

RSPCA 

for all creatures great & small

A guide to dog and puppy care



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Taking your new family member home

On the way home, make sure your pup is confined in a carrier, and your dog with a harness and seatbelt. This is essential for safety whenever you travel.

Never leave your dog or puppy unattended in a car, even for a few minutes as temperatures in the car can rise to levels which can cause your pet to die of heatstroke in just minutes.

Your dog or puppy's homecoming

Allow your dog or pup several weeks of careful supervision, training and encouragement. It may take some time – even months – for them to fully adjust to their new surroundings.

Remember, they won't know the rules right away so don't expect them to know what is expected of them as soon as they arrive.

Be patient. It will be worth it – you will have a loving and devoted family member for the next 12-15 years!



Show your new dog or pup around – where their sleeping area is, where their eating area is and of course, where you would like them to go to the toilet. Praise your dog for going in the right place, and give him or her a treat.

Identification

The majority of dogs that arrive in shelters and pounds as a stray are never reunited with their owners because they are not identified. To avoid the heartbreak of losing your companion, identify your pet via these forms of identification:

- A microchip is permanent identification. Remember to change your details by contacting Home Safe ID on www.homesafeid.com. All RSPCA canines are already microchipped.
- An ID tag with your dog's name and phone number is still the most efficient way to make certain your dog is returned to you.
- Council registration tags. Registering your dog is compulsory in most areas.

Your pet's VIP tag is instant identification, and are worn number out on your dog's collar. The phone number on it is manned 24 hours a day to ensure you and your pet are reunited quickly, should the need arise.

Identification

These tags are valid for your pet's lifetime, but should they become lost or damaged, they can be replaced for just \$5. Don't forget to change your details as required by contacting the RSPCA on 1300 36 37 36.

In the event that your dog should go missing, start searching immediately. Don't delay by assuming your pet will come home of his/her own accord. The longer you wait, the less likely you will be to locate your beloved friend.

For further information, contact the RSPCA Qld Pet-D-Tect service on 1300 36 37 36. You can also visit the website, www.rspcaqld.org.au/LostandFound.

Initial health care

You should have or will shortly receive a Veterinary Treatment History for your new RSPCA canine companion. This form will list when your dog was last vaccinated and wormed, de-sexing details and when follow-up vaccinations are required.

After taking your new companion home, you will need to:

- Ensure your dog receives any follow-up vaccinations
- Organise heartworm preventatives for them. Your dog will be due a heartworm preventative soon after moving into your home. Prevention must be continued for life so discuss this with your Local Veterinarian as soon as possible.
- Ensure that any changes to your dog's diet are introduced slowly. All RSPCA animals are fed Hill's Science Diet, which is a specially designed dry food, and sudden introduction of tinned or rich foods could cause illness or diarrhoea.
- Remember to take your new canine companion to your own Vet within the first week of adoption for any follow up health checks and advice on intestinal worms, fleas and heartworm prevention.
- Your new pet may be due for a follow up vaccination shortly after adoption. You must take your pet to your own Vet for this vaccination to be administered at your expense.
- Check their surgery site daily. If your new companion still has sutures remember do not allow vigorous exercise but rather keep them nice and quiet. Remember - sutures should not be allowed to get wet or be licked and chewed!

Your dog's diet

How much should I feed my dog?

- Puppies should be fed 3 to 4 times a day up to 3 months of age, then puppy rations, twice daily.
- Small dogs can generally be fed adult rations after 12 months of age.
- Large dogs, who take longer to mature, can generally be fed adult rations when they are closer to 18 months old. Adult or puppy, large breeds should be fed commercial food specially formulated for large dogs, such as Hills Science Diet Large Breed varieties.
- Adult dogs, or dogs over 6 months old, should generally be fed once or twice daily.

What should I feed my dog?

