. Watch pup's weight and do not allow him to become either too thin or too roly-poly.

ALWAYS keep clean fresh water available for your pup. A large bowl is not always a good idea as most Goldens find out real quick how much fun it can be to play in. The “Lix-It” watering fixture you can attach to an outside faucet is great, and pup will figure it out quickly. It will also be an incentive for him to go outside when he is thirsty, which will help with your potty training efforts. Don't make things TOO comfy indoors!

Try your local feed stores for the Lix-It and premium brand kibble. Any adult or large breed puppy formula is fine and will provide your pup with controlled nutrition to help your dog grow steadily without growth “spurts” and maintain correct weight. Later in life, new senior formulas are available with joint supplements already added that may save your dog a lot of pain (and you a lot of vet bills) in those senior years.

Do NOT feed your pup with table scraps unless you are prepared to feed it table food for the rest of its life. If you do, you can then also expect tooth and gum trouble, behavioral difficulties, and an early death from heart, liver, or kidney problems. People food contains salt, sugar, and chemicals that play havoc with a dog’s digestion and hormone balance. Many table foods actually rob your dog’s systems of essential vitamins and minerals. Most will cause very unpleasant flatulence (gas passing), always a sign of digestive difficulty.

Unfortunately, table food is nearly irresistible to our four-footed friends. If you are too tender-hearted to endure the beseeching looks you’ll get (Goldens are SO good at them, too), small amounts of table leftovers are alright as snacks or rewards... but do NOT let your pup confuse them with his regular meal. Of course the best rule of thumb is people food is for people and dog food is for dogs. Period.

When selecting chew-toys, rawhides of pretty much any variety are fine. I like to get the unbleached knotted ones or the chopped, pressed, and molded ones. Cow hooves can get wedged painfully in between pup’s teeth and pigs’ ears are TOO greasy. Large beef knuckle bones (you can get raw ones in most meat departments that are delightfully cheap) are wonderful and will not splinter. Rib bones (pork or beef) are absolute no-nos. Be careful with all bones, natural or rawhide, around the 4-month age as pup will lose his puppy teeth and his gums will be exposed and very easily damaged. Give him soft toys to play with until his adult teeth come in. Usually after 5 months of age he can have his bones back again.

Be careful using commercial dog treats for training... especially those soft-textured ones. They contain a LOT of sugar and also chemical plasticizers (yuck!).

Should you be interested in feeding your dog a raw diet (also called BARF... Bones And Raw Foods) let me know and I will hook you up with experienced raw feeders. The burden of correct dietary balance and nutrition is all on YOU and a mentor is a MUST.

IN THE HOME. Do not be surprised if your pup is withdrawn or skittish at first. It has been taken away from its mother, its family, and its home. What an identity crisis! YOU will become your pup’s new family. You must provide the security and affection that previously came from mom and littermates.

If you have children, they must be taught the right associations with the pup from the very beginning. A pup ABSOLUTELY can not be teased, over-stimulated, or dragged around like a rag doll. On the other hand, pup must not be pampered or spoiled. Do not let it do anything now that you not want it doing when it is full-grown!

Establish pack order immediately... and people are ALWAYS at the top! Have every family member take turns being near your pup at feeding time. Try taking the food dish away from it while it is eating. If the pup ever growls, grab it by the scruff of the neck, suspend its front legs off the floor, give it a shake, and say “NO” firmly. Be fast and firm. Return the food dish after a minute or two. Do this at every meal until the growling stops. When pup does not object, give it a good scratch, an enthusiastic “Good puppy!”, and return the dish to it immediately.

Do the same thing with pup’s playthings. Tug of war is NOT an appropriate game for your puppy to learn. Growling and tugging may seem cute in a little puppy but not in a 60 to 80 pound dog. Likewise with rough-housing. Tussling with a pup will develop habits of play that can turn into unintentional mauling when your dog is grown up. Even if your children are old enough to withstand rough play, what will happen to a neighbor’s two or three year old? Goldens will rarely harm anyone on purpose, but you will be just as liable for an accident.

