

Dog Training Articles
By Beth Bradley

Socialization

Puppy Kindergarten is essential. Teach good manners before bad habits begin. A puppy kindergarten class should consist of socialization and basic commands (i.e. sit, down, come, heel) as well as common behavior problems such as barking, jumping, and inappropriate chewing and house training; however I like the idea of more training and less playing between pups. Puppies learn just about all they need to know about how to interact with other dogs by the time they are 6 weeks old. After that, what puppies need to learn in order to be good pets is how to interact with people and how to behave appropriately around other dogs.

Dogs are motivated by two things: food and play. That is the reason why I am constantly stressing the combination of training and play. If you can make your dog think that by obeying your commands he is playing or initiating play with you, he is going to always want to obey. That is why it is important that your dog learns to play with you rather than abdicating the powerful influence of play drive in training to other dogs. Playing with your dog builds a relationship with you. I want my dog to respect other dogs and not become aggressive or shy when around other dogs but ultimately, if given a choice, I want my dogs to have the desire to interact with me instead of other dogs.

I understand that you feel guilty for not spending enough time with your dog and you see social inter-dog play as a means to make up for quality time with him. But when all is said and done, what you want from your adult dog is control and responsiveness. Yes, the sight of puppies playing is seductive but don't let the idea of social inter-dog play distract you from your main goal of an obedient and well-mannered adult dog. Remember, you got your dog for yourself, not so your neighbor's dog has someone to play with.

Socializing with people:

Prior to your puppy having all of his vaccinations, he should not be around dogs that you do not know because they might not be vaccinated. But socializing with dogs that are healthy and people is a great idea. Bring your puppy everywhere that you can but be careful not to bring him to loud places or places with too much going on. Don't push him into situations that will make him fearful. Always have his crate with you. This way, if he is afraid, you can place him in his crate and he can watch from his 'safe place' until he becomes accustomed to the people and noise. Once he is desensitized, you should be able to bring him out comfortably but don't toss him from person to person; keep him on the floor. A puppy that is skeptical of new places and people to begin with and afraid of being dropped as well, is only going to find the new experience

bad instead of pleasant. Let your puppy initiate affection and attention from people rather than having a bunch of people run up to him. Remember, as humans we are giants to young puppies.