



The Mannerly Dog

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Training Tip Sheet: Teaching Puppies to Be Handled

Throughout a puppy's life, he will need to have his body handled and manipulated for grooming, medical examinations, and for wiping his feet after going outside in the wet grass. It's much less stressful for the puppy as well as you if the pup has been prepared for handling so he enjoys it, or at least tolerates it well. Start working on this process as soon as you meet your puppy.

Types of Body Handling a Puppy Needs to Tolerate:

At first, your puppy may be surprised by these exercises or may not want you to do them. Practice often, but for only a few seconds at a time, and give him a treat after each second of handling. Pairing treats with these handling procedures will teach the puppy to look forward to them in the future, and you'll find him more relaxed each time you do these exercises.

- ***Examine his ears:*** look in his ears, pretend to put medication in and massage the ear canal. Give him a treat for accepting each step of this process.
- ***Examine his eyes:*** gently pull the eyelids away from the eyeball and look closely at each eye. Give him a treat for accepting this.
- ***Examine his mouth:*** gently open his mouth and pretend to look at his teeth, his gums, tongue and throat. Give him a treat for each step of this process.
- ***Examine and wipe his feet; practice toenail-trimming:*** with the puppy relaxed and lying down, handle one foot. Gently examine his foot, look between his toes and gently squeeze a toenail or two. Carefully trim just the tip of only one toenail. Give him a treat after each step of this process.
- ***Examine his tail and under-tail area:*** Handle his tail and look under it. Give him a treat for tolerating this.
- ***Brush the puppy with a soft brush;*** give him a treat every few seconds.
- ***Examine his belly:*** with the puppy relaxed and lying down, gently roll him over onto his back and pretend to examine his belly and chest. Pet him and brush him gently with a soft brush. Give him a treat after each second or two throughout this process.
- ***Pull the puppy gently by his collar*** and give him a treat. We shouldn't be dragging a puppy by his collar, but it's important he learn to tolerate it because someone is going to do it sometime and we want him to be used to it when it happens.
- ***Pat your puppy gently on top of his head.*** This is a dog's least favorite way to be petted, but someone is very likely going to pet yours this way sometime. It's best if he is not surprised or upset by this treatment and tolerates it well.
- Any handling procedure your puppy objects to is one you need to practice even more. Practice gently and carefully, in a controlled process, anything that your puppy has trouble tolerating. Use plenty of treats as you begin with the simplest touch, perhaps just an index finger on the body part he needs to learn to have handled, and give him a treat immediately. By pairing treats with handling he doesn't really like, you'll find your puppy happy to comply with things that previously bothered him.