

Basic Behavior Tips

Handling

Small dogs, sometimes referred to as "lap dogs," are the easiest to handle. The larger breeds, such as German Shepherd dogs, are usually too large to lift. If you want to carry a puppy or small dog, place one hand under the dog's chest, with either your forearm or other hand supporting the hind legs and rump. Never attempt to lift or grab your puppy or small dog by the forelegs, tail or back of the neck. If you do have to lift a large dog, lift from the underside, supporting his chest with one arm and his rear end with the other.

Training

A well-behaved companion animal is a joy. But left untrained, your dog can cause nothing but trouble. Teaching your dog the basics--"sit," "stay," "come," "down," "heel," "off" and "leave it"--will improve your relationship with both your dog and your neighbors. Start teaching puppies basic sit and stay commands. Use little bits of food as a lure and reward. Puppies can be enrolled in obedience courses when your veterinarian believes they are adequately vaccinated. Contact your local humane society or SPCA for training class recommendations. Start teaching your puppy manners NOW!

Exercise

Dogs need exercise to burn calories, stimulate their minds, and keep healthy. Exercise also tends to help dogs avoid boredom, which can lead to destructive behavior. Supervised fun and games will satisfy many of your pet's instinctual urges to dig, herd, chew, retrieve and chase.

Individual exercise needs vary based on breed, sex, age and level of health, but a couple of walks around the block every day and ten minutes to explore the backyard is probably not enough. If your dog is a 6- to 18-month adolescent, or if she is an active breed or random-bred from the sporting, herding, hound or terrier groups, her requirements will be relatively high.

Always keep your puppy or dog on a leash in public. Just be sure your pet will come to you at all times should you say the word. A disobedient or aggressive dog is not ready to play with others.