A PLACE TO STAY. (Adapted from an article by Sheri Gartshore.) A dog crate (either wire or plastic airline type) should be the first thing you purchase for your pup. If your pup was shipped to you, then you already have one!

To you, a human, a crate may seem cruel and cage-like, but to a dog, a crate is its doghouse, bed, and “safe place”. It can go there to rest or escape confusion. If you travel with your dog or leave it in someone else’s care, it is HOME wherever it is set up.

For a young puppy, a crate is an invaluable training aid. Put in the crate when you’re busy or gone, pup won’t destroy anything, soil the carpet, or hurt himself. Think of it like a human playpen for your dog. Pup will soon welcome the security when left alone.

To train a pup to crate, start as soon as possible. Set the crate in a corner or wherever you choose to be “his” or “her” spot. Many people elect to have more than one, with one in the main part of the house for use during the day and another in the bedroom for at night.

Put in a piece of old blanket or an old rug or towel. Don't use made-to-fit stuffed cushions until pup is well past the chewing stage!

When pup flops down to sleep somewhere, pick him up gently, place him in the crate, and shut the door until after his nap and he is well awake. If you have timed it right he will be too tired to care and will be getting the proper association with the crate as a place to sleep. Soon pup will seek it automatically when tired. Many people report that eventually they never need to close the door and the dog simply "puts himself to bed" all on his own.

Loosely covering a wire crate with a dark colored bedsheet will make it seem more like a real "dog house", especially at night.

Confine pup to his crate several times a day for short periods of time, especially when you are unable to watch him. This is most important until pup is housebroken but also for his safety. Puppies like and need to chew, but chewing on a plugged-in lampcord can result in immediate death.

ALWAYS CONFINE PUP WHEN YOU ARE OUT OF THE HOUSE! He will howl in resentment at first, not because of the crate itself, but because he is being left behind! Leave pup a snap-in bowl or rabbit-type bottle of water and a few toys. Don't weaken and don't worry. Pup will settle down as soon as you are gone.

Always remember to remove any collars when crating your pup as they can become caught on the wire and can badly frighten or injure it.

Confine pup to a crate all night and solve your nighttime housebreaking problems very quickly. One of the greatest advantages to the crate is that a dog won't want to soil it because it becomes his or her bed.

The dog crate, intelligently and properly used, can indeed spell real happiness for both dog and owner. A good crate is not cheap but since it virtually lasts forever and is so very worthwhile, the cost is soon forgotten and may well be considered a bargain!

If you decide not to buy a commercial crate, for whatever the reason, the theories behind crating are sound. An old baby playpen, sturdy cardboard box, or a laundry room or service porch can become your pup's "home". Of course, a location in your home will not be portable, but a favorite rug or blanket can be rolled up and taken with you.

If your pup is going to spend significant amounts of time outside, you can still use a crate as a "doghouse" of sorts. Make sure the crate is located out of the direct sun and has adequate protection from rain and wind.

Better still is a small "kennel" area, easily made from 6'x6' panels that are available at most home improvement stores. They are very attractively priced and will keep your pup from digging up your landscaping or sprinkler system and developing other bad outside habits. Make sure the kennel has a shelter and fresh water.

HOUSEBREAKING. As soon as you get pup home, carry him immediately to the place you want to establish as his toilet area. Put him down in that area and depending on how long your drive was, he should need to go right away.

Take pup to his toilet area whenever you remove him from his crate. Take him there after each meal. Dogs usually need to pass stool within 15 to 30 minutes after eating. You should also take pup out for about 5 minutes each hour that he is awake. Your best chance for smooth housebreaking is to anticipate your pup's need.

Be alert! Walking in circles, wandering off towards corners or under or behind furniture, and sniffing at the floor are all usually sure signs that pup is about to squat. Take him quickly to his area, but be careful not to move TOO quickly or frighten him. You could inadvertently make him fear going out to toilet, especially if you punish him or handle him roughly near the correct area.

