

The Golden Retriever

Lives and breathes to love his family

Introduction

Joy and loyalty wrapped in sunshine is the perfect description of the Golden Retriever, a top dog for families, handicapped owners, and obedience competitors. The Golden lives to learn, to generate smiles, to romp with the children, and to please his owners. He's a bundle of canine cheer without an unkind bone in his body.

Although not as popular as his rambunctious cousin the Labrador Retriever, the Golden resides in the American Kennel Club's top 10 with more than 68 thousand individual dogs and 14, thousand litters registered in 1993.

Like many of the sporting breeds, the Golden was born in Britain in the 1800s. Breed ancestry includes the extinct Tweed Water Spaniel, a small Newfoundland, the Irish Setter and other water spaniels. The Golden was developed by Lord Tweedmouth at his estate on the Tweed River near Inverness, Scotland, for retrieving shot waterfowl. The foundation stock of the breed was a yellow retriever puppy of unknown breed and a Tweed Water Spaniel, both of which appear several times in early pedigrees.

In the early 1900s, Golden Retrievers were shown in England as Flat-coated Retrievers, Golden variety. The dogs made their way to the US with travelers in the 1890s, but were not exhibited in shows until after 1920. Initially, the dogs were used to hunt, but they gradually migrated to the show ring. Although the Golden color ranges from pale orange to deep gold, the deeper colors were originally preferred. Today the medium and light shades are more common than the burnished copper-gold.

Brains as well as beauty, along with an innate need to please his owners is the Golden trademark even above his handsome appearance. The first three dogs to achieve the Obedience Trial Championship instituted by the American Kennel Club in 1977 were Golden Retrievers.

The standard

The Golden is a well-balanced, strong, active dog with a kind expression, gentle manner, and an alert and self-confident disposition. He is trustworthy, friendly, and reliable; excessively shy or high strung dogs are atypical of the breed and usually the result of poor breeding practices or inadequate socialization.

Males stand 23-24 inches at the shoulder and weigh 65-75 pounds; females are a bit smaller and lighter. The body is a bit longer than tall.

Males have a broader skull and muzzle and a thicker neck than females, and neither should be coarse or overdone. The eyes have a deep and gentle expression with a spark of intelligence; the ears fall forward along the sides of the head but are set high so they do not droop like hound ears.

The tail is strong and well-fringed, and almost always wagging.

The Golden is a strong, muscular dog with fluid movement. He is well-angulated in the rear for endurance in the field, a trait that helps him work in obedience as well.

The Golden coat is dense and water-repellent with a good undercoat. The outer coat is firm and resilient and can be straight or wavy; the legs and tail are feathered with longer hairs. Color is rich and lustrous in various shades of gold. Although the color may shade to cream on some parts of the dog's body, particularly with the lighter-colored dogs, white markings are not permitted. In the show ring, Golden Retrievers with undershot or overshot jaws and dogs more than an inch off the stated height are disqualified.

Care and training

The Golden needs moderate daily exercise to maintain health and condition. His coat needs some grooming, and he does shed the soft undercoat. Although he is wonderful with children and eager to please, he must be obedience trained to channel both his enthusiasm and his strength.

Early socialization and puppy classes are important for the Golden youngster who must learn to curb his natural friendliness to other dogs and his exuberance for greeting people. Some dogs do not appreciate Golden overtures, and most people do not care to be leaped upon or bowled over.

Training must be gentle and consistent, never harsh, even for the dog that is easily distracted. However, firmness is also necessary, for a 70-pound dog with bad manners is a nuisance. Games go a long way; the Golden enjoys retrieving Frisbees and other toys and can be taught to locate hidden items.

If the Golden has a drawback as a pet, it is his perpetual effervescence, which can get him into trouble with other dogs and with neighbors and can be an annoyance for owners not able to give him frequent attention. However, most owners of this breed find the ebullience to be a treasure, the sweetness a joy, and the tight family bond to be reminiscent of childhood dreams of the perfect companion dog.

The Golden diet should be a premium food, and owners must be careful not to overfeed. Golden Retrievers are susceptible to hip dysplasia, a condition that can be triggered or exacerbated by too-rapid growth of puppies. Many veterinarians and breeders recommend adult food of less than 25 percent protein instead of puppy food after three months of age. Owners must also guard against overweight in these dogs that often make a science of begging treats and table scraps.

Golden Retrievers are also susceptible to progressive retinal atrophy, an eye disorder that causes blindness; von Willebrand's Disease, a bleeding disorder; cataracts; heart problems; and skin conditions. The Golden Retriever Club of America is jealous of the breed's health, but the popularity of the breed has led to many poor quality puppies produced by commercial kennels and backyard breeders.

Norma Bennett Woolf

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Kids And Dogs: Safety First

Kid-proof your dogs; dog-proof your kids

High-pitched laughter peeling behind her, Nancy ran around the corner of the house smack dab into the dog chained by the garage. Unnerved by the noise and startled by the child, the dog lunged and bit Nancy on the nose. She screamed, and the dog bit again. Nancy ended up with several stitches in her face and nightmares; the dog was euthanized for biting; and both families were traumatized.

The tragedy could have been avoided if Nancy's folks and the dog's owners had been prepared.

First of all, a dog should never be chained outside unattended. Most dogs of guard or working heritage suffer personality quirks when tied and many become downright aggressive. Dogs are better off in fenced areas, where they can see the barrier between them and the world, where they can feel somewhat safe from noisy, frolicking children. In addition, many dogs instinctively equate the high-pitched sounds of children with the distress sounds of prey animals, and they react by biting the child as they would have bitten the prey animal in the wild.

Second, children should be taught how to behave around dogs, even if their own family does not own a dog. For example, a child should never approach a strange dog without asking the owner if it's OK to pat the dog. If the child sees a loose dog on the street, he should not approach it even if he knows the dog belongs to his friend. He should tell someone that he saw the dog, but should make no attempt to pat or grab it.

Nor should he scream or run away, for these actions can result in an attack by the dog. A running being frequently says "prey" to the dog and triggers the chase response in his brain. Once triggered, this response is almost impossible to interrupt. The dog is reacting to chemical stimulus, not rational thought, and is extremely difficult to sidetrack.

Most dogs, even those that are well-trained, do not consider children as figures of authority. Furthermore, since children frequently stare intently at animals, a dog may feel threatened by this short person who is trying to catch him. Even the best-natured dog may bite to protect himself in these circumstances, especially if he feels cornered.

Once a child is given permission to approach a dog, she should present her closed fist for the dog to sniff. This protects the fingers in case the dog is frightened and tries to nip.

Children should never hug a dog that is not their own, and should only hug their own dog very gently if the dog can tolerate the hug. Children should be taught to never hit dogs with their hands or an object, to lower their voices when playing with the dog, to leave the dog alone when he's sleeping, eating, or ill, and to never tease a dog in any fashion. Many dog bites occur because the child teases the pet beyond endurance.

Dog owners share the responsibility for bite prevention as well. They should socialize their puppies to small children at an early age. (It helps to buy from a breeder who has started this socialization prior to the puppy purchase, for the younger the puppy is exposed to gentle children, the more tolerant of children it will become.)

Socialization can be as simple as walking the dog near a playground where children are making noise, running about, playing ball or Frisbee or soccer or walking through the neighborhood while the kids wait for the school bus. The dog can be told to walk at heel through a crowd of children, to sit-stay and watch the play or allow the children to pet his head, to down-stay until the end of the game. Constant exposure of this type will accustom the dog to the presence and antics of children.