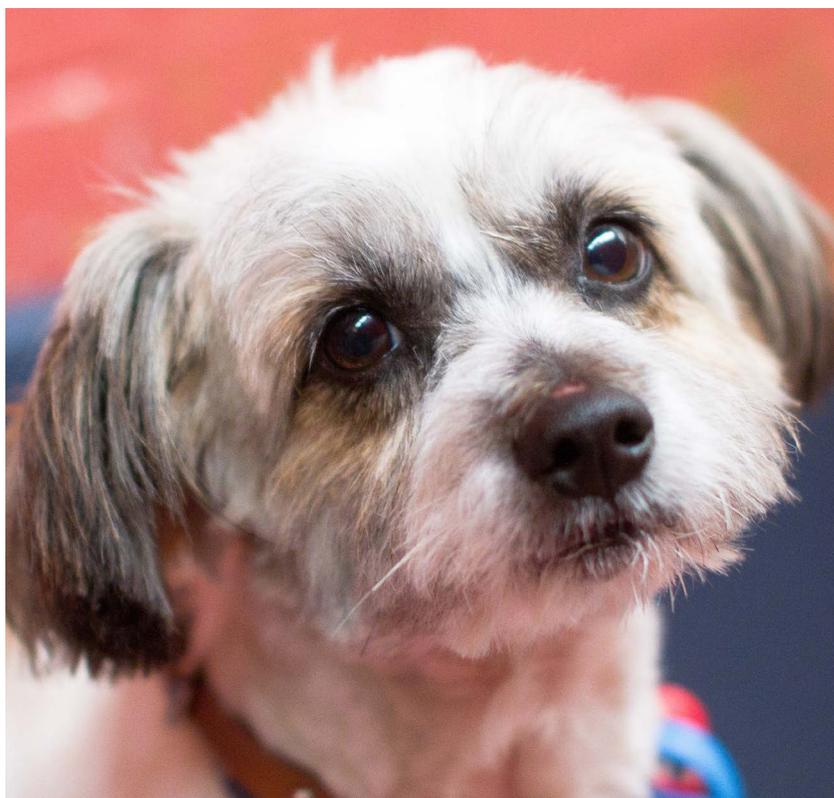
While dogs love meat, it has a totally incorrect proportion of nutrients, vitamins and minerals and should not constitute their core diet.

Provide good quality, nutritionally balanced food suitable for your new dog's age and size. All RSPCA dogs are fed Hill's Science Diet, a premium lifecycle food. Dry biscuits are economical, convenient, provide an excellent diet and help to keep your dog's teeth clean. However, they are concentrated in nutrients, so don't overfeed your dog, or they may become obese.

ALWAYS ensure your dog has access to clean, fresh water, especially if your dog is fed on biscuits alone. In summer, you can put ice cubes in the water to keep it cool. To prevent the bowl being knocked over, sit the bowl in a small hole dug in a shady spot or weigh down the bowl by placing a rock inside it.

Bones are not essential, however you can give your dog either raw brisket bones or large raw marrowbones. Never give your dog cooked bones, as they can splinter and cause internal damage to your dog. Never feed your dog lamb or pork chops, T-Bones, chicken bones (excepting raw chicken wings) or fishbone.

REMEMBER: Resist those begging eyes, when dishing out treats and meals and they will thank you for it (although maybe not at the time)



Understanding your adult dog

The great thing about adopting an adult dog is you have some indication of how much grooming and exercise they will need and whether they have the right personality to suit your lifestyle. Most adult dogs are usually beyond the destructive puppy stage, are better at looking after themselves when left alone throughout the day and will sleep through the night. Most are toilet trained and some even have basic training and house training.

If you've chosen to adopt an adult dog, there are some things you need to know:

- All dogs over four months adopted from the RSPCA have been behaviourally assessed to help you understand and care for your dog.
- It is not always possible to know where the dog has come from, or how it has been treated. Sometimes information is available, but it may not be reliable.
- Our assessment aims to identify dogs that are suitable for you and your family.
- The behaviour assessment is only a guide and not a guarantee of behaviour. Even though the testing is thorough, it is impossible to know exactly how a dog will react in any given situation.

Settling in

Introduction to your home

How to handle the dogs first few hours in your home is difficult to describe, your behaviour should be guided by your dog's responses to you and your home. The best thing you can do for your new dog is give him time to explore your home quietly while you supervise. This means taking your time, observe them closely.

Make sure all other pets are secured out of sight, pick up any loose items or toys that are not going to be chew toys or play things.

Introduction to the human family

We want to ensure this is a positive experience, ensuring that the dog is not overwhelmed or over excited. Well intended eagerness to love the dog can end up being frightening rather than welcoming. Have family members meet the dog calmly one at a time. Some dogs may find physical contact a little threatening initially, and are more likely to accept you after time to settle in. Offering some yummy treats is a great way to make a good first impression.

Introduction to other family dogs

Keep resident pets separate from a new pet initially. Before beginning this introduction familiarise yourself with the subtle signs of dog body language in the back of this booklet.

- Introduce new dogs slowly through closed doors/gates/fences at home one at a time
- For some dogs it is a good idea to go for a walk away from home at slow pace, and

Settling in continued ...

maintaining a comfortable distance between the dogs. This shared activity can produce the start of a friendship.

- When the dogs are calm allow controlled interactions on loose leads to create a positive association and slowly allow closer interactions. This may take several weeks.
- Don't push it! Having a tight lead can negatively influence a dog's behaviour and the dog can also pick up on your emotions. We tend to do this if we are stressed or worried. Ensure you are calm and relaxed and remember to breathe normally!
- Depending on the two dogs involved, drop the lead of the calmer dog first. When both dogs are calm you can begin to drop the 2nd lead for short periods. Working up to removing the leads slowly.
- Allow short supervised play times, even where dogs are compatible. How long is short? It can be anything from a few seconds up to five minutes depending on the dogs involved. Stop at the beginning of subtle signs of stress in either dog.
- Do not allow pets to "work it out" as this can spoil future relationships and elevate stress levels (in both humans and canines!).



