



OUTDOOR SURFACES

Young puppies are susceptible to disease before their immune systems have a chance to become effective. But this doesn't mean you should wait until they are older to introduce them to the wider world. Carry them if you need to, but make sure to start the socialisation process as soon as possible.

Socialisation is about more than introducing your puppy to other dogs or people... The real goal of socialisation and exposure is to get your puppy comfortable with everything they are likely to experience throughout life. You need to introduce them to new situations safely, making them positive, confidence-building experiences. Never put your puppy in a new situation just to see what happens.

Puppies need to be exposed in a pleasant way to different surfaces including: grass, wet grass, water, steel, dirt, sand, leaves, concrete, gravel, lino, carpet and wooden floors. Puppies who lack early experiences may find many things scary and grow up to be anxious and fearful. For example a puppy who was never exposed to wet grass, may have a hard time going out to the toilet when it rains.

Every new and positive experience will help your puppy grow into a confident companion. Allow your puppy to explore at their own pace, and support them throughout. The younger your puppy, the easier it is to socialise them. As puppies get older, they become more cautious when faced with new experiences. So getting out and about in the world as early as possible is really important.



HAPPY TRAINING!



SET UP FOR SUCCESSFUL WALKS

Before you go on a walk with your puppy there are some things you can do to set you both up for success. It is really unlikely that your puppy will be able to walk beautifully on a loose lead next to you as soon as you start venturing out together because there are lots of distractions and new smells, sights and sounds for your puppy to experience.

You want to first let them have a chance to sniff and explore on a longline attached to the back of their harness. This will help them to get used to the environment, building up their confidence and becoming more relaxed. Let your puppy have as much time as they need to settle into the environment. Don't rush too quickly to try and train together, let your puppy tell you when they are ready.

Reward everything that your puppy does, that you like. If they check in and look at you, reward them. If they settle calmly, reward them, if they sit when somebody passes, reward them. When your puppy has settled into the environment you might see that they start to look at you a lot more, particularly as you'll be rewarding each time.

This is when you can start to work with your dog and teach them where you want them to walk. Loose lead walking can look different for different people so get clear on what it means for you - what is your goal? Reward your dog in the position you would like them to walk and don't be stingy! Reward at least every couple of steps to start with.

Take frequent breaks for your puppy to sniff and explore between periods of focus. It's important to keep an eye on the environment as things change quickly. Your puppy might go from calm and relaxed to stressed and worried or excited and bouncy in a few moments if new things appear. Watch for changes in the environment and be mindful of your puppy's body language. You might need to alter your planned route to give your puppy more space and time to absorb things.





COFFEE SHOP FIELD TRIP

This week your field trip is to take your puppy to visit a coffee shop.

Practice walking around the environment and exploring the different textures, taking in the sights, sounds and smells.

If your puppy is relaxed, see if they will do some training games like sit or settle whilst you get a cup of coffee.

Watch the people passing by in the bustling environment. Why not get your puppy a puppuchino or bring a chew for them so they make a great association from the very beginning.

Remember, keep the visit short and come back often.



HAPPY TRAINING!



TEACHING USING NOSE TARGETING

Once you have taught your puppy a nose target you are able to use the same skill to teach many new behaviours too.

To start with, get your puppy used to moving to follow your target hand. Reward them for following a short distance.

From here try getting them to follow in a circle - this is called a spin.

You can use targeting to teach your puppy new positions and even to ring a bell to be let outside. How many uses can you think of?



HAPPY TRAINING!



ENRICHMENT PROJECT MUFFIN TIN CHALLENGE

This week's enrichment challenge is called the muffin tin game. This is a great confidence builder for puppies and can be made simpler or more difficult depending on your puppy's skill level.

To begin with you're going to take some of your puppy's food or treats and sprinkle them into the different sections. You can use a selection of different flavours and textures to give your puppy an even more enriching experience. Once you've done this you are going to add some objects on top of the tin that your puppy will need to move out of the way in order to access the tasty delights.

To start with you can make this simple by having some of the sections free to access and some covered by one of their toys. As your dog becomes an expert you can increase the difficulty by adding more objects, including different toys as well as novel items such as plastic egg cartons or other packaging.

There are so many ways to vary this challenge to keep it new and exciting for your pup.



HAPPY TRAINING!