1. **The dog should never be left alone with a child less than five years of age.** A young child may challenge or injure the dog unintentionally and the result could be tragic. Dogs and children should be separated at snack time so the dog doesn't learn to steal food from tiny hands.
2. **The dog should have a place he can call his own, a retreat, a private room, a den.** This can be a pen in the back yard or a crate in the house. The children should never be allowed to bother the dog when he is in his place.
3. **If the dog has access to a fenced yard, owners should make sure that neighborhood children cannot accidentally or intentionally tease him.** Kids often begin by goading the dog to bark, then to snarl. Or they may throw things at him to chase him away from the fence. However it begins, the end result is usually the same: the kids learn that teasing the dog gives them

a feeling of power tinged with the possibility of danger and the dog learns to hate kids. This hatred may be manifest as fear or as aggression, and may end when a child is bitten and the dog is taken to the pound to be placed in a new home, (if lucky).

4. **If the dog does not like the children, the children must change their behavior.** Most dogs are wary of staring, of quick movements, and of high-pitched screams, all of which are typical of small children. Here's a few hints to alleviate the tension between dog and children.
5. **Provide a crate where the dog can escape the attention of boisterous or over-zealous children.**
6. **Teach children to leave Ranger alone when he's in the crate, to pat him gently--no squeezing around the neck, please--and to leave him alone while he's eating.**
7. **Do not play tug-of-war with any dog who has access to children.** A dog that learns to tug on any item will soon figure that anything he can grab is his, even if it's a child's toy, clothing, or appendage.
8. **Teach children not to run past the dog and scream,** for this can excite the dog and lead to dominant and even aggressive behavior.
9. **Never tie a dog in the yard.** Children tend to tease tethered dogs even without realizing it, which can lead to aggressive behavior. Many instances of dogs attacking children occur when the dog is tethered in the yard and a screaming or running child enters its space.

The sight of a child and a dog napping together on the sofa or the floor, playing in the yard, or contemplating the sunset is a wondrous thing. The potential relationship between a child and the dog who considers himself the family guardian is precious, and it needs to be nurtured and guided. Families can accomplish this by teaching the dog and the child to respect and cherish each other. If this can be done, fewer children will be bitten and fewer dogs will be euthanized for aggressive behavior.

(Also see Vicki DeGruy's award winning column: *Kids and dogs: a common sense approach*)

Norma Bennett Woolf

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Kids and Dogs: A Common Sense Approach

Understanding dog bites: how they occur and how to prevent them

This article by Vicki DeGruy, originally published in *Dog Owner's Guide*, was the winner of a 1993 Dog Writer's Association of America Maxwell award for best article in a canine newspaper.

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Question: I'd like to get a medium to large breed dog for my family but I'm worried. I've heard so many stories about dogs biting children. How can I be sure that it will be safe for my kids?

Answer: You have good reason to be concerned. Statistics show that most dog bites causing serious injury involve medium to large sized dogs and children under the age of five years. The dog is usually known to the child or is the family's pet.

To understand how these bites occur, what causes them and how to prevent them, a little education in the nature of dogs and the nature of small children is in order.

A dog's temperament is first inherited, then modified by events in his life and proper training. Some breeds and certain bloodlines within breeds are friendlier, more tolerant and more adaptable to training because they were bred to be that way. A responsible breeder wisely puts emphasis on good temperament when selecting breeding stock. Breeders without adequate knowledge of dog behavior may not understand what a correct temperament is and use unsuitable dogs for breeding.

Unscrupulous breeders sometimes deliberately breed dogs with poor temperaments. There are some dogs, just like there are some humans, that are mentally disturbed or have an illness or physical defect that affects their behavior. A dog's basic temperament, instincts and training have the biggest effects on how that dog reacts to the world around him and his levels of tolerance.

Very few bites happen without provocation -- but the provocation may exist only in the dog's mind! We need to realize that dogs are not little people in furry costumes. They don't think in the same way that we do. They look at the world around them with a different

perspective. Most of their actions are instinctive. A dog will react to situations according to what his instincts tell him unless these instincts are overridden by the consistent training and socialization he needs to receive from his owner throughout his life.

Here is one of the most commonly reported scenarios in a bite case: A very young child sees a pretty dog he'd like to pet. The dog may not want to be petted. The dog's first instinctive reaction is show his displeasure by giving a warning -- growling. The growl means that something more unpleasant will follow if the warning isn't heeded.

The type and number of warnings given can vary. Many dogs faced with a child like this would just walk away. Walking away can be considered a warning. If the child keeps trying to pet the dog, a sterner warning, usually a growl, will follow. Some warnings are more subtle -- a stiffening of the body, for example. Few dogs bite without giving some indication beforehand.

Small children (and some adults) don't recognize a warning when they see or hear one. A very young child (under age six) doesn't know what a growl means. What may be obvious to an adult isn't understood by the child. The child continues to pet or follow after the dog even though the dog has now clearly told him what will happen if he doesn't stop.

Dogs instinctively set up an invisible "fight or flight" boundary around themselves. The size of this boundary depends on his level of confidence and tolerance. A fearful dog will give itself a wider area than a more stable one. When someone who the dog perceives as threatening or unwelcome enters that area, the dog has two choices -- it can run away or it can defend itself. If it feels that it can't run away, it will fight instead, no matter how afraid it might be. Some dogs will choose to fight first, rather than run.

A small child that's petting or hugging a dog has already intruded well within the dog's flight or fight boundary, the dog's safety zone. If the dog has tried to leave or has issued a warning with no response from the child, the dog (in his mind) has no other recourse -- he bites. This is normal, instinctive behavior -- to the dog. He is responding to what he perceives as a threat and is doing what his instincts tell him to. Remember that dogs don't think in the same way that people do. A child's innocent action, petting the dog, can be provocation for a bite when seen through the eyes of the dog.

There are other circumstances that can provoke a dog to bite a child. Running, playing, screaming kids can trigger an instinctive predator-prey reaction in some dogs. Children who rough house and wrestle with dogs unknowingly encourage them to use their teeth. Dogs equate this kind of play with littermates or other dogs where using teeth is allowed. Startling a sleeping dog or petting him when he's eating can also provoke a bite.

What can be done to prevent dogs from biting children? I feel that, first, it's essential to understand that almost any dog will bite under the right circumstances. Second, a dog is a dog, an animal whose behavior isn't the same as humans and can't always be predicted with 100 percent accuracy, no matter how friendly or reliable he is.

Obedience training and socialization are absolute musts for a dog who'll be spending time with children. Remember that a dog will act according to his instincts if he doesn't receive proper training or if that training isn't kept up through regular practice. The dog needs to be taught to obey commands under all conditions no matter how distracting. Just as responding to the command to "come" could save the dog's life someday, an immediate response to the command "leave it!" could save a child from serious injury.

Just as children need to be taught how to be well-behaved around other people, they need to be taught to be well-behaved and respectful around animals. They need to learn what kinds of games are appropriate, how to touch the dog properly, how to interpret the dog's body language and when the dog is not to be disturbed. When they're old enough to understand, kids should be involved in the training process. They should learn to give the dog commands and be able to enforce them.

Adult supervision is essential! Small children should never, ever be left alone with any dog, no matter how reliable the dog has been before. A responsible adult needs to be on the scene to prevent any aggressive behavior by the dog and to keep the child from putting him or herself in danger. Telling the toddler to stay away from the dog isn't enough! Remember that young children don't recognize when they may be in trouble. It's up to the adult to keep them safe from the dog and to keep the dog safe from the children. I can't stress enough that adult supervision around children and dogs is absolutely critical! If you can't be right there to handle whatever might come up or if you have any doubt about the dog's behavior around children, the dog should be put away out of reach of the kids.

Almost all of us would agree that it would be nice for our children to grow up with a dog. Kids and dogs are wonderful, almost an American tradition. If you're thinking of getting a dog for the children or already have one, here are some guidelines: Consider postponing the purchase of a dog, especially a large one, until your children are at least six years old.