Building a bond for LIFE

Training is much more than following commands. Training helps the dog to understand the expectations that you and family have. Many dogs end up in a shelter because nobody took the time to show them what was expected. A dog that understands the 'house rules' is calmer, happier and more involved in your family's life. Involving the whole family in the training process will help you to develop a wonderful bond.

Early training helps you to prevent unwanted behaviour emerging or developing, as we don't always know what the dog has learned, or been allowed to do, before coming to the shelter.

There is often a "honeymoon period" when dogs first come home and it can take a few weeks for old habits to emerge, Dogs are learning all the time, even when you are not actively teaching them something, so ensure that every interaction shows them the things you want them to be doing.

RSPCA QLD Animal Training and Behaviour Centre offers a behavioural help line 07 3426 9928 should you have any questions about training your new pet.

Socialisation is key

Over the course of your puppy's life, he/she may be exposed to many of these things. We want to ensure that all encounters are positive and not scary! The more things you can introduce your puppy to in the important early developmental months the more stable and resilient your dog will be for life.

Try not to introduce more than a few of these things at a time, and if you feel that the puppy is overwhelmed or even unsure, do not continue introducing new things that day.



When introducing anything new, set your puppy up for success:

- Start with a calm dog
- Have plenty of treats on hand
- Always ensure that the puppy has the ability to move towards the new thing and also to move away.
- If the puppy does not want to investigate that is OK try again another day!
- Reward the puppy for approaching or even looking at something new.

If your puppy reacts strongly to anything ensure you simply remove the puppy from the situation calmly. Call us straight away so we can help you change this reaction.

You should see an increase in confidence each time the puppy is introduced to the new 'thing'- if you don't, please call us straight away!

Dogs and children

Dogs and children should be supervised at all times by a responsible adult.

- It is important for children to understand that a dog may need time to settle into the new home.
- Young puppies and older dogs will need the opportunity to retreat and have a break as especially young children can at times be a bit overwhelming for dogs.
- Under your supervision involve the children in feeding and training the dog as this will help them form a closer bond
- For more information please refer to our information sheet: "Toddlers and dogs"
- Do not force the dog or the child to interact until they are both comfortable.

Seek professional advice if you need more information regarding child and dog safety.

Making introductions

Introducing your new dog to other pets

It is vital to set up all your animals for success. Prevent accidental meetings. It is difficult to predict how a dog will react to other small pets. Cats particularly, can take several weeks to adapt to change, and may not be ready to meet your new dog for quite some time. Allow an exchange of smells so the introduction can begin. Allow investigations through screen doors, gates and under doors.

When encouraging them to meet start with the dog on lead and at a distance, encourage your cat out with some food, ensuring that he has a high safe place to retreat to if he feels overwhelmed. Reward all calm behaviour in either animal.

Repeat several times under close supervision. When there is an absence of any stress behaviour you can begin to drop the lead.

Toilet training puppies and dogs

One of the most stressful and frustrating exercises for a new puppy's guardian can be toilet training. Just when you think the puppy has got the right idea, you find another puddle. What do you do?

The association with a toilet spot will be built of the following things:

- Smell (of urine, faeces or ammonia)
- Location
- Substrate eg: what the surface is made of. This can be grass, sand, tiles, newspapers etc.
- Occasionally a word, command or sound
- Physiological things like feeding, sleeping and playing.

The easiest method of toilet training is to take advantage of the puppy's natural instincts. Dogs in the wild are fastidious about keeping the den and nests clean. Dogs generally do not toilet where they sleep or eat. Dogs and pups are most likely to go to the toilet after feeding, playing or upon waking from a sleep.

Initially, the puppy should be confined to a small area of the house (such as a puppy pen/ laundry/bathroom). This enclosure should contain the puppy's bed and water and feed bowls and the puppy should be fed in this area.

Keep a close eye on the puppy when he or she wakes from sleep or has had a meal or has been playing. The puppy will appear agitated and show signs of needing to go to the toilet. You just need to notice these and respond quickly before the pup makes a mistake and goes in the wrong place. Sometimes they will sniff the ground or even walk around in a circle. If you see these things happening, then carry the puppy quickly and calmly outside and let them go to the toilet. As soon as the puppy has gone to the toilet, give them lots of praise

Toilet training puppies and dogs cont ...

and command them "toilet - good dog". The puppy will eventually associate the word "toilet" with the right action of urination or defecation.

The closer you can observe your puppy in the first few days, the less chance there will be for mistakes, then the quicker the puppy will understand and be more relaxed. Each time you take the puppy outside, give the word "toilet" and try to use the same spot. As the puppy grows up they will head for that area of the yard.

