

Helpful Puppy Tips

Out for a Walk: Teaching Your Puppy Not to Pull on the Leash

There are many things that tempt your dog when you're out for a walk, like new smells and other animals. Your dog will try to get where he wants to go, even if that means pulling you along with him! If he pulls on the leash and you allow him to, you've reinforced him for pulling, and your pup got what he wanted. Once you've allowed him to do this, he'll do it again. American Kennel Club® Canine Good Citizen® Director and Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist, Mary Burch, Ph.D., offers the following two techniques to stop your dog from pulling on the leash.

Technique #1

- When Fido starts to pull on the leash, stop in your tracks. Stand still and don't move forward with the dog.
- Wait right there where you are. Your pup will pull, but he'll eventually stop.
- When he does stop pulling, praise him and move forward again.
- Anytime he starts to pull, repeat the procedure and stop where you are. It won't take him too long to figure out that you're not going anywhere as long as he pulls on the leash.

Technique #2

- When your pup begins to pull off in his own direction, briskly turn around and begin walking in the opposite direction. Fido will have to come along, and most likely he'll hurry up to keep up with you.
- When Fido begins to follow in the direction you are walking, praise him. If you're at the beginning stages of training your pup, give him a treat. This will train your dog to watch you when you're out for a walk and not pull on the leash.

Additional tips on how to train your dog can be found in "Citizen Canine," the official new book of the [AKC Canine Good Citizen®](#) Program sponsored by The Hartford.

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Why Won't My Dog Come When I Call Him?

Have you ever trained your dog to come when called, and then when you call him, he completely ignores you? You are not alone! There are many reasons why your pup is not responding to your command.

AKC's Canine Good Citizen® Director and Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist, Mary Burch, Ph.D., breaks down why this might be happening and what you can do to fix it.

- **More training is needed.** Your dog might not be ready to be off the leash in wide, open spaces and needs more systematic training. Go back to the basics and try again.
- **Competing reinforcers.** Your dog might be perfectly well-trained to come to you when you call him, but if your sporting dog is in a field where there are birds, or you have a sight hound in the woods where there are rabbits, you probably lost the competition for your dog's attention. It is important for you to know your dog, and that includes knowing when you need to leave the leash on.

- **No reinforcement.** When you call your dog and he comes to you, it is important to praise or reward him. No reinforcement leads your dog to not wanting to come to you. You can reinforce your dog with a food treat or plenty of praise.
- **Not understanding the dog's needs.** Sometimes your dog will not come when called because you are rushing him. He may need to run, sniff around a bit, or search longer for a good bathroom break spot.

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Do's & Don'ts for a Healthy Dog

Just like humans, it is unhealthy for a dog to be overweight. Excess weight endangers the heart, lungs and joints and makes a dog more susceptible to other ailments. The AKC offers the following feeding rules every dog owner should keep in mind.

- Keep in mind the three stages of development when preparing a diet and exercise plan for your dog: puppies eat more and are highly active, adult dogs have normal routines and food intake, and older dogs might require special diets and limited exercise.
- Feed a quality puppy/dog food. Quality foods have good protein sources and are limited on fillers. Quality foods cost more but you will feed less because your dog will get more nutrition for the food. This is not only healthier for your dog but also will decrease your daily pickup chores.
- Set Regular Mealtimes. An irregular eating schedule can affect your dog's digestive system and ultimately cause chronic digestive disorders. Digestive problems can usually be improved by a change in diet.
- Dogs don't easily adjust to a time zone change or to daylight savings time. To prepare your dog for a time change, gradually adjust her eating schedule over a few weeks.
- It is important that your dog's water and food bowls are kept in the same place every day. If you have more than one dog, make sure each dog has its own food and water bowl.
- Don't worry about your dog getting hunger pangs between meals. Your dog only needs one or two meals daily if it is fed on a regimented schedule and receives a balanced diet.
- Set a 15 minute rule. If your dog has walked away from its bowl, it has probably had enough to eat. Discard the remaining food, since exposed dog food is unsanitary.
- Resist giving your dog people food. A begging pooch can be hard to resist, but your dog doesn't know how dangerous the mal you're eating can be. Grapes, raisins, chocolate, onions are among some of the foods that can be toxic to your dog in large enough quantities. Sometimes excessive fat in meats or dairy products can cause digestive distress.
- Don't over-treat or over-supplement your dog. Too many treats will lead to unhealthy excess pounds. Too many vitamins can also have unintended consequences. Ask your vet about whether your dog needs any extras before starting it on a regimen of supplements.