1. Take your time when looking for a dog. Do your homework. Learn the differences in the various breeds and choose one best suited to your lifestyle and experience.

2. Be honest with yourself about the amount of time and work you're willing to put into a dog. If you don't have time to raise and train the dog properly, don't get one.
3. Buy your dog from a reputable, responsible breeder who puts priority on good temperament and health and consistently produces dogs that excel in those areas. Choose a breeder who's experienced and willing to guide and advise you about care and training throughout the dog's life.
4. Train and socialize your dog properly! Get help if you run into problems. Don't fool yourself into thinking the dog will "outgrow" it or that the problem will go away on its own.
5. Teach your children how to behave correctly and safely around animals and to respect them.
6. If your children are too young to understand, it will be up to you to physically supervise them and protect them from potential harm. Don't take chances with their safety! If you can't be right there to take care of a problem or if you can't control your dog or your child -- put the dog away.
7. Remember that what your dog tolerates from your own children may not be tolerated from someone else's. You need to take extra safety precautions when other children visit and make sure that the children obey your ground rules.
8. Never, ever leave a child alone with any dog, no matter how harmless the dog seems. Kids and dogs are wonderful together -- when adults use common sense and put safety first.

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"No bite!"

Angel days and devil days: teaching bite inhibition to puppies

***Q:** My Dalmatian puppy is almost nine weeks old. I got him when he was five weeks. He's playful and fun but I can't get him to stop biting me. That seems to be the only way he likes to play anymore — rough! I've been telling him No!, holding his mouth shut while saying "No bite!" and even shoving my hand back in his mouth like a trainer told me to do. Nothing seems to work. In fact, he thinks I'm playing a game with him and gets more excited the more I try to stop him. Sometimes he walks right up and attacks me! What can I do? Is he vicious?*

A: No, he's not vicious, he's just being a normal, rambunctious, and sometimes obnoxious puppy. To get control of your pup's biting, it helps to understand why puppies bite in the first place.

Biting and mouthing are normal behaviors for puppies. Dogs don't have hands so they investigate objects and their environment with their mouths. To a curious puppy, everything about this big world is brand new and exciting. He learns as he goes along. You can almost hear his thought processes as he discovers something he's never seen before: "Hmmm...what's this? [chomping on it] Something to eat? No? [tossing it around] Can I play with it? Maybe. Can I make it squeak?"

Playing is also a normal learning behavior for puppies, especially play-fighting. Play-fighting with littermates and other animals develops reflexes, coordination and physical skill. It also helps them develop social skills and teaches them how to interact positively within their canine society, their "pack." And it's great fun for them. Sometimes their fighting and "attacks" on us appear frighteningly fierce but to them, it's just a game. Much like a group of kids playing make-believe games and pretending to be grown-ups, puppies have their own games and pretend to be "grown-ups," too!

A dog's ability to control the force of his biting is called "bite inhibition." It's a critically important skill that every puppy needs to learn, the earlier the better. At first, they don't know their own strength nor how sharp their little teeth really are. Puppies learn to control the force of their biting from the reactions of their mothers and littermates during play and especially play-fighting.

We can teach puppies about bite inhibition, too, but some of the methods most often recommended aren't effective. Mother dogs' methods, however, are very effective, often more so than ours. I believe this is because they're speaking to their pups in the language they understand best -- dog language! A baby puppy is much too busy learning how to be a dog to take time to understand our human words and ways. That takes time and maturity. Puppies respond to dog language in a very powerful, instinctive way. We can take advantage of that by copying a mother dog's actions and using them for ourselves.

The idea of using mother dog's natural training techniques isn't new. Respected trainers like Carol Lea Benjamin have been using them for years. To understand these methods, let's take a look at a typical mother dog disciplining her brood. We'll use my Heather (Chow) and her four rowdy puppies as an example.

When a playful puppy bites Heather hard enough to hurt, she squeals in shocked indignation. The puppy, surprised at her reaction, usually hesitates a moment, unsure of himself, then tries to bite again. Heather yelps even louder this time and whirls on the puppy, growling, showing her teeth and scowling at him fiercely. Then she turns her back on him and storms away, completely ignoring him and any further attempts to get her to play. A smart puppy picks up her clear message quickly: "if you can't play nice, I won't play with you at all!"

If the puppy persists or doesn't take the hint, Heather doesn't fool around. With a menacing growl and using her teeth, she grabs him by the scruff of his neck and gives him a shake. If he sasses back, she gives him another little shake, tougher this time. She doesn't let

go of the pup till he's acknowledged her authority (in dog language) by relaxing his body, laying his ears back and keeping still for a moment. Heather disciplines especially obnoxious puppies by knocking them over with her paw and pinning them to the ground, growling angrily and pinching them with her teeth. The puppies shriek but they're not really hurt. She doesn't let them up again until they relax and lie still. After the correction, the puppy shakes his fur back into place and goes off in search of a playmate with a better sense of humor.

We don't have to growl at our puppies or shake them with our teeth, but we can modify Heather's technique for ourselves. The next time your puppy bites you, scream "OW!" in a high-pitched voice. Exaggerate a little. Then refuse to play with him or pay attention to him for a few minutes. If he doesn't get the message, give him a little scruff shake and scold him in a low-toned, threatening voice. You can exaggerate a little on that, too! Sound meaner than you really are. For puppies that just won't quit or seem to get wilder with every correction, flip them over on their backs, scold them in that same low, scary voice (growling) and gently but firmly, hold them in that position until they stop struggling.

We sometimes give puppies the wrong message about biting by some of the games we play with them. Wrestling and tug of war can encourage a puppy to bite and make it hard for him to distinguish when it's okay to use his teeth and when it's not. To make it easier for your puppy to learn good manners, it's a good idea to avoid these games.

Puppies seem to learn a great deal about bite inhibition and authority between five and eight weeks of age through play with their mothers and littermates. This is an especially good reason not to buy very young puppies. Puppies that were acquired earlier need to be taught these important things by their owners. They might require a little more intense use of Heather's methods than puppies that stayed with their litters longer. Puppies that receive little or no training in bite inhibition, either from their mothers or their people, may grow up to develop behavior problems.

I noticed that Heather picked out certain puppies for a little "extra" correction two or three times a day. She'd roll them over, pin them down for no apparent reason, growling at them if they didn't lie quietly. I noticed, too, that the puppies she chose were the most outgoing and dominant in the litter. She gave them regular reminders of her authority and the behavior she expected from them. I've found that using her technique myself works very well on puppies that've become too big for their britches!

Even with their mothers, puppies act a lot like kids -- they're always testing and pushing their limits. They have angel days and devil days. With patience, persistence and a few hints from your puppy's mother, you'll be able to tip the balance toward the angel's side! More on kids and dogs is available in the article: [Kids And Dogs: Safety first](#) and Vicki DeGruy's award-winning column: [Kids and Dogs: A common sense approach](#).

Vicki DeGruy

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Puppy adolescence: trials and tribulations

Tales of teenage terror

Q: *Can you tell me where I've gone wrong with my puppy? She used to be so good about coming when she was called and doing what she was told. It seems like just overnight she's turned into a brat and deliberately disobeys me. She's already been to an obedience class but she acts like she's forgotten everything she learned. She's nine months old.*

A: Welcome to adolescence! You have the canine equivalent of a rebellious teenager. Young puppies are very dependent on people and other dogs for instructions. They have a strong instinct to follow and to fit in. At about six months of age, they start to think for themselves and test their independence. This is also the time when they start to question your authority. Instead of automatically obeying you when you give a command, they now ask "What for?" and "What will you do if I don't?"