If pup's first toilet is a "mistake", dab a rag in the mistake and stake it in the area you have chosen for his toilet. Pup will smell where he has "gone before" and get the idea. Clean the mistake well with a commercial product and then disinfect and deodorize with white vinegar or a specially formulated pet odor eliminator.

You have to teach your pup one thing... how to communicate effectively to you that he needs to go. The method I like best works like this.

First, do not allow your pup run of the entire house. This is simply too much area for him to deal with. Confine pup to one room of the house, hopefully the room that has the door in it that you will want pup to use as his primary exit to his toilet area. Use baby gates or whatever barricades you have to limit pup's world to that one room.

Second, every trip outside should begin by placing pup in a sitting position in front of the door you are training him to use. Do not SAY “sit”, but put the pup in a sitting position with your hands. Once he is sitting, repeat several times, “Let’s go OUTSIDE... let’s go POTTY” or whatever you want your toilet command to be. Before pup gets too antsy, open the door and RUN out to the toilet area. Pup will follow you. Then you stop and stand perfectly still. When pup potties, praise him with “Good puppy, good POTTY!” Treats after a successful potty are fine. Keep a few in your pocket and give them in the toilet area and pup will make that connection very quickly.

Soon pup will automatically go to the door and sit when he wants out. Some smart pups use this ploy to go outside when they don’t really have to potty. Don’t make a big deal out of this. Better a few unnecessary trips outside than having to clean up a mistake.

With the possible exception of toy breeds or very extreme circumstances, never housebreak a puppy to relieve itself on paper or to go in the basement, garage, etc. With a dog the size of a Golden, you’ll only end up with a mess. A big mess.

After a few weeks, pup should be consistently going to the door. If he continues to have frequent mistakes, especially in the same area, he is either confused by the familiar odor of mistakes not well neutralized or he is being lazy. You can try confining pup to his crate and going through the “sit at the door” routine every 15-20 minutes until he potties outside. Then pour on the praise and reward pup with some “free time” loose in the house.

Do not make excuses for your pup (or yourself) such as it is too cold outside or it is raining. Pup will not catch cold in the amount of time it takes to “go”. Most likely he will hurry the job to come back in! Golden retrievers were bred for outside work in adverse weather. They have insulating coats that are very water repellant. A soaking to the skin can be health threatening to a young pup. Anything less than that might be chilly, but not dangerous.

How long should reliable housebreaking take? Using the above system, your pup should be trustworthy in that initial room of the house in two to three weeks. You can expand his world to include another room about once a month. If he regresses, start back at room one again. Make sure the pup is reliable at each stage before expanding again.

Any mistakes pup has after he is six months old or so (which should translate to the main living rooms of your house) will be YOUR FAULT. You must be consistent-consistent-consistent for your training to be effective. Never fail to praise and compliment your pup every time he potties in the correct toilet area and pup will welcome every trip outside.

Even if pup has no mistakes, continue the frequent trips outside and lavish praise. Puppies are a lot like children. They have small bladders. If pup is used to going out regularly, he will potty when he feels it’s time. They also love attention. If pup is used to lots of praise, he may deliberately have mistakes if you ignore his perfect potty habits. (I still praise my adult dogs!) Keep things consistent and fun and pup will be reliable in record time.

OUTSIDE: There is more to a dog’s being outside than just putting it out the door. Do a thorough walk-around your yard. Are there broken or weak spots in the fence where your pup could get out, to be stolen or hit by a car? Are there hazards such as wire, sharp pieces of scrap metal or glass, or small spaces that could entrap or strangle your pup? Are there outside wires or exposed sockets he can chew on? Get down on your hands and knees and try to see things from his viewpoint. What looks inviting?

Another threat to puppyhood of all breeds is toxic plants. Many of your favorite bushes and flowers may be poisonous if eaten by a playful pup. A costly vet trip (and perhaps a dead dog) can be avoided by making sure your landscaping is puppy-friendly until yours has matured past the chew-up-everything-you-can-get-your-teeth-on stage. The internet is an invaluable resource... just search on “TOXIC PLANTS” using your favorite search engine. You may be surprised by some of the common names (I sure was).