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Calming Common Dog Fears

On a dark and stormy night as the thunder rolls in, do you find your dog cowering under the table? You're not alone!

Fear of loud noises, including thunder, is a common issue with dogs. Your puppy can develop sound sensitivities between the ages of two and four, and they tend to get worse with age. Dogs that are afraid of thunder usually are triggered by some external force. They can sense that a storm is coming by the increasing wind or even the darkening sky. Here are some tips on how to calm your dog's fears.

- Try a desensitization program. Get a tape recording of the sound of thunder and introduce the noise at a very low level, gradually increasing the volume and giving praise when your pooch does not run and hide from the noise. This does require a great deal of time and patience on your part.
- Divert your dog's attention from the noise by playing a fun game with her at the right moments to turn the bad triggers into positive ones.
- See if your pup will eat her favorite treats during the storm. If she does, then giving her one will help keep her engaged when the thunder strikes.
- Your veterinarian may suggest treating your dog with tranquilizers or herbal mixtures before a storm approaches. Sometimes these work, but they are not guaranteed.

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Introducing a New Dog to Your Household

Whether you choose to get a puppy from a responsible breeder or adopt a German Shepherd dog from a rescue group, the first two weeks for you and your new dog are a critical period of adjustment.

If your dog had a previous owner, this time could be particularly stressful for him or her. Here are some tips for a smoother transition for new dog owners.

- **Introduce kids and other pets separately.** It may be too overwhelming if you introduce your new dog to your home, children and other pets all at once.
- **Watch the diet.** To avoid stomach upset, keep him on the same food his previous caretaker was using and slowly transition him to the food you want to use. If you can't get the same food, mix rice into his new food for the first few days.
- **Keep a close eye on him or her.** Do not be surprised if there are accidents. Housebroken dogs can still have accidents in a new home due to stress and confusion. Help them learn where to go by taking them outside often and watching them when they are inside to avoid accidents or other unwanted behaviors.
- **Permanently identify your dog with a microchip.** If your dog came with a microchip, you must update the owner information with the microchip registry. It will take time for the new dog to recognize his new surroundings as his home and you as his new best friend. If he gets loose during this critical time, capture may be very difficult.

- Enroll in training classes and have fun! After about two weeks, your new dog's personality will really start to shine and it's a good time to start exploring activities that you and your dog can enjoy together. Training classes are valuable not only for teaching dogs basic manners and problem solving, but they will teach you how to communicate with your dog and help you bond.

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Canine Courtesy

No matter where you live, owning a dog is a long-term emotional and financial commitment. But for pet owners who share their sidewalks and parks with many others, it's especially important to take your neighbors into consideration so that the rights of all dog owners are not adversely affected.

The AKC offers owners the following tips on responsible dog ownership to ensure a long and happy relationship with your best friend.

- **Train Your Dog** - Puppies need to be properly socialized and trained. Train for the AKC's Canine Good Citizen test. You can find a local evaluator at http://www.akc.org/events/cgc/cgc_bystate.cfm
- **Pick Up After Your Puppy** - Always carry a plastic "baggy" or two with you when you walk your puppy to pick up any waste it leaves behind, then dispose of it properly. Failure to clean up after your dog is disrespectful to your neighbors and against most city laws.
- **Exercise** - Puppies (and dogs) need regular exercise to ensure that they don't become destructive. Take your puppy for walks or throw a ball around -- anything to get your puppy moving will prevent behavior problems.
- **Prevent Nuisance Barking** - Don't let your puppy's incessant barking annoy your neighbors. Training and exercise can reduce barking.
- **Microchip Your Dog** - In addition to wearing an ID tag with your name, address and phone number at all times, your puppy should have permanent ID in the form of a microchip. When he's old enough (ask your veterinarian). The size of a grain of rice, and implanted in between your dog's shoulders, it will increase the chances of your dog being returned to you if he is lost or runs away and ends up in a busy city shelter.
- **Get a License** - Make sure your puppy is licensed, as required by the city in which you live and remember to renew it annually.
- **Use a Leash** - Keep your puppy on a leash no longer than six-feet whenever you are out in public. Not only will it keep your dog safe, it's also the law in most cities. Exceptions include dog runs, and off-leash hours in designated areas in some city parks.