This can be a trying time for your relationship. In fact, most dogs taken to animal shelters because of "behavior problems" are between nine and 18 months old — prime canine adolescence. Most of these problems could be solved if the owner understood what was really going on and how to handle it.

This is also a very critical time for your relationship. Dogs do grow out of adolescence but what they learn during that time will stay with them the rest of their lives. Your puppy is testing you. If she learns that you won't enforce your commands and that she only has to obey when she wants to, you'll be setting a pattern that will be very hard to break.

It's important that you only give a command when you mean it and only when you're prepared to follow through. If you've called her to come and she doesn't, go and get her. Every time, no exceptions. Work a short obedience practice session into your schedule every day to brush up on her training. Include obedience commands like "Sit," "Down," and "Stay" in your daily routine around the house so they become second nature to you and your puppy.

Be consistent. If you enforce a command sometimes but not always, she'll learn that she only has to obey you sometimes. Show her what you expect from her every time.

Be persistent. Teenagers and adolescent dogs are stubborn. To get your point across, you need to be stubborner than they are!

Be patient. A well-trained dog doesn't just happen, it takes an investment of time and effort. To get the full return on this investment, a teenaged dog needs guidance and time to mature. Adolescence is a temporary condition but the solid foundation you build now will support your relationship for many years to come.

Vicki DeGruy

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Puppy chewing

Puppy days can be frustrating or fun -- you choose which!

*Higgledy, piggledy, pop
The dog has eaten the mop.*

So goes a children's rhyme according to the venerable Mother Goose. And so goes many a mop according to frustrated mothers who clean up after playful pooches.

Every family that has taken a dog into its heart has suffered the destructiveness of needle-sharp teeth that demolish dolls and seat cushions, splinter furniture and door frames, and tear bedspreads and panty hose. That such a tiny bundle of fur could be responsible for such waste is beyond belief. Almost. Puppies chew to ease teething discomfort, to play, to explore the environment, to assuage hunger, to establish dominance, and to relieve boredom. Families can plan a response to active puppy teeth that will soften the impact on possessions and limbs while the pup is growing.

Some suggestions

Buy Blackjack several toys he can chew on. Hard rubber balls and Kongs, sterilized bones, nylon bones, and knotted ropes are available at pet supply stores. Knotted rags and old socks and shoes are acceptable as long as the pup doesn't get confused between the discarded item and a pair of \$100 Nikes or Katy's new t-shirt. Soft squeak toys are fun for small puppies and for games of fetch, but are not sturdy enough for chewing exercise for older pups.

Whenever Taffy chews the wrong thing, remove her to a neutral area and give her something she's allowed to chew. No shouting, no smacks with a newspaper or hand -- just matter-of-fact corrections in a firm tone of voice. "No, that's mine, here's something for you" is appropriate.

Confine Fritz to a [crate](#) when you cannot watch him. A confined pet cannot chew the furniture. Make sure he has a toy in the crate that he is allowed to chew.

Limit access to bedrooms, living rooms, etc. with baby gates and closed doors.

Teach "no bite" to eliminate attempts to chew parts of human bodies. Puppies should never be allowed to teethe on people parts. Never. Biting family members is an attempt to establish dominance. Even toy dogs try to become leader of the family pack if given the opportunity. When a fast-growing guardian breed is allowed or encouraged to mouth arms and legs, he will quickly become unruly.

If you cannot stop the pooch from biting on crawling babies and toddlers, separate kids and dog. Don't fall for the old "he really doesn't mean it" when Ranger nips or growls at the kids. It doesn't matter what he meant -- he's not allowed to put his teeth on babies. Ever.

Puppies that are allowed to rule the roost with teeth and growl will turn into dogs that do the same.

Join the in a game of retrieve or Frisbee. Be sure to teach "bring it" and "give it" so you don't end up chasing Duke through several counties to get the ball back. These commands come in handy when the pup steals Mary's slippers or snatches an ornament off the Christmas tree as well.

Each time you give the pup a toy or treat, say "take it" before he puts it in his mouth. Grabbing is not allowed. When Bandit has mastered "sit," he should do so before the toy or food is offered.

Put Daisy on a leash to teach the retrieve game so you can guide her back and get the ball. Grasp the ball firmly with one hand, open her mouth by placing the other hand over her muzzle and pushing in on her lips to protect your fingers from her teeth. Say "give" and open her mouth to remove the toy.

Don't be intimidated by puppy growling and don't overreact. As Daisy learns the appropriate responses, the growling will cease.

Never play tug-of-war with a pup no matter how cute this growling ball of fluff looks on the other end of a rope or stick. If you give up the game, Rambo wins and advances up the leadership ladder. If you pull the rope from his teeth, you may hurt his tender young mouth. Puppies that learn to play tug-of-war frequently look at any moving piece of clothing as fair game, even if there's a child inside.

Teach children that puppies must never be encouraged to chase or bite. Collies, Corgis, Shetland Sheepdogs and other herding breeds may try to round up children by nipping at their heels, but this, too, is unacceptable. Owners can understand that their herding breed pups may exhibit this behavior, but they should not allow it to continue.

Use discipline, not punishment for infractions of the rules. A stern "no" or "quit it" and banishment to a crate should handle most infractions. Puppies should never be hit.

Be persistent and consistent. If it was wrong yesterday, it's wrong today.

The millions of dogs destroyed at animal shelters are testimony to the myth that good relationships with dogs develop automatically. You can avoid many of the behavior problems that often result in abandonment if by doing some basic training to teach Rover to inhibit his bite reflex.

Norma Bennett Woolf

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Puppy social skills

Puppies need social skills to become friendly guardians

Introduction

Q: I recently bought a Rottweiler puppy and I'm having some problems. He's growling at my friends. I want him to be a watchdog as well as a companion to me but how do I teach him when he's supposed to be friendly and when he's not?

A: Socialization is the process of teaching a dog how to cope with and behave well in a human world. Socialization is important for any pet but it's especially critical for large, guardian breeds. They're natural watchdogs. They're suspicious of strangers. This a natural, instinctive quality of this breed group. It doesn't have to be taught. Without socialization, though, they may become so suspicious that they won't let anyone touch them. They might even become aggressive. Most of the stories you hear about "vicious" dogs were inspired by dogs that weren't properly socialized.

Socialization should start as soon as the puppy is born. A responsible breeder lays a foundation for good behavior by handling the puppies every day. As they grow, the breeder allows them to go outside, to play and explore this big new world. The pups are introduced to a dog crate, house-breaking and the veterinarian. The breeder provides as many new experiences as possible to prepare them for the transition to their new homes. The breeder has merely started the socialization process. Now it's up to you to go on from there.

To a puppy, everything in the world is brand new. He's never seen any of this before! Try to remember his perspective as you teach him what's expected of him. Dogs learn from positive and negative experiences. They learn fastest from positive experiences. You'll get best results if you make it easy and rewarding for the puppy to do what you want. It's important to have patience and a good sense of humor!

Throughout his life, your dog will need grooming and medical exams. The first thing every puppy must learn is to allow himself to be handled and touched all over his body. Several times a day, pick up your puppy and put him on his back in your lap or on the floor. Be gentle but firm. He'll probably struggle to get away so rub his tummy and talk to him until he relaxes. Run your hands all over him — down his legs, fiddle with his toes, feel his ears, lift his lips to look at his teeth, scratch his back. He might nip your fingers in play and wriggle all around while he's getting his "massage". It's important that you make these sessions enjoyable but don't let it turn into a wrestling match or a tug o'war game. Have everyone in your household and your friends handle the puppy like this every day.

Gradually increase the length of time the puppy must lie quietly until he'll lie there to be massaged as long as you want.

