



HANDLING

*A guide to
introducing your
puppy to
handling using
cooperative care*



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WHY IS HANDLING IMPORTANT?

Handling is a huge part of your puppy's life—from vet visits to grooming, nail trims, and even just putting on a harness. Teaching them to be comfortable with it now will save you (and them!) a lot of stress in the future. The key? **Cooperative care**—where your puppy is an active, willing participant in their own care.



THE LONG-TERM PAYOFF

Handling practice now means:

- Less stress at the vet & groomer
- Easier nail trims & brushing
- A pup that trusts you completely

BUT PUPPIES LOVE BEING HANDLED. DON'T THEY?



Not all puppies enjoy being touched right away, and that's okay! The important thing is to listen to what they're telling you.

Signs your puppy is uncomfortable:

- Turning their head away or avoiding eye contact
- Licking their lips, yawning, or sniffing the ground (stress signals)
- Freezing up or going stiff
- Trying to move away or wriggling to escape
- Growling, air snapping, or showing their teeth (this is a warning—listen to it!)

If you see any of these signs, **stop and give them space**. Go back to an easier step and rebuild their trust slowly.

HOW TO GET STARTED

The goal is for your pup to see handling as no big deal—or even better, something they enjoy! Here's how to get started:



PAIR TOUCH WITH TREATS

Lightly touch your pup's paw, ear, or tail, then give a tasty treat. Keep it brief and positive



WATCH THEIR BODY LANGUAGE

If they pull away or seem uncomfortable, slow down. We want them to feel safe, not just tolerate it



LET THEM OPT-IN

Teach a simple “consent” behavior, like a chin rest in your hand. If they pull away, respect that and try again later



SHORT & SWEET SESSIONS

Keep handling practice to just a few minutes at a time

BUILDING COMFORT WITH EVERYDAY HANDLING

01

KEY AREAS TO WORK ON

- **Paws & nail trims** – Gently touch their paws, hold them briefly, and reward. Work up to tapping a nail with clippers (without cutting) before trimming for real.
- **Ears** – Lift an ear flap, look inside, then treat. This makes ear cleaning easier later!
- **Mouth & Teeth** – Gently lift their lip, touch their gums, and reward. Great prep for brushing!
- **Brushing & Grooming** – Start with short strokes of a brush or comb, treating as you go.
- **Collar, Harness & Vet Handling** – Gently touch their collar, lift their legs, or check their belly—just like a vet would.

02

TEACH A HANDLING CUE

Try introducing a simple phrase like “Ready?” before handling. If your pup stays still, reward! This teaches them that they’re in control—making handling way less stressful.

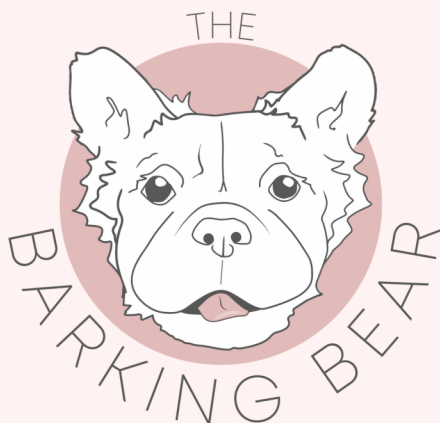
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WHAT IF MY PUPPY RESISTS?

Some pups are naturally more sensitive to touch. If yours pulls away, slow down and break it into smaller steps. Never force them—cooperative care is about trust, not restraint.

GET IN TOUCH

Need more advice or have any questions,
get in contact.



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