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Preventing Food Guarding

Even though we feed our dogs plenty of food and treats each day, by nature, many of them will defend or guard their food. Because dogs often had to fight to eat in the wild, the need to protect food items is innate in them. While this behavior is undesirable in a family pet, it can be prevented. Here are some tips prevent food guarding from developing in your pup.

- **People give, not take.** You will want to reinforce early on that a person approaching your dog's bowl of food means something good, not that his food will be taken away. Every so often when your puppy is eating, walk over to him and drop a tasty treat in his bowl. This will let him know that you are not coming to take his valuable food away.
- **Be consistent with feeding.** Don't leave your dog's food out all day. This will make him think that the food is a resource that can be taken away from him at any time, therefore making him fiercely protect it. Instead, feed your pup the amount of food recommended by your veterinarian and take the food bowl up after he's had enough time to eat his food, usually no more than 15 minutes.
- **Let your dog eat in peace.** Dogs shouldn't be bothered while they are eating. To prevent any problems from occurring, feed your dog in an area where kids can't interact with them. Make sure to teach your children that the dog should be left alone when they're eating or chewing on a bone.
- **Don't remove food from a growling dog.** If your dog is growling over its food or chew toy, do not respond by removing the bowl. This will only reinforce to your pup that the food needs to be protected because it can be taken away at any given time.

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Introducing the Baby to your Dog

Congratulations—your family pack has just expanded! You've spent months preparing for the arrival of your new baby, but don't forget about your dog. He's been used to being the "baby" of the household, and may have difficulty losing that spot to the newest addition to the family.

You can help your dog transition by making gradual changes along the way so he'll be ready when you bring home baby.

- **Start early.** Begin to alter your pet's routine months before your due date. You should gradually change his routine to what it will be like once baby arrives which may mean a little less time spent with your pup. This will help your dog get used to what life will be like once the baby is born.
- **Practice with a doll.** Purchase a baby doll and hold it, rock it, dress it, and so on around your dog. When your pup behaves well around the doll, and later the baby, praise him and reward him with treats.
- **Introduce the scent.** Before bringing the baby home from the hospital, introduce a blanket with the baby's scent to your dog so he can sniff and become used to it.
- **Baby and dog's first meeting.** Make sure that your pup is well exercised before you introduce him to baby. Have one parent confidently hold the baby, while the other controls the dog on a leash.
- **Include your dog.** Give your pup as much attention and affection that you can while the baby is around. Another good practice is taking your dog along with you when you go for walks with the baby.

- **Never leave an infant or toddler alone with a dog.** Even the most trusted animal can react dangerously to a sudden scream or cry from your child.

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How to Decipher Your Dog's Bark

Have you ever wondered what your dog was trying to say to you when he began barking incessantly? Dogs use a variety of sounds—barking, howling, and growling—to convey different things. Your pup may be barking for attention, or growling to protect his bone. Whatever noise Fido is making, he's trying to tell you something.

- **Stranger Beware!** Your puppy will defend himself and his space against strangers by emitting a deep, explosive series of barks. This signals to the approaching person to stay away.
- **Hey, I'm over here!** Barking is also used to get attention. Once you give him what he's looking for, he'll stop. If you ignore him further, he will most likely keep going!
- **Keep away!** Growling is designed to keep opponents away, especially if your puppy has a treat he is protecting. He will let out a deep growl that signals to anyone coming close that it is dangerous to approach.
- **Is anyone out there?** Dogs can communicate with others far away by howling. When dogs travel in a pack and one gets separated, the lost dog will begin howling and wait for the others to respond. That way, he will know which way to travel to be reunited with his pack. Sometimes, dogs hear sounds such as a siren that they perceive to be another dog calling to them, and they'll start howling in response.