If you still encounter problems start with a small 'den area'. That is very important. Make it easy for yourself and the pup at first by having a limited area to keep an eye on. Choose any small room with a floor that is easy to clean as the den. Place the food and water bowls and on the opposite side place a few newspapers for the toilet area. Once the puppy is using the newspaper you can enlarge the "den" area. Place the top newspaper (which is wet) on the bottom of the pile. The smell will encourage the puppy to use this area. The soiled papers can then be placed outside in the yard to encourage the puppy to 'toilet' in the area of your choice. Access to the rest of the house can be made slowly, once the puppy is reliable

You must expect accidents occasionally. Never punish the puppy by rubbing their nose in the 'accident'. Reprimanding the puppy will only confuse them as to what you require from them. If you catch the puppy in the act of toileting, don't reprimand - don't say a word. Just quickly lift the puppy outside and give the command - "toilet". If you reprimand the pup, you could just end up with a stressed and confused pup, which makes sure they goes when you are not around to scold them.

Some puppies and older dogs will urinate because of excitement or anticipation of seeing their owner. Usually, puppies will grow out of this habit. With the older dogs, it is a little harder to control. Encourage the dog to be relaxed during greetings and to lessen the excitement. Do NOT scold the dog.

After the puppy or dog has urinated in the house, clean the area with a non-ammonia based product e.g. BIO-ZET laundry powder. Leave a bowl of clean water in that area. Even feed the dog the next meal in the same area.

Additional Tips:

When adopting an adult dog, most are toilet trained but some are not. Even those who are trained may have learnt to go in places that are not acceptable to you, and you may need to re teach a new place to toilet. Some dogs adopted from Refuges have learnt to toilet on concrete and may need to be retrained.

To do this: limit unsupervised access to any concreted areas. Observe the dog closely at times when they are likely to need to go to the toilet. Take the dog to the desired location and reward them when they go there. If the dog is defecating frequently then limit the times when they have access to food so you are home to do the toilet training.

Reward for doing the correct thing. Do not punish for mistakes - it is better to ignore and make it even easier for the dog to get it right next time so you can reward them for the correct response.

Settling puppies at night

For a puppy, leaving the security of familiar surroundings and their littermates can be very overwhelming. There are many new sights, sounds and smells in the new environment. It is no wonder that they complain when left alone for the first time in their short lives!

Sleeping area

Inside or outside? Dogs are very social animals and like to be with their human companions. For this reason we do encourage you to have an inside sleeping area for your new puppy. Not only is inside closer to you, safe and warm, but having your puppy inside at night (and during other times too) can help to prevent problem behaviours developing such as barking, escaping and chasing wildlife.

Restricting the sleeping area

The next step is to restrict the area that the puppy is sleeping in. This can help to keep the puppy safe, prevent toileting in inappropriate areas of the house and chewing of inappropriate items such as furniture.

A den can be set up in a laundry or similar area with all the pup's needs such as a bed, blankets, toys, chews and water.. Alternatively you can use baby gates or baby play pens to restrict access to certain rooms or areas.

Crates are GREAT!

We highly recommend crate training your new puppy. Not only is this helping to restrict the puppy's area at night, but also helps with toilet training. You can set up a crate in or close to your bedroom and then the crate can be moved to other areas of the house when the puppy is older.

Crating has many other benefits for you and your puppy, and for when your puppy is an adult dog. These benefits include helping to prevent problem behaviours such as chasing wildlife, and being able to take your dog on holidays with you.

What to include in the sleeping area

- A soft toy or blanket with the puppy's mum or littermates smell on it
- A soft/padded bed and blankets
- A warm water bottle wrapped in a blanket can help in winter too
- Access to a toilet area (such as newspaper) for dens
- Include two sources of water (in case one is tipped over!)
- Items that the puppy can play with (and rip up!) can help, such as an empty bottle with some treats in it, some toys which you can put small amounts of food in such as Kongs, long lasting chews such as pigs ears or sheep's ears and/or toys which you can smear with small amount of peanut butter or honey. The main meal should have been fed well before settling down (see Feeding and Toileting below).

Settling puppies at night continued ...

Dog Appeasing Pheromone (DAP)

This product can be purchased from your vet and is designed to mimic the pheromone lactating female dogs emit when feeding puppies. This can give the puppies a sense of calm and wellbeing and tends to work well with helping puppies settle into their new home.

Feeding and toileting

Young puppies cannot hold their bladder all night long! You will need to get up in the middle of the night to take your puppy outside. Ensure they have had a chance to toilet as late as possible before you settle them into their area at night.

Set your alarm during the night several times depending on how young your puppy is. Expect to have a young puppy up to 12 weeks of age needing to toilet every 2 hours! This can greatly depend on the breed and the individual.

Ensure your puppy is fed prior to settling down at night, at least 2 hours or so. We don't encourage free feeding so don't leave food out for the puppy except chews and food in filled toys.