Introduce a brush and the nail clipper during some of these sessions and make the brushing feel good. As your dog grows up and it's no longer practical to hold him in your lap, encourage him to lie on his side for his massages. Grooming and nail cutting are much easier on both of you when the dog lies quietly on his side. Your dog will look forward to grooming if you've shown him since puppyhood how pleasurable it can be.

Building tolerance

The guardian breeds can be reluctant to meet new people and must be taught to tolerate strangers. Many puppies enjoy the people they meet and want attention. Others don't. Some puppies learn to like it but a few never do. It really doesn't matter how your puppy feels about it, though. The most important thing is that he learn to tolerate being handled by strangers because you want him to. Without this training, visits to the vet, the groomer or boarding kennel will always be difficult or even impossible.

When a visitor wants to pet your puppy, pick him up and put him in the person's arms. Shy or frightened puppies often do better when picked up than if approached on the ground. Both of you should talk to him in a happy, cheerful voice. Have your visitor offer him some of his favorite treats. If the pup's frightened or upset, ignore it. Don't baby him or use a comforting tone like "There, there,

puppy, don't be scared, everything's okay" because it backfires! The puppy usually responds by becoming more frightened and acts even worse. Make your puppy feel secure by being confident and enthusiastic. Be gentle but firm.

Many kennel clubs, veterinary clinics and animal shelters offer "puppy kindergarten" classes. Created especially to help with socialization, these inexpensive classes are great opportunities for you and your puppy. They're fun, too! Your puppy especially needs socialization in the world outside your home. As soon as he can be taught to walk on leash and has had his puppy shots, take him everywhere with you. Let him investigate everything. If he's afraid or confused, find a spot for the two of you to sit and watch things go by. Bring along some of his favorite treats and toys. Let him check things out at his own pace and encourage him with a happy, confident voice. For some puppies, it might only take a few minutes for them to get comfortable in a new environment. For others, you might need to make several of these "watch and relax" stops throughout the course of a walk.

When you take your dog to the vet, be positive but firm. In order to work efficiently, the vet needs your dog's cooperation. No vet likes to work on a growling dog that's not under his owner's control and some will refuse to serve them altogether. Encourage your puppy to stand quietly on the table. Keep gentle control by holding his head.

When your puppy is old enough, four-to-six months of age, start him in obedience class! Even the most well-behaved puppy needs to learn to obey commands. Classes are inexpensive, fun, excellent opportunities for socialization and available in almost every city. Your veterinarian or the AKC can refer you to local training clubs that offer group classes at convenient times and reasonable rates.

Socialization with other dogs

Some of the guardian breeds are not "pack oriented." Most of them are fairly solitary and don't enjoy the company of other dogs besides those in their own household. They can still learn to be ladies and gentleman when on lead around other dogs, though, and puppy kindergarten and obedience classes are good socialization and training opportunities.

Some dogs are "born socialized" but most of them require some form of socialization throughout their whole lives. Like obedience training, it's an ongoing process that's never quite finished. Once your dog's grown up, continue taking him with you whenever possible. If left at home too long out of sight of the real world, your dog may quickly forget how he's supposed to act. Give him plenty of socialization refresher courses. Let him meet new people and make new friends. There'll be plenty of people wanting to admire your beautiful dog and you'll make plenty of new friends, too!

Vicki DeGruy

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Who's in charge here, anyway?

Why don't we get any respect?

Q: *Help! Our one year old dog doesn't seem to have any respect for us. He's been to obedience class but he seldom obeys our commands. He's always grabbing our hands or head butting us when he wants something. He's become very demanding. He never seems to get enough attention even though we give him attention all the time. He even body slams us out of the way at the door so he can get outside first. He's a very loving dog but we need to get him under control. He's too big to be telling us what to do!*

A: You're absolutely right! It sounds like your dog has a dominance problem and is on his way toward becoming the leader of your family – his pack. He has also reached the age of adolescence where, similar to a teenaged child, he's testing your limits. Now is an ideal time to nip these problems in the bud.

A dog's social system has a pecking order. The leader of the pack is the "alpha." He (or she) gets the best of everything – the best food, the best place to sleep, the best toy, etc. The alpha also gets to be first in everything – he gets to eat first, to leave first and to get attention first. All the other dogs in the pack respect the alpha dog's wishes. An alpha dog doesn't ask for what he wants, he demands it. He lets you know in no uncertain terms that he wants his dinner, that he wants to go out, that he wants to play or be petted and that he wants these things right now.

Your family is your dog's pack. Most dogs fit easily into the lower levels of their human pack's pecking order and don't make trouble. They do what they're told and don't challenge authority. Other dogs don't fit in quite as well. Some are natural leaders, others are social climbers always looking for ways to get a little closer to the top of the family ladder. These dogs can become problems to an unsuspecting family that's not aware of their natural pack instincts. Some families unknowingly encourage their dogs to take over the pack. They treat their dogs as equals, not as subordinates. They give them special privileges like being allowed to sleep on the bed or couch. They let them get away with disobeying commands. In a real dog pack, only the alpha dog would get this kind of treatment. Dogs need – and want – leaders. They have an instinctive need to fit into a pack. They want the security of knowing their place and what's expected of them. Most of them don't want to be alpha – they want someone else to give orders and make decisions. But if his humans don't provide that leadership, the dog will take over the role himself. To reclaim your family's rightful place as leaders of the

pack, your dog needs to learn how to be a subordinate, not an equal. He knew this once, as a baby puppy, because his mother taught him. She showed him very early in life that she was alpha and that he had to respect her. It's time to refresh his memory!

Before you can remove your dog from his alpha position, you must become alpha and earn his respect. Alpha is an attitude. It involves confidence, dignity, intelligence, an air of authority. A dog can sense this attitude almost immediately – it's how his mother acted toward him. Watch a good trainer or obedience instructor. They stand tall and use their voices and eyes to project the idea that they're capable of getting what they want. They're gentle but firm, loving but tough, all at the same time. Most dogs are immediately submissive towards this type of personality because they recognize and respect alpha when they see it.

Stand up straight with your shoulders back. Walk tall. Practice using a new tone of voice, one that's deep and firm. Don't ask your dog to do something – tell him. There's a difference and he knows it! As alpha, you're entitled to make the rules and give the orders. Your dog understands that instinctively.

Since your dog has been used to getting what he wants on demand, it's likely to take more than just a change in your attitude to make him mind better. He's been getting a free ride for a long time but you're going to teach him that from now on, he has to earn what he gets. This will be a shock to his system at first but you'll be surprised how quickly he'll catch on and that he'll actually become eager to please you.

Your dog already knows the command SIT. Now, every time your dog wants something – his dinner, a trip outside, a walk, some attention, anything – tell him (remember don't ask him, tell him) to sit first. When he does, praise him with a "Good Boy!" then tell him OKAY and give him whatever it is he wants as a reward. If he refuses to sit, walk away and ignore him. No sit, no reward. If you don't think he understands the command, work on his training some more. If he just doesn't want to obey, ignore him – don't give him what he wants or reward him in any fashion.

Make him sit before giving him his dinner, make him sit at the door before going outside, make him sit in front of you to be petted, make him sit before giving him his toy. If you normally leave food out for him all the time, stop. Go to a twice daily feeding and you decide what time of day he'll be fed. Make him sit for his dinner. If he won't obey the command – no dinner. Walk away and ignore him. Bring the food out later and tell him again to sit. If he understands the command, don't tell him more than once. He heard you the first time. Give commands from a standing position and use a deep, firm tone of voice. To keep him from body-slaming you at the doorway, put a leash on him. Make him sit and wait while you open the door and give him permission – OKAY! – to go out.

