



Five secrets to a well-adjusted new puppy

An article by dvm360 in association with Kathryn Primm, DVM, and modified for Evergreen Veterinary Hospital

Did you know that puppies learn and develop a big part of their adult personality by 16 weeks of age? The positive – or negative – associations that young dogs develop during the critical stage of brain development can last a lifetime for better or for worse, so let's make it better! Remember, do not force things! Make sure these exposures are done in a way that is comfortable for the puppy. Do not keep exposing a puppy to a new experience if they are scared. Talk to the Evergreen team today for guidance!

Secret 1: Handle your puppy – literally

Make a point to touch your puppy all over. Do not be forceful or push to the point of struggle, however. Touch and hold gently and reward the acceptance with a special treat. Remember, over time, you will need to be able to trim toe nails, clean ears and brush teeth. If your new puppy enjoys these rituals, life is better for the both of you!

Secret 2: Socialize with your puppy

Let your puppy meet people of all shapes, sizes and mannerisms to learn that there is nothing to fear from people. Introduce children, men, women and even people with hats, sunglasses or costumes. Do not forget the treats to make this fun!

Secret 3: Play dress-up with your puppy

If your dog is ever going to need a sweater, coat or even a bandage, now is the time to teach them about these. Even if you have them wear a loose T-shirt, getting them used to the feeling is an investment for the future. Best of all, if you can help your new puppy learn about an Elizabethan collar (those collars we use when our furry friends need them due to surgeries, wounds, itchiness, the list goes on and on), their time in one in the future will be more pleasant.



Secret 4: Make noises with your puppy

Expose your pup to loud noises and novel objects, like the vacuum cleaner, doorbell and even something as odd as a rattling can full of coins. Show that these things are not harmful and reward them only when they are calm in reaction to them. Startling at a loud noise is normal, but your puppy can learn that there is ultimately nothing to fear and recover quickly from the startle. Noise phobias are real, and you can do your part to prevent them.

Secret 5: Adventure with your puppy

You and your pup will experience all life has to offer together, but the experiences will not be as fun if your puppy is afraid or difficult to handle. Take your puppy everywhere you can for exposure to new places. Visit Evergreen on a day just for a happy visit and some yummy treats! Take the puppy on errands to see lots of new sights and smells. Make all the places that you go extra special with great treats or repeat the visits until they are so normal that your pup may even be bored with them. Be sure to check with the Evergreen team some of the places you plan to visit to ensure that they will be safe for your pup!

Science shows that it is easier for brains to remember bad experiences far better than good ones, so make sure your foundation for your puppy's brain is filled with terrific associations. You can avoid big problems in the future, and let's face it, handling and spending time with your puppy is a ton of fun!