To get up or not to get up

Puppies will cry! They miss the familiarity of their litter mates and environment and will be calling out to find them. If you have set your puppy up well, hopefully the vocalisation will be minimal. But...chances are your first few nights with your new puppy will be fairly disrupted! This is normal; however, please make sure you don't reinforce your puppy's crying! We can very easily reinforce this by going to them when they cry and cuddling them or letting them out and into our beds!

This can make the crying even more intense, as the next time they are put into their den or room, all they have learnt is "when I cry or make a loud noise, they will come to me!"



Set your puppy up for success (refer back to sleeping areas, toileting, entertainment and exercise), and ensure you wait out the vocalisation. Reward your puppy when they are quiet! It is far better to set your alarm and let your puppy out when they are quiet, than being woken up with crying or howling!

Finally, enjoy your new puppy. Be patient and kind, persevere and maintain a sense of humour! If you would like us to email you more detailed information please contact the RSPCA Animal Training Centre on 3426 9928.

Thunderstorms and fireworks

It is natural for dogs, cats and other animals to be frightened of certain sights, sounds, smells and situations. During the evolution of animals, a healthy fear of potentially 'nasty things' actually helped them survive. A frightened dog will behave much the same as we do when we are scared. They may call out (bark or howl), shake, run, hide or freeze. Generally they will seek comfort in an area or situation in which they feel secure.

If you know there are going to be loud noises then it is important to:

- Provide your dog with an area where they feel safe and most importantly secure so they cannot escape.
- Do not praise or comfort the dog when they are scared, as this will help make the response grow worse with time. Only praise and reward the dog for calm and relaxed behaviour.
- Make sure your dog is properly identified just in case the worst happens and the dog gets out.

Common problematic behaviours

Pulling on the lead

Many strong, young, active dogs pull on the lead when you walk them. This can make walking an unpleasant experience, and also limit the family members who may be physically capable of walking such dogs.

The problem is helped considerably by purchasing a head collar, which gently teaches the dog not to forge ahead. There are several brands of head collars including haltis, gentle leaders and Black Dog.

They need to be fitted to suit the size and shape of your dog's head therefore should be fitted by a professional. They are very kind and easy to use, once the dog gets used to them. Reward your dog greatly while introducing this to ensure the dog gets a positive association with the equipment. They are not muzzles and are not cruel. Formal training will also assist in teaching your dog to walk at heel rather than forging ahead. Head collars should not be used for dogs under six months of age as they are still teething and are quite sensitive around their muzzle.

Puppy mouthing

Mouthing is a common behaviour in puppies and it is important for them to learn what is appropriate to mouth. This behaviour is often tolerated in young puppies as it is thought to be a teething behaviour. Nipping, mouthing and biting in young dogs are generally a form of social play and a way to experience the world. Teething is more likely to involve gnawing or chewing on available objects. Soon young puppies grow up and there is much more force in their mouthing.

Common problematic behaviours cont ...

It is best to set up a no teeth policy from the day your puppy comes home. That is, no teeth are to make contact, no matter how soft, with skin or clothing of any human.

There are three steps to this process.

- Firstly give puppy lots of praise and positive feedback every time you are touching and stroking the puppy and the puppy is NOT mouthing you or when the puppy is mouthing appropriate items such as soft toys, Kongs, rope toys etc.
- Secondly, if the puppy starts to put his/her teeth on your skin redirect the behaviour, without giving any attention, towards an appropriate item your puppy can chew and encourage him/her to do so.
- If the puppy continues to mouth you proceed to the third step which is providing an immediate time out whenever contact between puppy teeth and human skin is made... Remove your puppy and give him a short time out: 30 seconds is enough. Be prepared to repeat as often as necessary

If your puppy has previously learnt that mouthing results into attention of any kind be prepared for him/her to complain about the change of rules by whining, barking, scratching and mouthing and the behaviour to increase momentarily before it ceases. The puppy will learn that mouthing humans stops the game and results in social isolation. Be persistent and consistent so that you end up with a polite dog.

Some Things We Don't Do:

- Scream, yell or squeal – this may heighten your puppy's sense of arousal and can increase the likelihood of the mouthing happening again with more enthusiasm.
- Say 'No' – it doesn't let your puppy know what the RIGHT thing to be doing is.
- Use any form of force or punishment. You will confuse your puppy and may nurture other inappropriate behaviours, such as appeasement wetting every time he/she sees you.

Mouthing is an interspecies communication problem; we just don't play like puppies so we need to show our puppies how to play appropriately with us.

Barking

Barking is normal communication behaviour in almost all breeds of dogs, but it can become a problem if it becomes excessive, or occurs at inappropriate times. You must expect some barking and recognise that it is important for your dog to bark occasionally. The key is in training and management so the barking does not become a problem.

If your dog develops a barking problem, it is important to work out why your dog is barking to help you find a solution. Dogs bark for a number of reasons including:

- Trying to get your attention.
- To raise the alarm that an intruder is nearby. (The "intruder" may be another animal)
- If they are anxious or upset.
- To communicate with other dogs.
- Boredom and a lack of training.