Alpha dogs are used to being fussed over. In a real dog pack, subordinate dogs are forever touching, licking and grooming the alpha dog. It's a show of respect and submission. Until your dog's attitude has improved, cut down on the amount of cuddling he gets. When he wants attention, make him sit first, give him a few kind words and pats, then stop. Go back to whatever you were doing and ignore him. If he pesters you, tell him NO! in a firm voice and ignore him some more. Pet him when you want to, not just because he wants you to. Also, don't get down on the floor or on your knees to pet your dog. That, too, is a show of submission. Give praise, petting and rewards from a position that's higher than the dog.

Don't allow wrestling or rough-housing with your dog. These games encourage dogs to dominate people physically. In a dog pack or in a litter, these games are more than just playing – they help to establish pack order based on physical strength. Your dog is already stronger and quicker than you are. Rough, physical games prove that to him.

Where does your dog sleep? Not in your bedroom and especially not on your bed! Your bedroom is a special place – it's your den. An alpha dog thinks he has a right to sleep in your den because he considers himself your equal. Until your dog's alpha problems are fully under control, the bedroom should be off-limits. The same goes for sleeping on furniture. If you can't keep him off the couch without a fight, deny him access to the room.

If your alpha program is successful, your dog should start looking to you for directions and permission. He'll show an eagerness to please. Watch how your dog approaches and greets you. Does he come to you "standing tall," with his head and ears held high and erect? It may look impressive and proud but it means he's still alpha and you still have problems! A dog that accepts humans as superiors will approach you with his head slightly lowered and his ears back or off to the sides. He'll "shrink" his whole body a little in a show of submission. Watch how he greets all the members of the family. If he displays this submissive posture to some of them, but not others, those are the ones who need to work harder on their own alpha techniques.

Once your dog has begun to accept this new way of life and his new position in the family, you should take him through another obedience course with a qualified trainer. Obedience training is a lifelong process. Obedience commands need to be practiced and incorporated into your daily life. In a dog pack, the alpha animal uses occasional reminders to reinforce his authority. Certain commands, like DOWN/STAY, are especially effective reminders of a dog's place in the family pack order and who's really in charge here. A well-trained dog that's secure in his place within the family pack is comfortable and confident. He knows what's expected of him. He knows his limits and who his leaders are. He's free to be your loving companion and not your boss!

Vicki DeGruy

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Give that dog a job to keep him happy

"My dog is always into something."

Q: *I'm almost at my wit's end. My Golden Retriever is 2 years old and he's so hyper! He's always into something, chews on the furniture, jumps up on everyone upsetting the guests, he digs under the fence and he's in my face all the time. I thought he'd calm down as he got older but he hasn't. Any ideas?*

A: Golden Retrievers are very energetic, enthusiastic, people-loving dogs. What you're describing—being “in your face” all the time, chewing, jumping up and excitability are normal activities for this kind of dog. This doesn't mean that they can't be modified with training but you need to understand that these are some of characteristics of the type of dog you chose. Golden Retrievers, like many sporting breeds, need training, exercise, attention and a job to do in order to be the kind of pet you want.

Golden Retrievers excel in obedience competitions. They are very trainable and willing at any age. Training, however, isn't a one-time thing, it needs to be practiced every day. For the Golden who jumps up, tell the dog to “*SIT-and-STAY*” when guests are about to come in the door. Until the dog is reliable on command, keep a leash on him and use it to enforce the command. Make sure you give lots of praise for obeying; Golden Retrievers thrive on praise. Jumping up is an expression of joy over seeing you or a new person, so make the experience of obeying your command (by using treats and praise) more rewarding than the act of jumping up.

For the dog that's in your face—well, that's where your people-loving Golden wants to be most of all. But I know there are times when you just can't have him on top of you. Sign up for obedience class and teach him what “down-and-stay” means. When you need to have your dog out of your hair temporarily, tell him to “down-and-stay or temporarily confine him to a dog crate.

Destructive behavior like chewing and digging, especially when seen in an active breed like a Golden, is often a sign of boredom and lack of exercise. A short term cure is to make sure your dog has plenty of appropriate chew toys. There are bitter-tasting spray-on products you can get and apply to your furniture that will discourage chewing. Keep chewable valuables out of reach. If chewing while you're gone is a problem, get a dog crate. It will keep him safe and out of trouble when you can't supervise him.

For a long term cure for chewing and destructive behavior, your Golden needs a constructive way to use his energy. Daily walks are more effective than just being let out into the yard to amuse himself. Walks are fun and healthy for both of you! Take advantage of your dog's natural retrieving and athletic ability—can he catch a Frisbee or a ball? Sure he can! Can you give him a job? Can he fetch things around the house for you like pieces of dirty laundry or put away his own toys? Sure he can—if you take the time to show him how. Obedience training and practice are effective, too. It takes a lot of energy to concentrate and obey commands! You can incorporate obedience commands into everything you do. Walks, games and work to do are all great energy-burners and give him the personal attention he craves.

Your Golden's greatest desire is to please you. You can show him what it takes to make you happy through training and praise. By the same token, you have to understand that your dog has needs, too. Every successful relationship, whether human or canine, involves an understanding of each other's needs and how best to meet them. If you give him what he needs—exercise, training, a job to do and adequate praise and attention, he'll be better able to give you what you need—a well-behaved, calm companion!

Vicki DeGruy

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Much ado about “responsible dog ownership” It's more than just being kind to your dog!

There's lots said these days about something called “responsible dog ownership,” but like art, people often can't define it — they just know when they see it.

The definition of “responsible” includes the conduct of an obligation or a duty. It is definitely the dog owner's duty to provide basic needs for his pets and show dogs, but beyond the basics, the issue of responsibility gets fuzzy.

Responsible dog ownership has a few foundation tenets, but beyond that framework, it can vary considerably. Few people would argue that these tenets include keeping Fido at home, treating him kindly, and providing good food, fresh water, adequate shelter, and appropriate veterinary care.

Responsible owners take seriously the duty to prevent canine pregnancies that add to animal control burdens — and shelter deaths — in the community. Sterilization is the easiest, most practical, and perhaps safest method of preventing unwanted litters and has other advantages as well: it prevents reproductive system infections and cancers; eliminates the annoyances of dealing with female dogs in season; and helps moderate the temperament of male dogs.

However, these advantages do not translate to “responsible dog owners spay or neuter their pets.” Pet owners who choose to keep their pets intact should not be considered irresponsible as long as they use another method to prevent production of unwanted litters.

Keeping Rover at home

Responsible dog ownership does include keeping the pet at home. Ohio has leash laws that require dogs to be under control at all times, so failure to confine the dog can result in a citation and a hefty fine.

But more important than the law is the need to maintain a good neighbor policy and to protect the dog from injury. Some owners keep Sassy home with a fence. Others always walk her on a leash and take precautions to prevent her from slipping out the door when the kids go out to play. (Baby gates and dog crates come in handy here.)

A dog kept at home can't dig in the neighbor's garden, mug the neighbor's kids or pets, frighten joggers, soil lawns, or get in fights.

Keeping Monster quiet

Noisy dogs can be a nuisance in close-knit neighborhoods, apartment complexes, and condo developments. Dogs barking at night waken babies and keep adults from nodding off; dogs barking during the day bother second shift workers and irritate frayed nerves. Most dogs who bark too much are either kenneled outside or left alone for hours at a time. Most dogs that bark too much can be taught to keep quiet except when alerting to a stranger.

Keeping Rambo clean, well-fed, well-housed, and healthy

Although there is much debate over dog food, any food that maintains the dog's health is appropriate. If you want natural, buy natural. If you want to make your own, do so. If you want to buy a grocery store brand, fine. If preservatives don't bother you, fine. Just buy or make a balanced food you can afford and monitor the dog's condition. If his coat's too dry or he's too fat or thin, or you get tired of huge piles to clean up or if he doesn't like it or doesn't digest it well, explore the possibility of changing foods.