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Bringing Puppy Home

Suggestions about House Proofing for a New Puppy

Crawl around to get a puppy's eye view of his surroundings before he arrives and as he grows!

DO NOT bring a puppy into your home if your older dog is dog-aggressive.

Your new puppy needs you to watch out for him when he's little. He will watch out for you when he's older for the rest of his life. **Before Bringing Puppy Home**

- Set up food and water bowls (stainless steel is preferred)
- Set a crate up in an open space for day use so puppy feels like part of the family
- Decide on a spot outside for house training. A consistent spot to relieve himself helps in house-breaking efforts
- Ask your German Shepherd breeder for a blanket or towel from the litter so he feels more at home
- Have treats in your pocket before you leave
- Ask your breeder not to feed the puppy immediately before picking him up
- Have a baggie, paper towels and cleaning spray on hand - just in case
- Keep things quiet and calm when puppy arrives home

- Only have your immediate family home for the first couple of days to help with bonding

Use lids on garbage cans or keep them behind a secured door.

Potential hazards include:

- electrical cords
- small objects
- poisonous plants
- medications
- cleaners
- stairs
- open toilet seats
- materials with cocoa (especially cocoa beans used as mulch for gardens)
- dental floss (gets tangled on their insides)

Suggestions for New Puppy “Stuff”

The German Shepherd Dog Club of America wants to help you have the best possible start.

German Shepherd puppies are awesome. However, they grow very quickly and will be large dogs. Because they grow so fast, investing in sturdy items that can be easily cleaned and will not be destroyed as your puppy grows is a good idea.

Here are some things you will want to get before you bring your puppy home:

- Nylon expandable buckle collar with a quick-release clasp - NO metal link collars at this stage
- A 6' leather leash (1/2" wide)
- A Large Crate with divider (at least a 500 size)
- Water bowl (stainless steel is best)
- Food bowl (again stainless steel is best)
- Toys of various shapes, textures and sizes (must be suitable for German Shepherd puppies)
- Hard rubber toys (balls, spiky toys, rings) - Kong makes sturdy products
- Smart toys (fill with treats)
- Nylabones
- Soft toys (supervision required) - many German Shepherds tear these up
- Thick bully sticks or white rolled rawhide - only when teething
- Bitter Apple Spray
- Soft Bedding for the crate like a blanket or towel (remove if they chew it and NO rugs)
- Cleaning tote with
 - paper towels
 - disposable baggies (grocery bags work well)
 - spray bottle (1/3 vinegar x 2/3 water or pre-mixed OdoBan or SimpleGreen)

- Healthy treats that can't get caught in the throat (no pig ears)
- Soft slicker or pin brush
- Nail clippers (scissors-style work better than guillotine-style)
- Styptic powder (just in case)
- Puppy shampoo and conditioner (dry)

Suggestions for Pro-Active Training

Your beautiful German Shepherd puppy will grow very quickly! Teaching them when they are puppies will pay off for the rest of their life.

Simple training should start the moment your puppy arrives home. Using the same word for the same activities will help them learn quickly:

- "Let's go out" or just "out"
- "Sit"
- "Wait"
- "Let's go"
- "Come"
- "Potty Time"
- "Good boy/girl"
- "Hurry up"

Children need to be trained right along with the new puppy and **should not be left unsupervised with a young puppy**.

Children tend to do all the wrong things. They run away from the puppy, encouraging it to chase them. They reach over the top of the head which threatens the puppy. Children in the household must be taught to treat the puppy with kindness and should be included in the puppy's training.

Your German Shepherd puppy is part of a breed that is intelligent, active and agile. The breed is resourceful and has tons of potential..... BUT YOU need to channel that potential in a positive way.

Find a good pre-school puppy class in your area. Find dog training classes in your area. See if there is a German Shepherd Club in your area. All puppy training classes should use positive reinforcement methods. If their methods use intimidation and harshness, find a different class. Your new puppy is one of the brightest of the canine species and responds well to positive reinforcement.

Planning for daily training before your puppy arrives helps to properly channel that intelligence and energy from the beginning! As early as 8 weeks, your puppy can learn their name and basic commands like "sit", "stay", "down", "come", and walking by your side without pulling. REMEMBER... your puppy will do what you tell him is okay to do. If you let him do what he wants when he's a puppy, he will expect that when he gets older.