Common problematic behaviours cont ...

There are a number of techniques that are useful in controlling barking:

- When you are at home, train the dog that they don't get your attention when they bark, unless it is alerting you to an intruder.
- Praise the dog when they bark appropriately or when quiet.
- Keep your dog occupied and stimulated to reduce barking due to boredom, through exercise and other forms of entertainment.

If your dog's barking is severe and does not respond to these suggestions, consult the RSPCA Behavioural Support team and Behavioural Specialist or your vet. **The RSPCA does not endorse anti-barking devices or de-barking procedures as this is against one of the Five Freedoms: the freedom to express normal behaviour.**

Escaping

Dogs are intelligent, inquisitive creatures and most are looking for excitement and adventure, especially if you are not there to entertain them. You can do a number of things to discourage your dog from escaping:

- Provide stimulation and exercise to reduce your pets desire to escape.
- Provide a secure fence that is of an appropriate height for your dog's age, breed and activity level; generally between 4 and 8 feet.
- When you're not home, it may be necessary to confine your dog in the house or a den area to prevent it escaping.
- Be aware of the times your dog is escaping as it can sometimes be related to a noise or storm phobia.
- Some dogs with separation anxiety also escape whenever they are alone. Seek assistance from a behavioural specialist if the problem is severe or you think it could be related to a phobia or anxiety.
- Should your pet go missing, begin the search immediately by phoning the RSPCA Pet-D-Tect service on 1300 36 37 36.

Chewing

Chewing is especially common in puppies between 4 and 12 months of age, when they are teething. Adult dogs also have a need to chew. You should give your dog plenty of stimulation and exercise to ensure it does not chew in frustration or boredom.

Provide your dog with appropriate chew objects such as raw hides, chew sticks or balls, to teach the dog what they can and cannot chew. Keep items you do not want chewed out of reach if possible and if caught chewing on them, re-direct to a more appropriate choice. Do not use old shoes as your dog may have difficulty distinguishing between old and new shoes.

Common problematic behaviours cont ...

Digging

If your dog enjoys digging, then provide your dog with an appropriate place to dig such as a digging pit. You must teach your dog to dig there and not elsewhere in the garden, so make the pit as attractive as possible. Choose a spot that your dog favours, and bury bones, toys and other goodies to get the digging started. Reward the dog for digging there.

Some dogs, particularly long-coated dogs, dig in hot weather to cool down. Providing a suitable shallow pool where they can help cool off may help if this is the reason for the digging.

Jumping up

Almost all dogs love to jump up, especially when they are excited. This may be an unwanted behaviour if you are dressed to go out or if the dog jumps up on a small child and accidentally knocks them over. When a dog jumps, it is instantly rewarded for the action by body contact with you. This is true even if the dog is pushed away or the knee is raised as directed in some books. The dog is also rewarded by eye contact and by speaking to it, even in anger. The best way to train a dog not to jump is to:

- Make sure you do not look at, speak to, or touch the dog when it jumps.
- Look away, do not speak, and fold your arms across your chest and turn away from the dog.
- Sometimes you may have to leave the room.
- Reward the dog as soon as the dog has all four paws on the ground
- Ask your dog to sit so that the dog learns what behaviour will give him/her the desired attention
- Should the behaviour persist you may have to remove yourself from your dog for a very short period of time or put your dog into a 'time out' area for 30-60 seconds.



This may need to be repeated until the dog learns that every time it jumps, all attention will be withdrawn. The technique will work as long as it is applied consistently and if everyone in the family follows the same rules. The more often you reward your dog for appropriate behaviour the quicker the dog will learn what is expected. Reward your dog with praise, a pat, or some food every time your dog sits, instead of jumping up. It is important to give the dog other ways to burn off excess energy instead of jumping. These can include a vigorous game or a run in the park. You can teach the dog to jump on command if you like.

Exercise, stimulation and socialisation

Most people are aware of how to care for their canine companion's physical health needs; however their mental well-being is often not given quite the same amount of attention.

Good psychological health will enable your dog to be calm, able to cope more readily with stressful events and generally have a more enjoyable life. Additionally keeping your dog entertained will reduce the opportunity that your dog has to practice problem behaviours such as nuisance barking, digging, chewing and escaping.

Provide regular exercise outside the yard

Dogs need to burn off all of their energy otherwise it can be channelled into nuisance behaviours. For many confident dogs, time outside the yard provides much needed mental stimulation (a variety of sights, smells and sounds); even dogs in the biggest yards can become bored if not taken out regularly.

Opportunities to play outside the yard either at the beach, park or at another house are also great options for the active dog. For older dogs or for those that experience exacerbating joint problems. Swimming is a fantastic example of a non-weight bearing exercise.

For dogs that are a little worried by new events, unfamiliar people, places or animals a 'couch day' once per week can help to calm and settle a nervous dog. Typically 'couch days' are 'chill out' days where no training or strenuous exercise takes place and the dog is left to rest and relax. Just like our need to sometimes watch a DVD or read a good book, our dogs need time to unwind and recuperate.

