

MP Canine Academy

PRESENTS



THE FIRST SIX MONTHS

A PUPPY GUIDE

A comprehensive guide to managing and making the most of the early days of “puppy-hood”. Including best practices to prepare your dog for a program at MP Canine Academy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Note from our Head Trainer	1
<i>YOUR HOME</i>	
Proper Puppy-Proofing	2
Crate-Training	3
Emergency Preparedness	4
<i>YOUR PUPPY</i>	
House Training	5-7
Diet and Nutrition.....	8
Mental Stimulation	9
Check-ups and Vaccinations.....	10
<i>EARLY MANNERS</i>	
Puppy Behaviour Phases	11-12
Positive Reinforcement	13
Encouraging Independence	14
Common Blunders	15
The Reading List	16-17



A Note from our Head Trainer

Often, new dog parents, filled with excitement, eagerly ask about when their dog can join one of our programs. While I very much appreciate the enthusiasm, my rule of thumb is simple: *we'll see you in six months*. You see, there is no time quite like puppy-hood. This will be the smallest and arguably the cutest your dog will be, it's important to *enjoy it*. Soak it all in. The time period is critical in cultivating your special bond and learning about each other.

You see obedience can be taught at any age; so you don't put any pressure on learning commands and rushing through to dog-hood. Instead, set your focus *and patience* towards manners and housetraining. And in all of the hustle and bustle, remember to revel in the joy every pup is sure to evoke.

MORGAN PHILLIPS, OWNER & HEAD TRAINER

PROPER PUPPY PROOFING

Here, we aim to be proactive rather than reactive. Before you even bring your newest addition home start with the following:

- Secure, remove and declutter any and all non-essential wires that are floor or “puppy”-level. An accidental electric shock could be devastating
- Review all houseplants for dog toxicity and be sure all harmful plants are well out of reach
- Sweep for any cleaning supplies, medications, toiletries etc., and keep them out of reach
- Check furniture arrangement and positioning to ensure sturdiness and no topple-hazards along with reviewing and re-adjusting (as needed) any puppy-sized gaps
- Shoes, socks, slippers, and laundry in general should be inaccessible
- Prepare “doggy-gates” for any areas that can’t be fully proofed or will be considered no-gos including steep staircases
- Toys, toys, toys, oh and more toys. Different sizes, textures, types may be what saves your couch or trim

CRATE TRAINING

Closely connected with house-training, crate training should be considered an integral part of good puppy development. It aids in the establishment of independence, reduction of separation anxiety and good house-training practices; pups avoid peeing where they sleep if they can help it. If your dog will ever be alone for long periods of time, travelling or if you'll ever entertaining in any capacity, it's worth the time. The crate is their safe, happy and private place. These are the three things to keep in mind:

1. While you purchase a crate with the adult-dog in mind you'll want to invest in dividers or a crate that naturally **sizes up**. It may be tempting to give your puppy as much room as possible, but it's imperative that young pups have just enough room to be comfortable without providing a "sleeping" and "bathroom area".

2. Make the crate a cozy, comfortable and positive place before your first introduction. Toys, blankets and treats are essential. Consider feeding your puppy in their crate as it will help teach them to go in on cue, and can prevent future food aggression as they have privacy to eat in peace (and no need to guard it).

3. Begin gradually. Introduce the crate by simply placing it in a central location in your home and leaving the door wide open. With treats and praise, allow for the initial exploration. After a few successful attempts close the door for a short period of time. Increase duration very slowly over a long period of time. Never rush, force or treat the crate as punishment.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Even with proper care and diligence emergency situations arise. And while you can't prepare for every eventuality here are the basics of preparedness:

1. Know the **hours of operation** for your vet and research your **nearest emergency or 24-hour vet**.
2. Have a general idea of the **weight of your dog** in the case of toxic substance ingestion (with a puppy, simply weigh yourself holding your dog and then without your dog, subtracting the difference for an estimated weight.) If your dog ingests something of this nature, be sure to have the product name, the estimated amount, time since ingestion and any other substance-specific information.
3. Purchase a First Aid Kit specifically designed for dogs. We would recommend [this one](#). Review both the uses of the contents to be able to act quickly if and as needed.