I already briefly discussed living quarters for an outside dog. Is there shelter from the elements? Is there a source of fresh water? Do your yard gates have locks to prevent your pup from being stolen or “accidentally” let loose by children, yard workers, or pool service personnel?

Speaking of pools, if you have an in-ground pool, you will have to “pool proof” your puppy. A puppy that is not pool-proofed will claw at the edge of the pool where he falls in until exhausted and then he will drown. Until it is 4-5 months old, do not leave it in the yard unsupervised. Then, pool proof your puppy as follows:

Place a large heavy flowerpot of a contrasting color or design from your pool coping on the top step of your pool stairs. A vivid black and white pattern or bright yellow works best. Make sure the pot is tall enough to stick up at least 6” out of the water. Have a family member put puppy in the pool a few feet away from the stairs. Tap on the flowerpot and encourage pup to swim to you. When he reaches the stairs, let him climb out on his own, then give him LOTS of praise! Repeat putting pup in the pool from other locations around its perimeter, increasing the distance each time and encouraging him to swim to the pot. Stop before he tires! Two or three swims in a row is plenty. Do this once or twice a day until pup is reliably swimming for you and the pot.

You are training pup to look for the pot, which represents the only safe exit from the pool. The pot must extend above the water because once he is in the pool, his line of vision will be right at the surface of the water. Test pup by placing him in the pool and NOT encouraging him to the pot. When he finds it consistently on his own, he is pool proofed.

Leave the pot on the top step if you like. It will be a conversation piece and a constant reminder that pools can be quite dangerous.

You alone are responsible for your pup's environment. One of "Murphy's Laws" ought to be that anything you don't want a pup to get into, it will. Even the most innocent looking yard decoration or child's toy can turn into a costly trip to the vet if pup chews it up and swallows the pieces.

I wasn't going to say anything about chaining a dog except DON'T, but if it becomes absolutely necessary, give your dog as much area as possible and make sure he has access to shade and water. A centrally located swivel stake will give your dog a large circle to move around in. For long narrow areas, a steel cable staked to the ground or suspended overhead with a free-sliding line attached to it will result in a rectangular shaped run.

Do not tether ANY dog until it is well used to a collar and leash, or it may panic when it finds itself restrained by the throat. NEVER tie out a dog using a "choke collar". A flat nylon buckle collar is much safer and a body harness is even safer than that. And I repeat... only tether a dog if it is absolutely necessary.

BREAKING BAD HABITS. I've already discussed housebreaking in detail, which leaves what most folks consider to be the Big Bad Three. In general, it is much harder to teach a dog NOT to do something than it is to teach the dog TO do something, so this usually involves using negative punishment as a deterrent.

Barking. If your pup barks or whines when first put in a crate or outside, he will stop once he realizes that making noise isn't bringing him any attention. But the outside dog on the doggy grapevine at 3 in the morning needs a no-nonsense correction. A lightweight plastic flyswatter or loosely rolled-up newspaper page smacked smartly but lightly across his nose will let him know in no uncertain terms that you don't like his nighttime yapping one bit. This is the most sensitive area of a Golden's face, so don't overdo it. One smack is plenty. You'll be surprised at how soon the mere sight of the flyswatter or rustle of the rolled page is enough to create sudden silence.

Always give a verbal correction with a physical reprimand. Say "Hush" or "Quiet" and not just "No". Above all, don't give up. Every time pup barks more than two or three times in a row you must be there to reprimand him. I spent three weeks of sleepless nights breaking one dog of midnight gossiping. Consistency, again, is all-important for effective training. BUT – do NOT reprimand your dog if he is barking AT something, be it a passer-by, unusual noise, or whatever. He will soon become a valuable crime deterrent.

Digging. Golden's love the scent of freshly turned earth. If you can, pick a place in your yard where it is okay for your pup to dig. Moisten the earth there and turn over a few shovelfulls for starters. In the summer, even a shallow hole can be 20 degrees cooler than the surface. A child's plastic pool full of water will give your dog much relief from the heat and can help curtail his digging if heat avoidance is his motivation.