Your puppy will learn by repetition with praise when he gets it right and a repeated lesson when he gets it wrong.

Select daily exercises and a training program that engages his mind as well as his body. Use "come" when you put down the food bowl. Give him a treat when you say his name and he looks at you.

Your dog will encounter phases where he simply will not listen (remember your teenage years?). Persevere with the right training and the phase will pass, usually within a few weeks. Don't ignore these phases.

Your German Shepherd breeder will be able to offer you wonderful suggestions when you are unsure on how to proceed.

Don't hesitate to ask for help when you need it. Don't let your level of frustration elevate. This will be counter productive in your training efforts.

You can raise your German Shepherd puppy to become the dog your dreams and enjoy everything this very noble breed has to offer.

All it takes is some planning and dedication on your part.

German Shepherd Dogs are magnificent animals and we are all extremely blessed to have the chance to share our lives with them.

Suggestions for Choosing a Veterinarian

Ask friends and neighbours who their veterinarian is.

Ask your breeder for his/her recommendation. You may find many that they all rave about the same one!

Call the veterinarian you select before your German Shepherd puppy arrives in order to book an appointment for the day following his arrival.

Reputable breeders will encourage you to take your puppy to the veterinarian and will give you a record of any vaccines, wormings, and other health clearances that may have been performed.

When visiting your veterinarian:

- Keep your puppy away from other animals while in the waiting room to limit his exposure to potentially harmful diseases but expose him to the staff in a positive way
- Introduce your puppy to the staff and his new surroundings. Bring some treats along to help make it a positive experience
- Obtain emergency contact numbers and find out what the procedure is in case of an emergency
- Emergency veterinary care is very expensive. If you suspect your puppy is injured or not well, don't wait until the problem becomes an emergency situation. Call your own veterinarian during regular hours and get your puppy examined
- Visit your veterinarian office often to weigh your puppy and let the staff pet and play with the puppy

Always make informed decisions.

- Should your puppy be spayed or neutered? If so, when is the best time for the puppy. Earlier may not be better.
- What vaccines should your dog get? What are the requirements of your state, particularly with regard to Rabies vaccines?
- Should all vaccines be given at once or over a period of time?
- How often should your dog be vaccinated?
- And the list goes on and on...

YOUR VETERINARIAN AND YOUR BREEDER SHOULD BE YOUR VERY BEST RESOURCES. Speak with your veterinarian and your German Shepherd breeder before making your decisions.

Suggestions for Introducing your Puppy to a Dog or a Cat

...YOUR CAT

DO Introduce them right away and understand that your puppy needs to learn to respect the cat

DO Have your cat in the same room as the rest of you when puppy arrives

DON'T hold one animal up to the other

DON'T intervene between their greeting - unless things are going very poorly

...YOUR DOG

If you have a dog-friendly dog, **DO** have them meet on neutral territory

DO keep the older dog on a loose leash during introduction

DON'T leave puppy and older dog unsupervised until the puppy is much older

DO ensure puppy is learning his boundaries with your older dog

DO watch for signs of stress and control the environment when you need to

Suggestions about Dog Food

If you want to start a stimulating conversation among dog people, ask about what food they feed their dogs. Most dog people feed one of the following:

- Kibble only
- Kibble and canned food
- Canned food
- Raw (uncooked) food

You should continue the food your breeder recommends until the puppy is at least 6 months old (unless there is a compelling reason to change). Reputable breeders will help you ensure that your puppy receives proper nutrition with quality foods that help him/her grow in a healthy way.

Dog food manufacturers are required to list the ingredients in their dog food, whether it's kibble, canned, or frozen. The FIRST FIVE ingredients are the most important. Dog foods that are high on fillers (corn, wheat, byproducts) are less expensive but those ingredients are not digestible. Cheap dog foods, while they look less expensive, are mostly wasted nutrition - which you will clean up.

A good quality dog food is a good investment in the health of your dog.

These articles are brought to you by the German Shepherd Dog Club of America and Windy Willows Pet Services.