YOUR PUPPY

HOUSE

TRAINING

This is not a command, it's simply a habit. One that you begin nurturing the very second you bring your puppy home. Consistency, patience and persistence are the core pillars to a successful housetraining journey. Here are the key points to understand and utilize:

SCHEDULING FOOD, WATER+

Puppies typically want to go the bathroom **every time** they eat, drink, wake up, or go to sleep. Although obvious, sometimes people don't make the direct connection. So, the higher the frequency and volume **of input**, the higher the frequency and volume **of output**. Therefore, we begin the journey by scheduling food and water intakes. We estimate about 15 minutes from food or water intake to expected output. Create a schedule around your day with this in mind. Rest assured that 2-4 feedings/waterings a day is sufficient for puppies.

SELECT A DESIGNATED SPOT

Choose a consistent and convenient spot **outdoors**. There are no shortcuts here. **Avoid pee pads***. You can allow your pup to select this spot or you can coax them with kibble or treats to a more desirable location (but not reward them, more on this later). When it comes to puppies, if you can't live with it forever, don't tolerate it for a day. For example, if they select right in the middle of your deck, in a children's play-area, right outside the door, some redirection would be recommended.

**Pee pads if even successful, train a dog to pee indoors. We don't want that! Often, they're not successful and delay proper training. Many dogs won't get used to them, tend to shred them and prolonged use can be unsanitary. Caution against ease. One day of convenience is not worth constant accidents in the home for years to come.*

YOUR PUPPY HOUSE TRAINING

CONTINUED

TO REWARD? OR NOT TO REWARD?

As previously mentioned housetraining creates and supports a habit, not obedience of a command. Therefore, while gentle verbal praises are great, don't worry about a constant stream of treats. Compare it to your dog taking a nap. A nap is needed, part of a schedule, and what's cuter than a puppy-nap? Nothing. But it would feel silly providing a treat following a "cat" nap.

ACCIDENT REACTIONS

We separate in-home accidents into two types: those you find and those you see.

Those that you find: because you didn't see the accident, you're too late. If you find an accident by the door, remember that your puppy tried to hold it but didn't quite make it. There's no way to discipline your puppy for an accident that happened an undetermined time ago, accept responsibility and do better!

If you see your puppy piddling: you've have caught them red-pawed. Mildly scold as you approach, pick them up up and then carry them to your designated spot. That's a good extent of punishment.

DYK? Mother dogs will begin disciplining their puppies at 3-4 weeks old if they go to the bathroom in the whelping box/dog house. Up until that age, the mother cleans up messes herself, but somewhere between 3-4 weeks old she decides that she's had enough, and bites the pups if they poop in her bed.

YOUR PUPPY

HOUSE TRAINING

CONTINUED

RECOGNIZE THE SIGNALS

Most dogs will show some sign of needing to relieve themselves. Look for: sniffing, circling and even hanging out by the door. You'll have a small window as warning, so ample supervision is required. Upon a signal, lead your puppy directly to your designated spot.

CRATE TRAINING RETURNS

Successful crate training prevents your puppy from making mistakes when we aren't around. Remember they try to avoid making a mess on themselves/ their sleeping areas meaning they'll attempt to hold it in as long as they can. This means we can use the crate to prevent accidents (and regressing on their housetraining) during times when we are at work, sleeping, or unable to provide constant supervision or just need a break.

THE HOUSETRAINING WINDOW

If your dog isn't house trained by the time they reach maturity (1-2 years old) then you might never be met with success. Like all habits however, this will take time. Allow 6 months to really get it down. Accidents happen and the fact of it is: housetraining depends a lot on the dog. And each one is so different. Keep that in mind and stay on top of your schedule and you should be met with success.

YOUR PUPPY

DIET AND NUTRITION

Think of high-quality dog food like the raw material needed for the best growth and development. Diet not only impacts physicality but additionally overall health and behaviour. We look to food to provide essential macronutrients like proteins, carbohydrates and yes, even fats along with certain minerals needed for certain kinds of development. Look for a “puppy”-specific formula and continue to feed until your dog stops growing.

Raw food versus kibble?

You are not doing your dog a disservice if you're not feeding them a raw diet. While it can have some noted benefits there are several drawbacks. It is an investment in both time and finances and even the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) maintains that there is “documented scientific evidence of potential animal and public health risks in feeding raw meats [which] outweighs the perceived benefits of this feeding practice. In short, kibble is great.

Here are two brands we personally like:

[Purina Pro Plan Puppy](#)

[Red Paw X-Series Puppy](#)

MENTAL STIMULATION

In the same way that a proper diet is necessary for good development, mental stimulation is invaluable. Cognition, memory and even problem-solving skills are enriched with the right kind of stimulation. What's important to note here is that a lot will depend on the breed of your puppy. This is two-fold, firstly, your breed often determines the level and frequency of stimulation your dog may require and secondly the kind of stimulation best suited to breed-purpose, therefore best enjoyed.