Daily, weekly, or even monthly baths are neither necessary nor recommended for healthy dogs. However, responsible owners do monitor their pet's skin and coat condition and take appropriate measures to keep them healthy. Cleanliness in the yard, the neighborhood, and the whole community is an important part of responsible dog ownership, so clean up after your dog on your own property and in public. Appropriate housing can vary with breed. A dog with a thick double coat can sleep outside all year as long as he has an insulated house, is protected from wind, direct sun, and precipitation, and has plenty of clean water and nourishing food. A dog with short hair should not sleep outside in cool or cold weather, and toy dogs should never be sent outside to sleep.

Dogs should have an annual checkup by a veterinarian and be placed on a preventive medicine program for rabies, distemper, parvovirus and other diseases. Many owners include heartworm preventive in that list, but some responsible owners are reluctant to give monthly heartworm preventive to their pets. Some owners prefer a homeopathic approach to good health and some use a combination of homeopathy and traditional medicine.

In a nutshell, responsible dog owners protect their pets from injury and disease, protect their neighbors from transgressions by their pets, and avoid unwanted litters. How they do so should be a matter of personal preference. If dog owners do not select the easy way, they should not be treated as “irresponsible” as long as the goals — no unwanted puppies, no nuisances, no neglect — are achieved.

Norma Bennett Woolf

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Puppy-Proof Your Home

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General Tips

Like babies, puppies need constant supervision. However, you do not need to give your puppy access to all parts of your home.

Until he knows the house rules, confine your puppy to an easily cleaned area where you can keep a watchful eye on him.

Gate or crate

Puppy gates are available at pet-supply stores; simply place them in a doorway as you would a baby gate (they work for puppies, too). Or buy a properly sized crate for your dog; especially if you plan to travel with your dog, a crate is an excellent idea. Think of it as your dog's home kennel, or an indoor doghouse; dogs generally see their crates as their personal space and, with training, will willingly go there on command.

To be on the safe side, until you know your puppy's jumping and wriggling abilities, remind everyone in the household to close doors to rooms with temptations like open wastebaskets and low toy bins. A New York couple came home one afternoon to find their Jack Russell puppy happily exploring an off-limits room; he'd learned to jump over the gate in the doorway.

Rooms to avoid

It's not a good idea to confine your untrained puppy to the bathroom, garage, or yard. In the bathroom, she may be tempted to drink from the toilet. Beyond the fact that the water is unsanitary, there's the danger of her falling in and drowning, and the water can contain a harmful bowl-cleaner residue. Your garage is probably full of potentially lethal substances like antifreeze and insecticides. And the yard is dangerous to a curious puppy, not only because of swimming pools, fishponds, poisonous or spiky plants, and gardening implements, but also because of wild animals (large or small), birds of prey, and sharp twigs (remember, puppies love to chew!).

At floor level

To get a puppy's eye view of the areas of your home where your new pet will have free access, get down on your hands and knees. Whatever you see that's within reach, assume that your puppy will want to taste.

Some puppies will chew on anything and everything; others are more selective. One Brooklyn family thought their puppy hadn't chewed anything for weeks—until the day they noticed that the lowest bookcase shelf had a row of tiny teeth marks in it!

Puppies are also great at wriggling into improbable spaces. So for at least the first few days, you may want to block off areas, like under a couch, where they could get stuck.

Safety Zone

For the place where the dog spends time alone, these tips will help you create a "puppy-proof" area. If you're a parent, much of this advice will seem familiar from when your baby became mobile.

- Place electrical wires out of reach; if necessary, tape down wires to keep them out of the way. Unplug appliances when not in use, and do not let the cords dangle. You may even want to put plastic safety plugs in unused outlets to prevent adventurous sniffing or licking.
- Make sure lethal substances like household cleaners, bleach, insecticides, fertilizers, mothballs, and antifreeze are locked away or out of reach.
- Place all plants well out of your puppy's reach, for the plant's sake and for the health of your dog. Some plants are poisonous to pets, but "very few are very dangerous to dogs; most, like poinsettias and some of the ivies, can cause gastric or stomach upset if ingested," advises Duane Schnittker, DVM.
- Most homes have an accumulation of books, magazines, shoes, jackets, and shopping bags on or near the floor. As much as is practical, put everything you don't want chewed away in a cabinet or on a high shelf.
- Check the floor and low shelves for small objects like pins, needles, bottle caps, and little toys and knick-knacks, and move them.
- Cover your garbage container with a tight lid. Dogs generally see garbage as a canine smorgasbord. And things that seem harmless (not to mention unappetizing) to you can be tasty but toxic for your dog. This list includes things like the seed pits of apples, apricots, cherries, peaches, pears, and plums.
- Keep in mind that tablecloths and dangling runners can be pulled down. If you use these items, consider keeping your untrained puppy out of the eating area, particularly if fragile and/or heavy objects are on the table.
- Window-blind cords should be tied or taped up to prevent chewing or strangulation.

Puppy Playthings

Keep play time safe with these tips:

- Buy several chew toys, so you can offer them as an alternative when you catch your puppy chewing on something forbidden. Select the appropriate size for your dog right now, not a large size he may need after he's grown. (Similarly, don't give your dog toys that are small enough for him to swallow.)

- Praise your dog when you find her chewing on something appropriate.
- Check that the eyes on stuffed pet toys are tightly attached and that squeakers are not easily removed.
- If you give your dog stuffed toys designed for children, be especially careful to check the label to make sure they're stuffed with nontoxic material, and supervise your dog when she's playing with them. Toys for humans are not designed to be attacked by sharp little teeth; they may easily disintegrate.
- Although it sounds like a cute idea, don't let puppies play with old shoes. The shoes may contain small parts that could be harmful if swallowed, and chewing on shoes can become a lifelong bad habit, since dogs don't differentiate between old and new shoes.

Grooming Basics

No matter what your mother said, it's not just what's on the inside that counts--not, at least, when it comes to canine care. Your dog's health and happiness also are dependent upon a well-care-for exterior--coat, ears, mouth and nails.

Show dogs and those with special grooming problems (severely matted hair, hard-to-groom ears and infected gums, to name a few) need the attention and skills of a veterinarian or professional groomer. But you easily can give your dog routine every-day care at home.

Regular brushing helps eliminate tangles and mats and helps your dog get accustomed to being handled. It also gives you the opportunity to check for ticks and fleas, lesions, lumps and changes in his skin and coat. Pet-supply stores and catalogs sell a wide array of brushes for different coats and conditions.

Slicker brushes have a bed of fine, closely spaced wires that usually are hooked or bent; they're good all-purpose brushes for removing mats, loose hair and debris.

Pin brushes have a bed of widely spaced tines that look like straight pins. The tines sometimes are tipped with plastic. Pin brushes are also good for removing tangles but can be uncomfortable for grooming shorthaired dogs.

Bristle brushes and metal combs are used in the final grooming step for longhaired dogs, leaving their hair sleek, smooth and shiny. A bristle brush may be the only brush you'll need for a shorthaired dog.

Begin the brushing process with a slicker or pin brush to remove dead hair, debris and tangles. For breeds with long and very thick coats, you should groom with both brushes, using the slicker brush first.

For tough tangles, gently comb or brush small sections at a time, giving yourself and your dog a break every few minutes. Be careful not to tug at or tear the hair.

After the coat is smooth, give your dog a final brushing with a bristle brush (for shorthaired dogs) or a comb (for longhaired dogs). Give plenty of praise during the brushing process and reward your dog with a treat when you're finished.

Bath time is much easier after a thorough brushing. Place your dog in a tub or a basin with a nonskid surface. Hold your dog's collar firmly, then slowly pour several pitchers of lukewarm water over his body, being careful to leave the head dry.

