

## LIFE SKILLS FOR PUPPIES

### REMEMBER!

The goal is for him to be able to *choose* to perform the appropriate response himself, rather than having to be asked to do so.



*If your pup sits to greet people, ensure that he is acknowledged and receives attention for this, otherwise he may jump up to get attention.*

◆ Some games can be used to help your pup learn self-control: tug, for example, is very useful. Firstly, get your pup interested in tugging on a suitable toy – most dogs seem to find the fleece tugs attractive. Once he is tugging well, teach him to release the toy by showing him a treat, giving it to him when he drops the tug to get it. When he is predicting that a second hand moving towards him will deliver a treat,



I can't do everything I want, when I want to; I don't expect to get everything I want, when I want it



*Teach puppies to give up items they have in their mouths by first exchanging a toy in their possession for a treat or another desirable toy. Initially show your pup the treat, as in these images, but later, when he is quickly dropping the item as your hand moves toward him, advance an empty hand. In this way he learns to give something up without first seeing a reward. Remember to still reward him for letting go with something you have hidden out of sight. At this point you can also add the cue 'drop,' or similar.*



*Some puppies need to learn this swap initially when they are fairly calm and then later introduce the concept when they are in the midst of a good game.*

*Letting go of something they are actively tugging on takes a great deal of self-control.*

# I need help to make the right choices

Being able to choose gives a degree of control, and this is important for an individual's welfare. We should not expect our dog to be a slave to our needs if we really care about his wellbeing and our relationship with him, so this Life Skill encompasses two points.

Firstly, as an owner it is important that we do give our dog choices: where to sleep, where to sniff on a walk, who to associate with, for example. Secondly, as our dogs need to fit into the family and the society in which we live, it is important that we guide our puppies to making the correct choice in a specific situation. It is crucial to remember that, in most behavioural decisions, the pup has a choice – to do what is requested, or not; to follow the rules he knows, or not – and it's an owner's responsibility to show him that choosing the behaviour that we want is best for him, too.

## TIPS

- ◆ Give your pup choices in everyday life. Provide a couple of comfy beds in different places, a variety of toys, if he stops to sniff on a walk allow him to take his time. You wouldn't like it if you were pulled away whilst in the middle of a conversation, which is what happens when we pull our dogs on when they have stopped to smell a 'message'.
- ◆ Allow your pup to choose not to approach a situation should he not want to. For example, if he backs away or

*This puppy's lowered head and nose lick gesture with the eyes focused ahead indicate that she is not comfortable with the situation. If you see this sort of body language in your puppy, assess what you need to do to make her feel more comfortable. For example, if she was looking at another dog approaching her bed, call the other dog away.*





## I need help to make the right choices

*This puppy also looks a little concerned about someone coming close to his chew. Note the ears pulled back and the muscle tension in the face with the furrows between his eyes and his tense lips. He is also shifting his body weight slightly backward: note the back leg bending and the arched back. In this case it would be advisable not to go closer to his chew, but to take a course of action to make him feel more comfortable with your presence. As an immediate step, move further away to reduce the tension while you decide how to do this.*





engage in games, get attention from people, and are taken for safe walks, all on a daily basis.

◆ Respect what your pup is telling you and respond appropriately to his needs. If your pup learns that indicating his discomfort in a given situation will result in you intervening and removing him from it, this means that he does not need to become more fearful or anxious, or learn an inappropriate way of dealing with the situation, such as escalating to a threat.

Occasionally, when pups feel uneasy about something, they may bark or even run away. However, most pups will hang back, try to move aside, hide, or

display even more subtle signs which indicate discomfort (remember, all behaviour is context-specific, so take care with interpretations), and may include –

- Glancing away or squinting
- Turning his head aside or lowering his head
- Licking his lips
- Yawning
- Tucking his ears back
- Tucking his tail in
- Sniffing the ground

If, when you see any of these signs, you give your pup a chance to move away from the situation until he is relaxed,



*We can tell that this pup is uncomfortable by her lowered head and staring focus, the body leaning back over the hind legs and the tense muscles, clearly seen in the tail which is starting to tuck.*



# Rogues' Gallery: the Cast

Nelson:  
Portugese  
Podengo



Griff:  
Australian Shepherd x  
Border Collie



Jack: Whippet

Kya: German Shepherd Dog



Toffee: Nova  
Scotia Duck  
Tolling Retriever x  
Brittany Spaniel