The goal is to have your dog *think*. Consider some of the following:

- **Treat-dispensing puzzles:** you can find a variety of sizes, complexities and levels. The dog uses various skills in attempting to have the treat dispensed.
- **Snuffle mats:** these are mats made of various kinds of fabrics, complexly folded with pockets and crevices where treats can be hidden to allow your dog to use their nose and “snuffle” to find them.
- **Puzzle toys:** similar to treat-dispensing puzzles just without treats
- **DIYs:** sometimes the best stimulation is free. Research different activities that you can try with things you already have accessible at home.

Another helpful tip is to focus a search on your breed, “mental enrichment for X” or “best mental stimulation for X puppies” to have better more fulfilling results. Finally, versatility is important here, so do your best to update, alter and try new things as often as you can.



YOUR PUPPY

CHECK-UPS AND VACCINATIONS

- Schedule consistent and regular vet appointments as requested by your veterinarian.
- Ensure all vaccines and preventative care remain up-to-date. This can additionally include tick and flea prevention. Also, keep in mind that socializing puppies outside of their own litters should only occur after the first round of vaccinations.

PUPPY BEHAVIOUR PHASES

Note, that the timing listed is approximate, different breeds will reach various phases at slightly different times, but the stages are consistent.

PRE-ADOLESCENT PERIOD (4-6 MONTHS)

Playful, curious, rambunctious. This is a stage that is closely aligned with the definitions many of us have of “puppy-hood”. At this stage we work on housetraining, crate training, play and gentle introductions to new environments. Remember if you can’t live with it forever, don’t tolerate it for a day. At this point your attention is a treasure. Give and take as needed to help your puppy understand preferred and unwanted behaviours.

TEETHING (>6 MONTHS)

Puppies are born without any teeth. At around 3 weeks they’ll grow their first set of “baby” teeth in two stages. The first being their deciduous incisors and canines (front teeth and fangs) followed by premolars. Then at around 12 weeks they’ll begin losing this first set and replacing them with their permanent set. Normally by 6 months all permanent teeth have grown in. During this time, many dogs find comfort in chewing. Provide ample chew-safe items to avoid losing parts of furniture, shoes and anything else that may help alleviate this transition.

PUPPY BEHAVIOUR PHASES

CONTINUED

SENSITIVE PERIOD (6-14 MONTHS)

Generally, a pup passes through two “sensitive periods”. The first likely before you bring them home and the second within the first 6 months to under a year and a half. You’ll see your puppy become suddenly wary and cautious, even with things they previously enjoyed. During this time, support your puppy by letting them take their time and keeping things light and fun. Socialization should still be continued, but in short increments.

ADOLECENSE (6-18 MONTHS)

Described as the “teen” years. Hormone production begins as your dog will begin reaching sexual maturity. This maturation, and all the extra hormones will have some impact on behaviors. Interestingly, the larger the breed the slower the development, so with the largest breeds, sexual maturity can be reached as late as 12 months. This is the behavioural phase where we usually come in. Here’s what you can typically expect with males and females:

MALES

- Descent of testicles
- Increased aggression towards other dogs
- Scent marking
- Decreased friendliness
- Lifting legs to pee
- Disinterest in listening

FEMALES

- Completion of first heat cycle
- Increased moodiness and inattentiveness
- Increased aggression towards peoples and dogs
- Can appear lethargic

In terms of training, an adolescent is as smart and trainable as an adult dog. This is why we accept dogs at this age-level for our programs.

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Behaviours that are **rewarded or reinforced are more likely to be repeated**. When your puppy is ready to join one of our programs, you'll learn about how we use operant conditioning in our training. It's a process that involves shaping behavior through the use of rewards and consequences, creating a predictable pattern of cause and effect. While your dog is young the preliminary focus, however, should be on a positive reinforcement.

UPON A DESIRED BEHAVIOUR YOU CAN PROVIDE:

- Small, puppy-preferred treats
- Verbal praise delivered with enthusiasm
- Physical affection like petting, scratching behind the ears or any other physical attention your puppy likes
- A favourite toy or initiating play-time

WHAT IF THEY DO SOMETHING UNDESIREED?