Soap your dog's body with a dog shampoo, then massage the soap into a lather, talking to your dog and praising him as you work. When his body is lathered, move to his head, being careful to keep shampoo out of his eyes, ears and mouth.

Rinse and dry your dog's head, then rinse his body. When the water runs clear, rinse one more time.

Thoroughly dry your dog with towels. If your dog has healthy skin, you can dry him further with a hair dryer set on low or warm temperature.

Bathe smaller dogs such as poodles and schnauzers every two or three weeks, except in the winter when once a month probably will do. Larger pets need bathing several times a year. Of course, always wash a pet when it is dirty or smells, regardless of when it was last bathed.

Proper foot care will keep your doggie dancing and help prevent unnecessary pain and infection later on. Most dogs don't like to have their feet handled, so go slowly--one paw at a time--and make foot handling a part of playtime.

Remove mats of hair from between the toes and pads of dogs with hairy feet; if ignored, the mats can become as hard as rocks. Then, using scissors, trim the hair between the pads and between the toes so it is level with the dog's foot.

Regular exercise on a hard surface may keep a dog's nails worn down. However, most domestic dogs will need to have their nails clipped every few weeks. If your dog has dewclaws (the smaller claw on the back of each leg, higher than the paws), those always will need clipping. If the nails or dewclaws are allowed to grow, they may curl inward into the skin and cause a painful infection.

Use nail clippers designed specifically for dogs. One type, known as the guillotine style, has a round opening for the dog's nail and a blade that slides across to clip the nail. Another type works like a pair of scissors. This type puts less pressure on the nail and is more comfortable for the dog. Make sure the blades are sharp.

Trim only the "hook" end of the nail. Clipping a nail to short can be painful and may cause bleeding. Frequent trimming of a small amount of nail always is better than waiting until the nail is long. Never trim into the quick -- the live portion of the nail.

Ear care generally is the easiest grooming task. Unless your dog has ear problems or spends time hunting and swimming, ear cleaning needs to be done only every few weeks--at bath time is best.

Clean the outermost area of your dog's ears with a cotton ball or cotton swab dampened with water or baby oil. To clean further inside the ears and soften and remove wax, use an ear-cleaning solution.

Warm the bottle of solution between your palms, then squirt the prescribed amount into your dog's ear canal. Gently massage the base of his ear. Remove any dirt or wax with a dry cotton ball.

Article provided by IAMS

Life Long Purina® Study Reveals How to Help Your Dog Enjoy More Healthy Years

Purina® Life Plan™ Makes It Easier to Feed Properly

ST. LOUIS, Mo. (May 6, 2002)—What dog owner wouldn't want more healthy years with his pet? A study from Nestlé Purina PetCare shows pet owners may have the power of longevity in their own hands.

In the first-ever lifelong canine diet restriction study, Purina researchers have proven that a dog's median life span can be extended by 15 percent—nearly two years for the Labrador Retrievers in this study—by feeding to ideal body condition through diet restriction, according to findings published in the current edition of the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association.

The 14-year Purina "Life Span" Study found that dogs that consumed 25 percent fewer calories than their littermates during their lifetimes maintained a lean or ideal body condition*, resulting in a longer median life span. According to experts, the study provides the most significant data to date on the effects of diet restriction as the...

1. First diet restriction study completed for the entire life span of a larger mammal;
2. First completed study to document that diet restriction increases survival time in mammals larger than rodents;
3. First study to achieve these health benefits for dogs with moderate reduction of food intake (25 percent versus the 30 percent to 50 percent typically used in rodent studies)

"We all know that obesity, whether in humans or canines, is generally bad for health," says Dennis Lawler, DVM, Purina scientist and a lead study investigator. "What's exciting about this study is that, for the first time in a larger mammal, we have shown scientifically that by simply feeding to maintain ideal body condition throughout a dog's life, we can increase length of life while delaying the visible signs of aging. That's powerful stuff."

Study Design—A Lifetime of Information

When the study began, 48 eight-week-old Labrador Retriever dogs from seven litters were paired within their litters according to gender and body weight and randomly assigned to either a control or restricted-fed group. The control group was allowed to eat an unlimited, or free choice, amount of food during 15-minute daily feedings. Dogs in the restricted, or "lean-fed," group were fed 75 percent of the amount eaten by their paired littermates.

All dogs were fed the same 100 percent nutritionally complete and balanced diets (puppy, then adult) for the entire period of the study, from eight weeks of age until death—only the quantity was different.

Dogs were weighed weekly as puppies, periodically as adolescents and then weekly as adults. Beginning at six years of age, they were evaluated annually for ideal body condition using the Purina Body Condition System™, a scientifically validated standard used by veterinarians to evaluate body physique in pets to assess weight and health. Other health indicators, including body fat mass, lean body mass, bone mass and glucose, glucose and insulin use, and cholesterol and triglyceride levels were measured annually to assess condition and health.

Study Results...More Healthy Years

Study findings revealed that the median life span of the lean-fed dogs was extended by 15 percent or nearly two years. Median life span (the age at which 50 percent of dogs in the group died) was 11.2 years for the control group versus 13 years for the lean-fed dogs.

By age 10, only three lean-fed dogs had died, compared to seven control group dogs. At the end of the twelfth year, 11 lean-fed dogs were alive with only one control dog surviving. Twenty-five percent of the lean-fed group survived to 13.5 years, while none of the control group dogs lived to 13.5 years.

The study showed that the lean-fed dogs maintained a significantly leaner body condition from 6 to 12 years of age than the control group dogs, with mean body condition scores between 4—5 (ideal) and 6 - 7 (overfed), respectively. On average, the lean-fed group weighed less, had lower body fat, and after a certain age, experienced a two-year delay in the loss of lean body mass as they aged, compared to the control group dogs.

In addition, according to observations of the researchers, the control dogs exhibited more visible signs of aging, such as graying muzzles, impaired gaits and reduced activity, at an earlier age than the lean-fed dogs.

The study provides some insight to human health as well.

"This study is significant for human as well as canine health because it's the first study completed in a larger mammal that proves the significant power that diet restriction wields in extending life and delaying the markers of aging," says Dr. Richard Weindruch, University of Wisconsin professor of medicine and expert in the diet restriction field. "From this study, we can extrapolate that large mammals, including humans, can potentially live healthier and longer through diet restriction."

Purina® Life Plan™

The Purina "Life Plan" Study reveals the crucial role ideal body condition plays in health and longevity. However, obesity remains the number one nutritional problem among dogs. Studies have documented that at least 25 percent of dogs in the U.S. may be overweight.

To help maximize their dogs' health, dog owners should learn how to recognize the signs of obesity and feed to ideal body condition. To help pet owners do this, Purina developed the Purina® Life Plan™, a comprehensive approach applying specific breed size and lifestage guidelines, the Purina Body Condition System and feeding instructions to its packaging. The Purina Life Plan enables pet owners to feed to their individual pet's ideal body condition from puppyhood through the senior years.

"There are many factors that go into determining ideal body condition, from the size of your pet to his age to his breed, and it can be difficult for pet owners to do it on their own," says Aine McCarthy, DVM.

Lean or ideal body condition refers to the evaluation of body physique in pets as an indicator of their overall health and well-being, generally falling into three categories: too thin, ideal and too heavy.

- **Too Thin:** Ribs are highly visible.
- **Ideal Body Condition:** Can feel and see outline of ribs. Dog has a waist when viewed from above. Belly is tucked up when viewed from the side.
- **Too Heavy:** Dog has no waist when viewed from above. Belly is rounded when viewed from the side.

**Ideal body condition: physical assessment of health defined as when you can feel and see the outline of a dog's ribs, there is a waist when viewed from above and the abdomen is tucked up when viewed from the side.*

Article Provided by Purina