PREVENTING SEPARATION ANXIETY

It's natural for your puppy to want to be around you a lot when you first bring them home. Everything has changed for them overnight and they will want to be near you as you are their source of safety. Eventually you want to be able to leave your puppy settled for a few hours at home whilst you go out but it's important you prepare your puppy for this and go at their pace.

If your puppy struggles to be on their own, and cries for you to come back make sure you don't force them to be alone. This can do more damage in the long run. Instead give your puppy free access to you and work on gradually building their confidence to be left for short periods.

One way to get started is to scatter a few treats outside of the bathroom when you pop to the toilet. This will keep your puppy happy and occupied and start to build a positive association to tiny absences throughout the day.





PREVENTING SEPARATION ANXIETY

Another thing you can do is set your puppy up with enrichment in their safe space. If it's a pen or crate, leave the door open so they can choose to come out if they want to. Use an enrichment item that is heavy like a frozen kong so that they can't pick it up and move around with it. You could also tie the toy down.

Whilst your puppy is enjoying their enrichment, move around the house, picking up and putting down items. Pay no attention to your puppy as you do this. Your puppy can choose to watch or follow you if they want to, or remain settled enjoying their enrichment. This choice really helps to fast-track building confidence as it's impossible to overwhelm them.

When your puppy is happy to be left for tiny periods, you can practice leaving your puppy for longer. Before you go make sure they have had physical and mental enrichment and a chance to go to the toilet. Settle them in their pen or crate with an activity to do. Consider leaving on the tv or radio for background noise. You can even set up a doggy cam to see how they're doing when you're out. This is great for peace of mind, knowing that they are relaxed and settled without you. Make sure to go at your puppy's pace, be warm and nurturing and never leave them to cry it out.





PEEKABOO

Peekaboo is a fun behaviour where your puppy goes round behind you before standing or sitting between your legs.

To get started have your puppy in front of you and holding a treat between your finger and thumb slowly lure your puppy around the outside of your leg. Mark as your puppy moves behind you and reward with your opposite hand between your knees.

Repeat several times, building up the duration that your puppy stays in position by feeding treats one after another as long as they remain in place.

Next step is to remove the food from your hand and use only a hand signal to guide your puppy.

Practice until your puppy is promptly offering the behaviour. You can then attach the cue peekaboo, by saying the cue word just before you give the visual hand signal.

After enough repetitions your puppy will understand the verbal cue.



HAPPY TRAINING!



LOOK AT THAT

Teach your puppy to look at you by default whenever they see something interesting in the environment. This could be another dog, child, runner, cyclist or anything else. Instead of being really distracted your puppy will happily focus back on you without you even needing to ask.

Choose a quiet environment where people are moving at a distance to you. If your puppy gets really excited outside, have a friend or family member help you practice at home to begin with. Have your marker ready and with your puppy sitting on lead in front of you, wait for them to look at a person moving in the distance. As soon as they do, mark and reward them.

Repeat this so that every time your puppy looks at a distraction they are getting rewarded. They will start to understand that distractions in the environment predict good things from you.

At this stage when your puppy looks at the person again, wait and see what they offer next. If your puppy has made the link between looking away and food coming from you, they will quickly look back at you anticipating their treat. Mark and reward them for looking back at you this time.

From here only mark and reward when your puppy calmly looks away and then looks back at you. Gradually build up the difficulty by being closer to the passing people.

Practice around cyclists, joggers, children playing and even other dogs. As your puppy gets really good at this you can practice in busier environments and enjoy seeing your puppy able to look away from even big distractions without any prompting from you at all!





FUN FOOD CIRCUITS

This game is all about supercharging the treats you use in training. The more your puppy enjoys their reward, the more they'll want to train with you and the quicker you'll make progress together.

In this game you will practice using 'get' as a way to add value to rewards. Start by cueing your puppy to do something they know really well - it can be a hand touch, eye contact, sit or anything else. When your puppy completes the behaviour, mark and throw the treat away and prompt them to 'get'.

When they come back cue them again and mark and reward by tossing a treat for them to run after and get. Vary the behaviour you are cueing to keep this game fresh and exciting for your puppy.

This game can really help to boost your puppy's motivation and supercharge the rewards you are using. Keep sessions short and make sure that your puppy doesn't slip or turn too sharply to run after the food. This could cause an injury. Make sure you always throw the reward in the direction they are facing, and play this game on a non-slip surface. You can even practice this outdoors with your puppy on a long line.



HAPPY TRAINING!