



Legend Acres Puppy 101 Handout



PUPPY PLAY TIME

Playing with your puppy every day will build a bond that will last a lifetime. Simple games stimulate your puppy's mind and they teach problem-solving skills. And, they're fun for both your puppy and you!

1. "Find it!"

Sit on the floor. When your puppy is close to you, show the puppy a toy, then hide it behind your back, under one of your hands on the floor, or under your leg. Tell the puppy, "Find it!" When the puppy gets the toy, use lavish praise in an enthusiastic voice. For very young puppies, you may need to make the game simple to start. Show the puppy the toy and cover only a portion of it with your hand. You'll eventually get to where you can hide the toy behind your back or for older dogs, somewhere in the room, and they'll find it. Kongs and toys you can hide treats in work well for this game as your puppy grows. When I clean the house and pick up all the toys I hide a few of them around the house and send the dogs on a scavenger hunt.

2. "Fetch!"

Start with a ball (for larger dogs) or toy. In the beginning, throw it a short distance only a few feet away. Tell the puppy, "Fetch." When the puppy gets the toy, call the puppy back to you. You can clap your hands and use encouragement to call the puppy. Give lavish praise, hugs, treats, and pets when the puppy brings the toy. This game helps reinforce the fetch and come commands with puppies.

3. Nothing like a good massage

Petting, holding young and small dogs in your arms, and a gentle massage are all good activities for bonding. Start at the head and ears, gently massaging your puppy. Work your way down the body. Some puppy's will resist having their legs or feet touched, or they won't want you touching their ears. If your puppy squirms, tries to get away, or tries to bite, you'll know you've identified a target behavior that you need to work on. This exercise reinforces puppy gentling.

4. Hide and Seek

To play hide and seek, when the puppy is distracted, you can go out of sight not far away and call, "Find me." When the puppy comes and finds you, praise the puppy. For older dogs, you can go to a different room in the house and call the dog to find you. You'll eventually want to teach the command, "Stay," so the puppy does not learn to try to find you every time you leave the room. Make sure that you go out of sight sometimes and don't call the puppy.

5. Scheduling a Play Date

Young puppies learn through play while they are still in the litter. Chances to play with other puppies in safe, controlled situations can teach your puppy canine social skills. Puppy 101 Classes are a good way for puppies to learn in a group and get group play.

6. Pass the Puppy

Young puppies learn through gentling that people are in charge. Suspend the puppy in the air at eye level, make eye contact, the puppy will look away, pull puppy to your chest and pet the puppy from nose to tail, when they settle or gentle pass to the next person and repeat. Pass the puppy will reinforce that people are in control and when they allow people to be in control they are rewarded. This exercise will also introduce your puppy to new people and learn that all people are friendly and there is no reason to fear them.