



Laurie Luck, CPDT
Certified Pet Dog Trainer
Box 1111 Mount Airy, MD 21771
(240) 848-3468
www.smartdoguniversity.com



THE WAY TO A WELL-ADJUSTED CHRISTMAS PUPPY

A puppy for Christmas! It's essential to get your puppy off on the right paw right from the start. From the minute he (or she) arrives, you're training your puppy. Preparation and consistency are important – so here's what you'll need to have the perfect pup.

1. Stick to A Schedule

Creating a schedule for your puppy is as much for you as it is for the puppy. You'll want to schedule virtually everything in your pup's life: feeding time, bathroom breaks, playtime, and nap time. The earlier you get your puppy on a schedule, the better!

Feeding time should occur two or three times per day. Put your pup's food down for 20 minutes, then take it back up until the next scheduled feeding time. Don't allow your pup to "free feed" – to eat whenever he wants. This will wreak havoc with housetraining!

Bathroom breaks should be scheduled every hour. Also, your pup should be taken outside fifteen minutes after each feeding, after vigorous play, and immediately upon waking. The more opportunities your pup has to eliminate in the proper spot (outdoors!), the more often he'll get it right. Stay outside with your puppy to (1) cheer him on when he's gone and (2) to ensure that he has indeed gone to the bathroom.

Playtime should be scheduled as well. You'll recognize early that your pup has periods of energy and periods of rest. Encourage your pup to play during those energetic times (remembering to take him outside immediately after play!).

Nap time is sacred. Make sure your pup has a safe and quiet place to sleep undisturbed. Puppies need a lot of uninterrupted rest. Make sure their crate is away from prying eyes (and hands) who "just want to hold the puppy" while he sleeps. The crate should be a safe haven where the pup can sleep (and eat) undisturbed.

2. The Crate Is Great!

Teaching your pup that the crate is a good place to be is super-easy, provided you follow a few easy steps.

First, all the pup's meals are inside the crate. Leave the door open so the pup is free to come and go as he eats (remember, only 20 minutes to eat, then the food goes away until the next feeding time).

Second, all the pup's treats and toys start out in the crate. Toss a dog treat inside the crate and let pup in the crate to get the goodie. Or toss a squeaky toy inside the crate so the pup has to enter to get the goodie. Once the pup is getting the idea that all good things come from the crate, you can begin to close the door (but not latch it) when the pup is eating his meal. He can push the door open if he wants out, he's not trapped in there. Finally, after he's comfortable with the door being closed, you can latch the door and leave him with a peanut butter stuffed Kong or Busy Buddy toy that will keep him occupied.

Every time I leave the house, I always drop a dog toy stuffed with tasty goodies into the dogs' crates – they can't wait for me to leave! They run to their crates the minute they see me grab my car keys.

3. Boundaries – For People and Puppies

It's essential that an adult watches the puppy whenever he's awake and outside his crate. A puppy should not have free reign of the house. **Puppy-proofing the house is imperative if you want to keep the puppy and your belongings safe.** If your pup can reach it, it's fair game! Crawl around the house on your hands and knees to see what's at puppy-level. If you can't put the item away, buy a baby gate to keep the pup out of that room.

It's also important to teach kids how to interact with the pup. Teach them how to gently play with the puppy, how to gently pet the pup, and how to leave a sleepy (or sleeping!) puppy alone. Teach them how to walk, not run, around the pup to prevent the pup from chasing and nipping at their heels. Children should be kept away from and out of the pup's crate, particularly when the pup is sleeping, eating, and looking for a place to "get away from it all." The crate is the pup's safe haven and he should not be disturbed while in the crate.

With a little planning, your Christmas puppy will transition smoothly to his new home, his new routine, and his new family. Look for a positive-reinforcement trainer and get your pup into training classes before he's 12 weeks old – socialization is very important!