But what if your pup turns out to be a mole in Golden's clothing? Try dropping a piece of pup's own excrement in inappropriate holes and smooth the dug out dirt over the top. He will find it very disgusting to have his wonderful holes filled with stool, and should soon figure out that you don't appreciate his random excavations.

DO NOT EVER sprinkle an area with pepper as a deterrent to digging or anything else. If inhaled, this will cause incredible agony to a dog and you will most likely permanently destroy or impair his sense of smell.

Chewing. Puppies of any breed are unholy terrors to socks, shoes, books, toys, plants, and anything else within reach. Accept the fact right now that you will suffer the loss of some of these items during your dog's puppyhood. Try to keep a good selection of puppy toys available and rotate them frequently so pup does not become bored with the same three or four toys day-in and day-out. However, despite a barrel of puppy toys, don't be surprised if you still suffer losses to your wardrobe or décor. It is a subtle compliment when pup chews up your things and your things alone!

It is important to remember that that the chewing itself is not wrong. It is pup's choice of items that must be discouraged. And please note that I say "discouraged" and not "punished". When you catch pup with something that is not his, say "Give", and take the item away from him. Then say, "Don't touch" or "Leave it", and immediately substitute your item with one of his own toys, encouraging him to take it by wiggling it or tossing it a short distance for him to chase and retrieve. When he takes the item, praise and compliment him on his choice.

If pup decides to nibble on table legs, carpet, draperies, or other stationary items in your home that can not realistically be “taken away”, say “Don’t touch” or “Leave it”, and immediately give pup a proper toy. Once his attention is elsewhere, apply a spray-on commercial dog repellent such as “Boundary” to discourage his interest in those areas.

GENERAL DISCIPLINARY GUIDELINES. Whether you bought your pup for show, field, obedience, agility, or just want a mannerly companion around the house, you must start training him NOW for the behaviors you will want when he is full grown. Your success really only depends on two simple things... keep it consistent-consistent-consistent, and keep it fun-fun-fun!

Like all children, puppies need rules and discipline, praise and affection to develop into responsible adults. An undisciplined child will grow up to be a juvenile delinquent. Likewise, an undisciplined puppy will become a defiant and disobedient dog.

Dogs are creatures of habit. Anything they can get away with twice in a row they will expect to be allowed to continue be it eating scraps, sleeping in your bed, or sitting in your lap. Don't let pup get away with anything just because he's “new”. His brain was fully developed at 7 weeks of age. He is going to learn with or without your guidance! You must teach him what you want right from the start or he will learn on his own and pick up bad habits that will only complicate later training efforts.

Never call your pup to you by name with the intent to punish him. This is the quickest way to train your dog to head for the hills when he hears his name.

Harsh physical punishment is completely uncalled for when you are dealing with a dog as sensitive and intelligent as a Golden. You can verbally “shame” a Golden into quivering apology. Beatings will only confuse the dog into cowering fear or drive it to willful and malicious misconduct. Your reprimands should be brief and appropriate to the offense, and immediately followed by showing the dog the proper behavior. Always praise the dog after the correction.

Play biting is something that can quickly get out of hand. If pup simply won't leave your hands or clothes alone, this is something you need to stop immediately. First you can try to use the puppy's own instincts to correct this... when he bites, screech like an injured puppy as loudly as you can in a high-pitched voice... “Yike! Yike! Yike!” He should let go like you are red hot! Snuggle him and allow him to apologize by licking your chin. Then put him down and give him a toy.

If the “puppy screech” doesn't work, you will have to step it up a little. While pup has your hand or clothing in his mouth, reach over the top of his muzzle and pinch his own lips against the tips of his upper teeth. Do this quickly and hard enough to make him squeak.. You are teaching him that when he bites YOU it hurts HIM. After he lets go, again, let him apologize, then put him down and give him a toy. After a few of these he should stop biting you as a means of play, but continue as long as necessary to ensure he doesn't pick the habit back up again.