Toys

Toys can be very useful in keeping dogs amused for hours. There are a large variety of toys available (rope / tugs, squeaky, puzzle cubes, balls etc) and it is worth experimenting to find toys your dog really enjoys. Importantly, remember to consider the size and material of the toys appropriate for your dog to avoid choking hazards and accidents.

Kongs are enjoyed by most dogs and provide a challenge and good chewing experience. It is important to rotate the toys on a daily basis so that your dog does not become bored.

Why not try a toy box, and each day change the toys your dog has access to. This will ensure that your dog is always willing to play and amuse him/herself with the toys that you provide.

You can find some great products at our World for Pets store, www.worldforpets.com.au - the best part is 100% of the profits come back to other animals in need!

Exercise, stimulation & socialisation cont ...

Attend training classes

In addition to teaching your dog manners, training also provides your dog with the opportunity to interact with other people and dogs and to obtain some much needed mental stimulation.

Consider fun activities such as Trick Training, Agility, Flyball and other doggie sports.



Use food to entertain

- Food can be fully hand fed, with food used as rewards throughout the day when your dog behaves appropriately.
- Food can be hidden in different locations and your dog must go on a search to find the hidden morsels. You can vary the spots where you put the food and make the search progressively more challenging.
- Provide bones or raw hides, this can provide your dog with hours of valuable appropriate chewing activity.
- Food can also be used in certain dog toys, such as treat balls, buster cubes or Kongs.
- Piñata for dogs – Place a hole in the bottom of a milk bottle big enough for the treats to fall out. Tie the bottle to hang from a tree branch. For inexperienced dogs hang it just above nose height. You may need to show that dog that by knocking the milk bottle around the treats will fall out.

To make a treat bottle:

1. Simply take the lid, plastic ring and labels off a 2lt plastic milk bottle.
2. Cut a few holes in the sides just big enough for the treats to fall out.
3. Place treats or dog biscuits inside.
4. To make the bottle extra enticing smear a small amount of peanut butter or vegemite on the outside.

To make an ice treat:

1. Place various dog treats in an ice-cream container.
2. Fill with water. You may even like to add a little gravy powder for additional flavour.
3. Freeze.
4. Once frozen tip the ice treat out of the container for your dog to enjoy.

Exercise, stimulation & socialisation cont ...

Kongs

Kongs are a fantastic way to give your dog something appropriate to chew on, while enjoying a nice and long lasting cool treat. Why not try stuffing a Kong with some raw chicken wings or chicken necks. Put the Kong into the freezer for a few hours before offering this cool summer entertainment toy. After use simply wash out and the Kong is ready for re-use.

Chewing problems?

Try dipping a rope toy in a bucket with chicken or beef stock. Hang out to dry before offering it to the dog. Once the dog takes the rope toy in his/her mouth the saliva will release the full flavour encouraging your dog to chew continuously.

Amusement areas at home

Digging

Many dogs like to dig and it is important to provide an area where they can do this without destroying the rest of the yard. Digging pits such as a children's clam shell pool filled with sand are great. Bury bones or toys so that your dog can have fun digging them up.

Sound

Try leaving a radio on when you are not at home. You may consider using a timer, so that it will turn on at different times of the day.

Canine body language

Dogs are experts at solving and avoiding conflicts. In order to communicate effectively with our dogs and to understand what they are saying, we need to understand their language.

Being able to read your dogs body language to understand when they are scared, anxious, stressed, bored or over aroused is an excellent tool, and it allows you to remove your dog/s from a situation to make them feel more comfortable and to improve relationships between dogs and humans.

When you are observing canine body language, pay careful attention to the context in which the behaviour occurs.

Canine body language continued ...

Dog calming signals

Norwegian dog trainer and behaviourist Turid Rugaas uses the phrase “calming signals” to describe the social skills or body language that dogs use from an early age to avoid conflict, invite play, prevent things from happening, avoiding threats from people and dogs, calming down nervousness, fear, noise and other unpleasant things.

You may have noticed that your dog tends to walk slowly to you if you call him to you in a voice that sounds stressed or angry, or he may turn his head away and lick his lips when you tell him off. These are all calming signals!

Sometimes these signals are very obvious or they can be extremely quick movements that with practice, observation and experience you can learn to pick up and in turn improve the relationship you have with your dog.

Different breeds have different skills

Some breeds of dogs have developed certain signals better than others due to their appearance. For example, black dogs tend to use lip licking more than other facial expressions as this is more easily seen. Very shaggy dogs with lots of hair on their face and body are often hard to read as you can't see their faces and body postures as well as shorter haired dogs.

How to interpret and use calming skills

Head turning

- Can be a very quick or tiny movement or held for longer. Often used when a dog feels uncomfortable in a situation.
- Greeting can be potentially stressful. These two dogs indicate their peaceful intentions by using simultaneous head turns when meeting each other. How polite!

