

Do you know at 7 weeks of age your puppy has the brainwaves of an adult dog? He has a brain maturity we don't realize until we are 25! At this seemingly tender age your puppy is capable of retaining and applying lessons taught by another dog, you, or happenstance.

Dogs inherently respect and revere teachers. You must earn your puppy's respect as his teacher by setting household boundaries. Achieving this respect brings about a learning shift from your pup. He will desire to please you as well as look forward to new lessons.

Don't adopt the mindset of "We will start being firm tomorrow." What behaviors you allow today become imprinted in your puppy as acceptable behavior. Your puppy will attempt to learn his place in the family hierarchy by using inappropriate behaviors such as jumping on you for attention or teething on your fingers. All puppies need to learn the first day to sit to before petting or getting picked up. From the first day your puppy needs to sit and wait for his meal as well as sitting and waiting at open doors, including the car door. These important boundaries are how you will send the message to your pup that you are the teacher and worthy of his loyal trust and respectful companionship.

The rules you create need to be followed by human family members too. Dogs crave consistency and it is consistency from you and your family that help your pup to learn he is safe and loved. A lack of consistency with puppy's rules amongst the human household will confuse and frustrate your puppy, creating inappropriate behavior from puppy that include house soiling, nipping and barking.

When you bring that new puppy home his education should begin *from the moment you open your door*. If you intend to use a crate or playpen -and I hope you do- you will want to use it immediately when you enter your home. Place puppy in confinement with a tasty chew bone. Ignore his protest of whining, scratching or barking. Do not look at puppy. Give puppy the time to observe your household and decompress from trip and car ride. Puppy needs to remain crated for 10 minutes, it is an important boundary that needs to be set right away. When you release him at the end of the ten minutes to the potty area he will understand the confinement doesn't last forever, and you are on your way to puppy's respect.

The best parenting in any species includes consistency, boundaries and firmness, taught out of love and mutual respect, not taught from anger and frustration. Teaching your pup respect for his new family right away will allow you less time being frustrated at puppy's shenanigans and more time for that belly rub, walk, game of fetch and cuddles with your new family member.

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