Whenever pup brings something TO YOU, be it one of your favorite shoes, a soup can pilfered from the kitchen trash, or that shrub you just planted yesterday, DO NOT scold him in any fashion. Grasp the item firmly, say “Give”, remove the item from his mouth, and then take a minute to play fetch with him a few times using a proper toy. He'll soon notice that non-toys get taken away. It is a Golden's instinct to RETRIEVE and DELIVER. Scolding him in the act of doing so will confuse him greatly.

Whenever possible, use some word other than “no” to correct your dog. I've mentioned several already such as “Hush” or “Quiet” and “Don't touch” or “Leave it”. Most Golden's have the comprehension level of an 18-24 month old child. They are capable of learning extensive vocabularies, sometimes up to several hundred different words. Tell your dog what you want him to do... “Go potty”, “Get it”, “Give”, “In the crate”, or whatever. You cheat yourself of a potentially rich relationship by limiting your communication to six words. Can you imagine what would happen if you raised a child using only his name and “come” “sit” “down” “stay” and “no”???

When one person gives a command, no one else should address the dog until he has either performed the command or has been corrected by the person who gave the command. Most dogs will sit and do nothing if given multiple commands by multiple people, even if it is the same command.

It is always easier to teach a dog TO do something than to NOT do something. A good defense is sometimes a better offense, so if your dog is doing something you want him to stop, teach the dog to do exactly that on command.

For example, if he is jumping up on you, teach him to jump up on command. I use the verbal command “Hugs” and pat my chest with my open palm. Then when he tries it on his own, you can tell him “No... off”. Once he is off, wait a few seconds, give him the “Hugs” command, and let him put his paws on you. Then say “Off” again and praise him when he complies. Soon he will know he can not jump up unless invited.

One of my Golden's, when lonely, would drag my personal items out into the living room while I was away and lay on them. Golden's will bond with their whole family, but also tend to choose one person to whom they will be especially close. This is usually the

person who spends the most amount of time with the pup when it is new. You should encourage family bonding by having everyone take turns feeding, grooming, and bathing your pup. Also take turns with interactive activities such as taking pup for walks, teaching basic manners, playing fetching games, etc.

There is a special bond that develops between a dog and his trainer in situations such as obedience, field, or show training. This is a very different sort of bond than the personal preference the dog may have for a family member. The formally trained dog must obey complex commands instantly, without hesitation, and with undivided attention to the handler. In the prolonged intensity of competition, the handler's skill in presenting the dog at peak performance is all-dependent on the rapport he has with the dog. Multi-purpose dogs can have multiple handlers for their various competitive activities and at home still be a "Momma's dog"! Each relationship is separate and special.

For the first two months, you should focus on teaching your pup only basic house manners and routines, such as housebreaking, no jumping up, sleeping all night, etc. I strongly recommend puppy kindergarten if you can find a class in your area. The ideal age for this for Golden Retrievers is between 8 and 16 weeks (4 months) of age.

From 4 to 6 months of age, use this time to reinforce basic house manners and what the pup learned in puppy kindergarten. The only other exercise I recommend during this time frame is yard-breaking... which I consider essential for any dog.

Put your pup in a sturdy flat buckle collar, buckled very snugly, not loosely. Attach a long line to the collar. Any cotton rope or cord will do but commercially manufactured 30' cotton leads are available at most pet supply stores as well. Plan your yard-breaking scenario in advance. Make sure your long line will reach from a central location in your front yard to the obvious boundary... for example the curb if you live on a paved street. Tie a loop in your long line if this distance is shorter than the actual length of the line. Have a distracter available on the other side of the street or outside whatever the boundary of your yard is that you wish to break your dog to. Bring the pup out and attach him to the long line. Position yourself and signal your distracter. The distracter can bounce a ball or be walking another dog, or really anything that is likely to catch your pup's notice and entice him to bolt across the street or out of the yard. Timing is everything in this lesson. The split second your pup's front feet leave the yard, roar his name as loud as you can and IMMEDIATELY haul back on the long line. For best effect, this should literally yank the pup straight over backwards.