Turning away

A dog may turn away when not comfortable with the situation anymore, or to avoid a threatening situation.

Licking the nose/flicking the tongue

This signal can be very brief and almost like a lizard like flick. Often accompanied by a head turn.

You may see this when you bend over and hug your dog, or when you are trying to take a photo of your dog.

Softening of the eyes

Indicates peaceful intentions.

Canine body language continued ...

Freezing

You may see this when a strange dog comes up and sniffs your dog all over.

Walking slowly, using slow movements

Slower movements can have a calming effect. If you call your dog to come to you in an angry tone, your dog may move slower as he is trying to calm you down!

Play bow

This can be an invitation to play (particularly when it is in a jumpy side to side way), but can also be a calming signal.

Sitting down

A dog may sit down if strange dogs come rushing up to them.

Lying down

This is a technique sometimes used by canines to calm other dogs down.

Yawning

A really good one humans can use to calm their dogs if the dog is fearful, anxious or uncertain. This behaviour is often seen if you are trying to take a photo of your dog, at the vet surgery or other strange environments.

Sniffing

This can be a swift movement towards the ground, or more purposeful. As dogs will sniff the ground to explore smells, it is important to look at this behaviour in the context in which it appears. When two dogs are meeting one another, mutual sniffing can indicate that the dogs are feeling more comfortable with each other. Sniffing is often seen in dogs when another dog is approaching them.

Curving

it is impolite to approach a strange dog by rushing up in a straight line to them (both by humans and other dogs). Using a curving pattern indicates a much more peaceful intent.

Splitting up

physically putting oneself between dogs or people is a signal. If a situation is becoming tense, or in the case of play, a dog may go in-between two dogs if they are becoming too aroused.

Wagging the tail

Is not always a sign of happiness. You also need to look at this signal in context. It is rather an indication of arousal of any kind.

Paw lift

This can also be used as an invitation to play (picture) or is also used as a calming signal.

Canine body language continued ...

Shake off

Is not only used when a dog is wet! Quite often a dog will shake all or part of its body after a stressful situation, such as meeting a strange dog or person.

Stress signals in dogs

Dogs can get stressed for the same reasons we do! Mostly when they feel they are unable to cope in a situation. Dogs can get stressed by direct threats, jerking on the lead, too many training demands, too much exercise (particularly in young dogs), too little exercise, not having access to a toilet area, temperature, pain/illness, too much noise, being alone, sudden scary situations and changes and also if a dog is never allowed to relax and be calm.

To identify stress, firstly look at the dog's body condition and coat, and always visit a veterinary professional if you suspect your dog is unwell or its behaviour has changed suddenly. Restlessness, overreactions to situations, the use of calming signals, vocalisation, diarrhoea, tense muscles, shaking, loss of appetite, allergies, changes in behaviour are just some signs of stress.

How can we help stressed dogs? Rule out illness first by visiting your veterinary professional. Change the environment for the better, use only calm, positive training techniques, and identify calming signals to read the dog appropriately. Control your dog's exposure to scary or novel situations include your dog in family life and find the correct level of exercise for your dog.

Canine body parts

Body part	Action	Behaviour signal
Ears	Folded back behind head (relaxed)	Appeasing
Ears	Held back but tight	Fearful
Ears	Back and relaxed	Calm, friendly
Ears	Forward and relaxed	Confident, aware, friendly
Ears	Pricked forward	Alert, excitement, aroused
Eyes	Averted/no eye contact	Appeasing or fearful
Eyes	Squinting	Appeasing, happy greeting
Eyes	Soft/direct	Calm, relaxed
Eyes	Hard stare	Alert, excited, arousal
Eyes	Can see white of eyes	Fearful
Mouth	Lips pulled back	Appeasing, fearful (some breeds smile!)
Mouth	Tense, closed	Unsure, dog may be undecided
Mouth	Relaxed, open	Calm, friendly
Mouth	Puckered forward/lips lifted	Threat, fearful
Tail	Tucked under	Fearful, appeasing (in some breeds)
Tail	Carriage lower than back (waving)	Relaxed, friendly
Tail	High carriage, still or vibrating	Tension, arousal (could be aggression)
Tail	Fast wag to tip	Threatening

Dogs with no or little tail or dogs who have a naturally curling tail are hard to read as the change could be millimetres.

Canine body language continued ...

Body posture

Body posture lowered, hackles may be raised: appeasing, fearful

Vertical, full height, even weight on all paws: confident, relaxed

Body posture forward, standing tall, hackles may be raised: alert, assertive, excited, arousal (threatening - could be aggressive).

Always look at the behaviour in the context in which it is shown.

If you have any questions or concerns about your dog's behaviour, please contact the RSPCA Animal Training and Behaviour centre on (07) 3428 9928 during office hours.

