

I am your puppy

I am your puppy, and I will love you until the end of the earth, but please know a few things about me.

I am a puppy, this means that my intelligence and capacity for learning are about the same as an 8-monthold child.

I am a puppy; I will chew everything I can get my teeth on. This is how I explore and learn about the world. Even human children put things in their mouths. It's up to you to guide me to what is mine to chew and what is not.

I am a puppy; I cannot hold my bladder for longer than one to two hours. I cannot "feel" that I need to poop until it is actually beginning to come out. I cannot vocalize nor tell you that I need to go, and I cannot have "bladder and bowel control" until six to nine months. Do not punish me if you have not let me out for three hours and I tinkle. It is your fault. As a puppy, it is wise to remember that I need to go potty after eating, sleeping, playing, drinking and around every two to three hours in addition. If you want me to sleep through the night, do not give me water after 8 p.m. A crate will make housebreaking easier, and will help keep you from being mad at me.

I am a puppy, accidents will happen, please be patient with me! In time I will learn.

I am a puppy, I like to play. I will run around, and chase imaginary monsters, and chase your feet and your toes and 'attack' you, chase fuzz balls, other pets and small kids. It is play; it's what I do. Do not be mad at me or expect me to be sedate, mellow and sleep all day. If my high energy level is too much for you, maybe you could consider an older dog from a shelter or rescue group. My play is beneficial, use your wisdom to guide me in my play with appropriate toys, and activities like chasing a rolling ball. If I nip you too hard, talk to me in "dog talk" by giving a loud yelp. I will usually get the message, as this is how dogs communicate with one another. If I get too rough, simply ignore me for a few moments, or put me in my crate with an appropriate chew toy.

I am a puppy; hopefully you would not yell, hit, strike, kick or beat a 6-month-old human infant, so please do not do the same to me. I am delicate, and also very impressionable. If you treat me harshly now, I will grow up learning to fear being hit, spanked, kicked or beat. Instead, please guide me with encouragement and wisdom. For instance, if I am chewing something wrong, say, "No chew!" and hand me a toy I am allowed to chew. Better yet, pick up anything that you do not want

me to get into. I can't tell the difference between your old sock and your new sock, or an old sneaker and your \$200 Nikes.

I am a puppy, and I am a creature with feelings and drives much like your own, but yet also very different. Although I am not a human in a dog suit, neither am I an unfeeling robot who can instantly obey your every whim. I truly do want to please you, and be a part of your family, and your life.

You got me (I hope) because you want a loving partner and companion, so do not relegate me to the backyard when I get bigger. Do not judge me harshly but instead mold me with gentleness and guidelines and training into the kind of family member you want me to be.

I am a puppy and I am not perfect, and I know you are not perfect either. I love you anyway. So please, learn all you can about training, and puppy behaviors and caring for me from your veterinarian, books on dog care and even researching on the computer. Learn about the characteristics of my particular breed (or mix) - that will give you understanding and insight into why I do all the things I do. Please teach me with love, patience, the right way to behave and socialize me with training in a puppy class or obedience class, we will both have a lot of fun together.

I am a puppy and I want more than anything to love you, to be with you, and to please you. Won't you please take time to understand how I work? We are the same you and I, in that we both feel hunger, pain, thirst, discomfort, fear, but yet we are also very different and must work to understand one another's language, body signals, wants and needs. Some day I will be a handsome dog, hopefully one you can be proud of and one that you will love as much as I love you.

by J. Ellis