As soon as he gets up he will most likely turn and look right at you with a very shocked or puzzled look. Immediately drop down to one knee at his level and call him to you... "Oh poor baby! What happened? Come here, sweetie, poor thing!" When he comes to you, love on him and cuddle and coo and tell him how awful you know it was. Then stand up and let him wander around for a few minutes... until he forgets what just happened. Then signal your distracter and do it again.

It rarely takes more than a few repetitions and there is nothing in the world that will entice your pup to step off the curb. You can repeat daily or weekly if your pup has an unusually high prey drive and needs extra reinforcement.

Why this works: It is key that the pup not associate you with the long line or the correction. All the pup knows is that the second his feet leave the yard he hears his name and then the Hand of God comes out of the sky and flips him over backwards. The obvious association... stepping out of the yard, hearing his name, and the back flip... become synonymous. Soon you can be anywhere, yell his name, and he will come flying to your side (because he knows what comes next if he doesn't!)

It sounds harsh, but it is absolutely essential that you have SOLID voice control over your dog and this is certainly much less harsh than getting hit by a car. Four months of age is the ideal age at which to do this. Golden Retrievers are at their most sensitive at this age since teething is just beginning. Use this to your advantage to yard-break your dog for lifetime effect.

Do not attempt a formal "adult dog" obedience class until your pup is at least 6 months old. Do not put him in a "big dog" class if you can't find puppy kindergarten. If you put him in class too young he will only want to play and visit and then will abruptly lay down and want to nap! Between the ages of 4-6 months, he is teething and the itching and pain will have him chewing on the lead, his feet, and your shoes instead of learning anything. He will be miserable, you will be frustrated, and the only thing either one of you will remember is what a rotten time you had. Other than yard-breaking, spend this time reinforcing the normal house behaviors your pup has already learned and THAT'S IT. After 6 months of age your pup will have the stamina, attention span, and maturity to make a formal obedience class worthwhile for both of you.

Do not teach your pup any trick behaviors until AFTER he is obedience trained. The first few nights of obedience class are very confusing. If you have taught your pup to perform tricks he will perform them whenever he is confused in an attempt to please you. You will then be in a position where you will have to reprimand him for performing the trick you worked so hard to teach him.

If your dog lives a long and wonderful life, it is entirely possible he will go deaf in his old age. This is real torture to a dog for whom human contact is such an integral part of life. Try to use hand signals in addition to all verbal commands, so that if that time ever

comes, you still have a means of communicating with your dog. Also, sometimes it can be a real asset to be able to give your dog certain commands long distance, say across a yard or across a street.

There are exercises a hunting dog should be taught by the time it is 6 months old, but I will not get into field training here. If you want to field train your dog, I urge you to contact a reputable professional field trainer in your area as soon as possible. The better ones don't come cheap, but the training results should be guaranteed in writing, and some guarantee the training for the lifetime of the dog.

Word of mouth is the best way to locate a good field trainer. Try a local gun shop or sporting goods store. Hunters have every reason to be proud of a well-trained dog, and they will be quick to recommend a good one or warn you off of a bad one. Before you contract with any trainer, make sure you see several dogs, of different breeds and owners if possible, trained by him in action, and inspect his training facilities thoroughly.

Many people are caught up in the current Agility and Rally classes that have recently become extremely popular. There are wonderful activities and virtually anyone can do them.

I urge you to obtain some type of formal training for your Golden. Golden that "go bad" with destructive or escapist behavior are usually highly intelligent but untrained, and therefore tragically bored.

SEEING THE VET. I have wormed your pup and given it the first in a series of recommended inoculations. Please refer to the shot schedule I have given you. The last shot your pup received before it left me will protect it for approximately three weeks. You should select a reliable veterinarian in your area and make an appointment before there is an "immunity gap". Enter your pup into your vet's vaccination program. Take my shot schedule with you for copying into your pup's permanent records.

I am a firm believer in the "preventative maintenance" of a puppy. The sooner you can detect something amiss, the easier it will be to treat, before it can progress into a more serious situation. Once a week, stack your puppy on a hard surface such as a table. Lay a towel or small throw rug down first to provide good footing. Position your pup in a "stand" and examine your pup from nose to tail using this checklist:

NOSE: Black and moist. No discharge, not dry or chapped. May turn brown or "liver" colored in cold weather.

