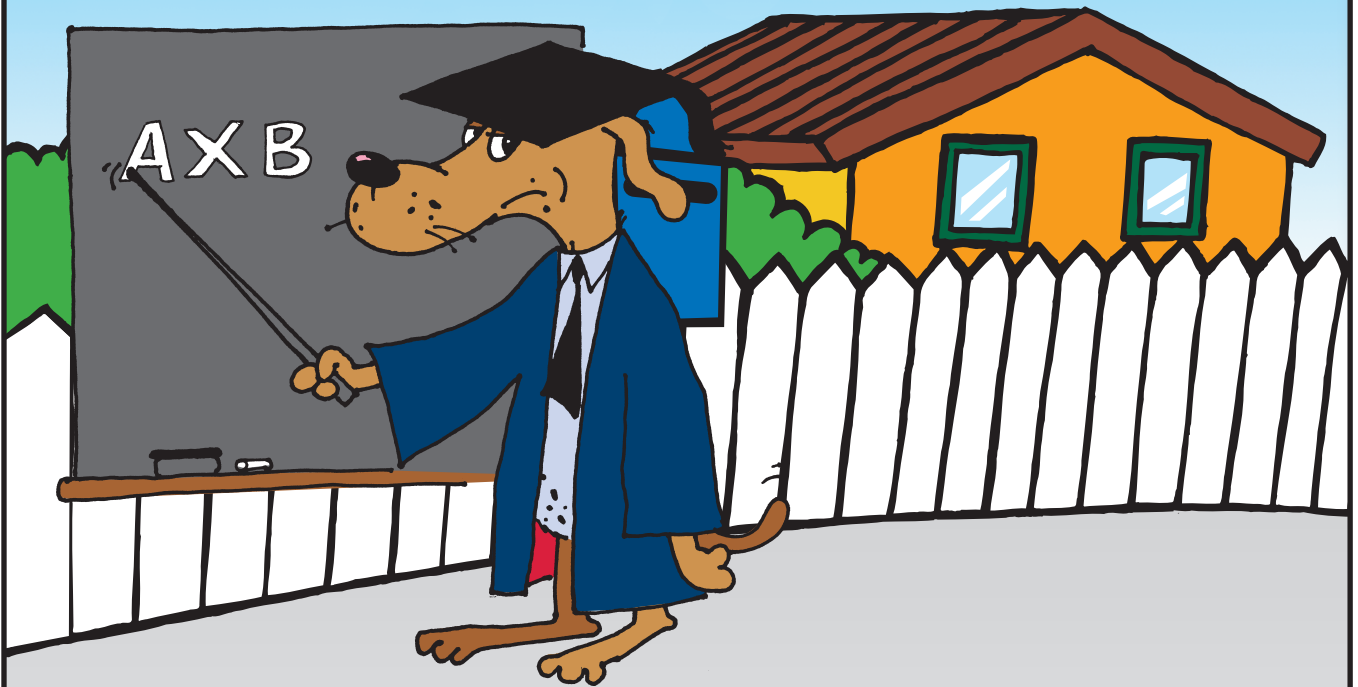


# Setting The Groundwork For Successful Puppy Training



You need to establish leadership over your new puppy in order to successfully train it. If your puppy does not respect your leadership then it will not accept your training.

It is important to recognise the difference between a “behaviour” problem and a “training” issue. **First consider:**

- What is causing this behaviour?
- Is it acceptable or unacceptable?
- Is it appropriate or inappropriate?
- Is it normal or abnormal?
- Could the behaviour be the result of a medical problem?

## **Avoid using too much discipline.**

Discipline can have negative consequences, for example:

- Your puppy has not been taught what is wrong yet.
- Your puppy may end up being fearful of you and people in general.

- It may cause your puppy to redirect its aggression.
- It may simply displace the problem.
- It may cause an aggressive response.
- It may cause “learned helplessness”. This impacts on your puppy’s ability to cope under stressful situations.

It is your responsibility to set the boundaries and teach the puppy good manners. You need to clearly show your puppy what you expect of it.

Dogs are social animals which follow a leader. If you do not establish your leadership over the puppy it will establish its leadership over you.

## **Caution:**

This brochure is a guide to establishing leadership over your puppy. It is not recommended that this procedure be used to modify dominance behaviour of an adult dog. An adult dog may accept the challenge and “do battle” with the trainer.

## Procedure to establish leadership:

**Praise, teach and reinforce submissive gestures, ignore or distract dominant behaviour.**

It is most important that you are consistent and that you constantly praise the puppy for complying.

Do not lose your temper when your puppy does something wrong. This simply sends the message that you are not in control.

All members of your family and even people from outside the family should be involved in the following exercises.

### Handling exercises:

**Lift the puppy up off the ground, to about 30cm away from your face and stare directly into its eyes.**

Dogs use eye contact to size each other up. Do not hold the puppy too close to your face otherwise it may try and snap at you.

- If the puppy struggles or growls, raise your voice and firmly say "AH".
- If the puppy looks away from you i.e. to avoid eye contact, praise it.
- Keep the puppy in this position for about one minute.
- Repeat the exercise frequently for about two weeks, in different places and around different people.

**Hold the puppy by the scruff of the neck, your other hand supporting its backside.**

This exercise is not intended to hurt the puppy. Be sure not to grab the skin too close to the base of the head or too close to the area between the shoulder blades.

- If the puppy struggles or growls, raise your voice and firmly say "AH".
- When the puppy settles, praise it.

Repeat the exercise as mentioned in c) & d) above.

**Straddle the puppy and interlock your fingers behind the front legs under its chest.**

Lift the puppy off the ground. Dogs feel vulnerable when you take away their traction.

Follow steps a) through d) above.

**Pin the puppy on the ground on its side.**

With your other hand, handle all parts of the puppy's body. Put your fingers in its mouth, play with its ears, etc.

Follow steps a) through d).

**Start basic training commands as soon as possible.**

Structured training will create a healthy relationship. Obeying your commands means respecting your leadership.

**Feeding the puppy.**

Humans provide and control the resources. Therefore humans should be respected.

**Disrupt feeding.**

You have the power to withdraw all resources and privileges. It is in the puppy's best interests to please you.

**Cautiously introduce the puppy to new stimuli.**

Reassure it and keep it under your protection because you are the leader. Introduce a wide range of experiences and, if possible, attend "puppy pre-school" or "puppy parties". Don't carry your puppy too often. It may become too reliant on this position for comfort and security.

**Don't over excite the puppy.**

Play is healthy for a number of reasons. However an over excited puppy is likely to become destructive.

**Don't encourage or promote "bite games".**

Avoid games like tug-of-war. Dogs know to the fraction of a gram how hard they are biting an object. The last thing we want to do is to teach them that biting hard is okay. Abbreviated biting should be discouraged.

**Try and avoid long periods of separation.**

However make the puppy spend small amounts of time on its own. Never attend to the puppy while it is barking. This will only reinforce that barking creates attention.

**Don't make a big fuss over departures or arrivals.**

If you make a big fuss over departures or arrivals you will be rewarding any anxiety the puppy has been feeling. Avoid eye contact during this time. As soon as you make eye contact, you are in communication.

**When you take your puppy for a walk, initially teach it to walk behind you.**

The leader should be in front. First teach your dog to heel then, with your permission, the puppy can walk by your side.