As previously mentioned utilize what your dog craves, your attention, by taking it away when they are doing something bad. The same way we can use praise, leaving the room, or ignoring your dog can help solidify something as an unwanted behaviour. Tread gently and always be sure to review if you have done everything in your power to help prevent an undesirable behaviour. For example, your dog is chewing on the couch. Do they have ample chew toys and aids? Your dog has piddled by the door. Did you time a bathroom break after a meal? Accept responsibility and do better next time.

ENCOURAGING INDEPENDENCE

Majority of people understand that a puppy requires both time and attention. A lesser known fact, however, is that encouraging independence is also essential. A independent puppy ensures both comfort and confidence for dog and owner alike. Here are a few things to focus on before proper training begins:

SET BOUNDARIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Think of this as creating and keeping to a set of rules. Perhaps there are certain rooms your dog is not allowed to enter, or certain pieces of furniture they can't climb. Or something like establishing when your puppy can enter a room or jump on the couch.

PRACTISE SHORT SEPARATIONS

Short and sweet. You can begin by simply going to the bathroom without your puppy. On top of minor separations, practise being together without giving direct attention too often.

ENRICHMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

While you may be excited to foster a beautiful bond with your dog, be sure that they're fulfilled with plenty to keep their minds and bodies busy. It may be tempting to spend as much time as possible with them, but be sure there are things that they love and are excited besides their family.

COMMON BLUNDERS

OVERSTIMULATION

Puppies can easily get overwhelmed and can sometimes have a difficult time coping with their environments.

Especially if too much is asked of them too fast.

Remember, they're young. Signs of overstimulation can include: hyperactivity which can be mislabelled as puppy-energy or excitement, restlessness, excessive barking and even some destructive behaviours. Avoid overstimulation by limiting new introductions, and providing the opportunity for lots and lots of puppy-naps. Incorporate a daily 30-60 minute removal of all toys to encourage being able to settle without constant stimulation.

UNDER-SOCIALIZING

Your dog should be exposed to new places, people and different dogs throughout the course of their young life. Neglecting this important area can lead to extreme fear reactions like trembling, tail-tucking and cowering, aggression towards people and other dogs, sensitivity to noises, excessive barking and difficulty handling. Aim to have short, positive interactions that are repeated often for the best results.

TAKING THINGS TOO SERIOUSLY

As previously mentioned, the first six-months are some of the best months together. Stay calm, consistent and enjoy your pup. We can start training at any time in a dog's life.

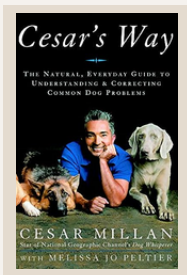
Enjoy this special time together.

A man with a beard, wearing a grey flat cap and a green tweed jacket, is shown from the side, looking down at a black and white dog. He is gently holding the dog's face with his right hand. The dog is sitting and looking up at him. The background is dark and out of focus.

EARLY MANNERS

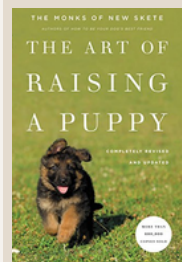
THE READING LIST

We look forward to meeting your dog when they are at least 6 months old. Find our programs at mpcanineacademy.com. In the meantime, peruse our recommended reads on all things behaviour and training.



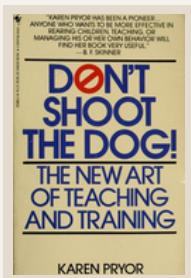
"CESAR'S WAY" BY CESAR MILLAN

Cesar Millan, a renowned dog behaviorist, shares his insights and techniques for **understanding** your dog's behavior and **addressing common problems**. This book emphasizes the importance of leadership and communication in training your dog.



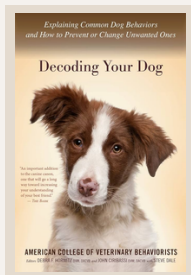
"THE ART OF RAISING A PUPPY" BY THE MONKS OF NEW SKETE

This comprehensive guide offers advice on raising a well-behaved and well-adjusted puppy. The Monks of New Skete provide practical tips on training, socialization, and building a strong bond with your puppy



"DON'T SHOOT THE DOG!" BY KAREN PRYOR

Karen Pryor, a pioneer in the field of animal training, explores the principles of operant conditioning and how they can be applied to training dogs. This book offers practical advice on using positive reinforcement to modify behavior.



"DECODING YOUR DOG" BY AMERICAN COLLEGE OF VETERINARY BEHAVIORISTS

This book offers insights into understanding your dog's behavior and provides practical advice on how to address common behavior issues. Written by a team of veterinary behaviorists, this book is a valuable resource for dog owners.