EYES: Clear, interior of lids pink but not red. No swelling or mucous-y discharge. Lids should fit tight to eye.

TEETH: Clean and white. Scissors bite. Pink gums, no redness or swelling. **NOTE:** If pup resists having his mouth examined when teething, don't press the issue. Try again next week.

EARS: Clean and pink inside. Brown stains or a "sweet" smell can mean bacteria, yeast, or mites. Have your vet do a slide to determine which it is and how to treat.

HEAD & NECK: No lumps, swellings, or tenderness.

CHEST: Wide, with good "drop" between elbows of front legs. No lumps, etc.

FRONT LEGS: Straight, feet positioned directly under body. No lumps, etc.

BACK: Level topline. Vertebrae should be easily felt but not prominent.

SIDES & BELLY: No excessive weight. Ribs should not show but should be easily felt. Good tuck-up of loin, and a visible "waist" when viewed from above. No lumps etc.

COAT: Soft and glossy. Neither dry with a "harsh" feel nor oily.

BACK LEGS: Set slightly behind and wider than rear. No lumps, etc.

FEET: Tight, not splayed. All toes pointing straight ahead. Nails short, no foxtails or excessive hair between toes.

TAIL: No tenderness at base.

ANUS: Soft and dry, neither wet & runny nor chapped.

MALES: Two testicles in proper position unless neutered. Scrotum soft and supple with no lumps, etc.

FEMALES: No discharge or odor unless in season.

Finish your exam by brushing pup well, first backwards to remove dead hair, tangles, and debris, then smooth his hair back down like normal. Take pup down and give him a treat! Have family members take turns so pup learns to be handled by all. Bathe pup when necessary, using cool water, never hot. Any shampoo formulated for dogs will do. If you like the way it smells, go for it! Special shampoo formulas exist for a number of different coat types, colors, and skin conditions. I do not normally use a conditioner or rinse of any kind although they can be helpful if your dog has an unusually harsh coat texture.

Be alert to your pup's habits. Know what his normal stool looks like and how frequently he urinates.

If you suspect ANYTHING is wrong with your pup, CALL ME. Some symptoms are quite frightful but not dangerous. Others are mild but deathly serious (literally). A too-hasty trip to the vet exposes your pup to disease needlessly. I can recommend over-the-counter products for most minor ailments. I can refer you to reasonably priced specialists for more serious ailments.

PLEASE inform me of ANY illness to your pup. As a breeder, a high incidence of disease may be caused by a genetic weakness that I must work on to expose and eliminate from my breeding program. If you don't tell me, how will I know?

NAMNG YOUR DOG: You should select a "call name" for your pup as soon as possible. Whether you call it Duke or Fido, Princess or Missy, it will come to know and love being addressed by name and your training will go that much faster. Never yell your dog's name in punishment or in a harsh tone, and it will always come joyously when called.

As your pup is from an AKC registered litter, we will be choosing a registered name for your pup too. The registered name can tell many things about your dog. It call tell who bred the dog, what color it is, what bloodline the dog is from, etc. We would be honored if you choose to put Sunshine Hill as a prefix to your dogs name.

Or perhaps the pup was from a litter with a "theme", where all the pups in the litter are requested to be named using the same word somewhere in the name (such as "Bear") or names that conform to a general theme idea (such as "wild animals" or "sweet things").

Are you going to compete with your dog? The name you choose should be unique, catchy, and easy to remember. You are really only limited by your imagination – and 28 spaces! Unusual or "clever" names are usually best. It is considered a compliment to play off the name of a famous dog or bloodline (such as my original "Honey Bear" example above), but it is very bad form to "steal" another kennel's name or "reuse" the name of a previously famous dog of the same breed.

Most pups are simply much beloved pets, but many owners still choose their dog's registered name with great care. Your puppy's pedigree shows three generations of ancestors and may be helpful to you. Please make sure you contact me after you select a name. I may be aware of another Sunshine Hill dog that already has that name!

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