



2026

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# WORLD CLASSIC

CELEBRATING THE CHAMPIONS OF CARE

**VMX**  
VETERINARY MEETING & EXPO



# When Pet Parents Become Human Parents

*Supporting the Human-Animal Bond in  
Growing Families*



# Meet the Panelists



**Rustin Moore, DVM, PhD**  
Dean, The Ohio State University  
College of Veterinary Medicine



**Meg Terrio**  
Head Trainer  
Partners in Canine



**Laura Anna See, DVM**  
IDEXX Internal Medicine  
Consultant



# Audience Prompts

- How many of you are familiar with health benefits of the HAB for children and families – including those with developmental differences – to be comfortable having conversations with clients?
- How many of you have struggled with conversations or have had an uncomfortable or difficult conversation around pet behavior with a client?
- How many of you feel comfortable providing information and resources for clients related to training and behavior?



# Facts & Figures

- Research shows that positive training can promote sociability and decrease behavioral problems and increase shared activities and engagement.
- According to the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) Canine and Feline Behavior Management Guidelines, positively training puppies and kittens results in less aggression and fearfulness over time.

Bennett, Pauleen Charmayne, and Vanessa Ilse Rohlf. "Owner-companion dog interactions: Relationships between demographic variables, potentially problematic behaviours, training engagement and shared activities." *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 102.1-2 (2007): 65-84.



# Facts & Figures

- Research suggests that pet owners who perceive their pets to display bad behavior are more likely to have a lower level of attachment to their pets.
- The most common reasons identified for relinquishment included **behavioral issues (28%)**. Aggression, social conflict, and soiling were the most common behavioral-issue reasons reported.

Serpell, J. A. (1996). Evidence for an association between pet behavior and owner attachment levels. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 47(1-2), 49-60.

Kisley, M. A., Chung, E. J., & Levitt, H. (2024). Investigating the reasons behind companion animal relinquishment: A systematic content analysis of shelter records for cats and dogs, 2018–2023. *Animals*, 14(17), 2606.



# Child Health & Development and the Human-Animal Bond

- Children with a family pet have been found to be more empathetic, have higher levels of self-esteem, greater physical activity, than non-pet owners
- Pets in the classroom may aid the learning process by providing children with positive experiences, while increasing their knowledge of social behavior



Hart, L. A., Thigpen, A. P., Willits, N. H., Lyons, L. A., Hertz-Pannier, I., & Hart, B. L. (2018). Affectionate interactions of cats with children having autism spectrum disorder. *Frontiers in veterinary science*, 5, 39.  
Daly, B., & Morton, L. L. (2006). An investigation of human-animal interactions and empathy as related to pet preference, ownership, attachment, and attitudes in children. *Anthrozoös*, 19(2), 113-127.  
Svensson, A.S. The impact of the animals on children's learning and their development—A study of what children learn from and with pets: The example of dog and cat. *Prob. Educ.* 2014, 59, 77–85.



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## Q&A

### ***What would you like to get the panelists input on?***

- Dog that has always been good with a baby snarling and growling at child now the child is a toddler
- Dog stealing child's toys and showing guarding behavior
- Cat toileting inappropriately since baby's arrival
- Juvenile dog that jumps and knocks child over, nips when playing, generally boisterous teenage behavior which is becoming difficult for owner to manage
- Cat that has no tolerance for child and swipes at any interaction or hides when child is around.
- Child that is being bullied at school and has become very withdrawn; will pet ownership help?



# Resources

- [Family Paws: Dog & Family Education](#)
- [My Pet and I \(Elanco\)](#)
- [Humane Colorado](#) (offers both articles and a behavior helpline for dogs and cats)
- [AVSAB.org](#) (to find animal behavior veterinarians when needed for additional help)
- [The Ohio State University Resources](#) (particularly the “Behavior Guide for Your New Puppy” and the “Indoor Pet Initiative”)
- [Partners in Canine Socialization](#)
- [AVMA Dog Bite Prevention Brochure](#)



# CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE

*This panel was assembled by IDEXX and HABRI. IDEXX is a supporter of HABRI's research and educational activities.*





# THANK YOU

DON'T FORGET TO RATE YOUR SPEAKER  
AND SESSION IN THE APP!

Presented By

**NAVC**  
YOUR VETERINARY COMMUNITY



# Appendix



# Crating Tips for Puppies

## Did You Know

- Puppies need up to 18 hours of sleep for normal physical and mental development.
- When puppies become nippy, pushy, and over-the-top it may be because the puppy has too much freedom in the house - and not enough rest.



## Handling Challenges



Some puppies really struggle to get settled in their crate - this is normal! You may experience new octaves of howling and maybe some signs of mild distress.

And certainly some sad sad puppy eyes.

- If the puppy cries or howls in the crate you can verbally reassure them or try covering their crate to create a more den-like environment.

## MORE TIPS FOR THE CRATE

- Give your puppy something safe to chew on in the crate (especially if they're exhibiting nippy behavior).
- Make sure your puppy POOPS, PEES, PLAYS, and TRAINS during their time out of the crate. This will help ensure their needs are completely fulfilled and make resting in the crate easier.

## Benefits of Crating

- Keep in mind that crating helps your puppy learn the ability to self-regulate (become calm on their own), cope with being away from you, and provide a safe place for them to rest when you can't keep an eye on them.
- These are all very necessary skills for dogs in our modern lifestyle. If you ever need to have your dog boarded, or vetted overnight, or if there is ever an emergency - having your dog be ok in a crate is critical too.

### THE CRATING RATIO

Very structured, supervised 1-2 hours out / 1-2 hours crate rest.  
Plan your time with your puppy!

## Out-of-Crate Time & Success

- Use crate time to get household chores, phone calls, emails, and other distractions out of the way. Make sure that before you bring your puppy out of the crate you have collected any hazardous items and put up appropriate gates or barriers to ensure that the environment is completely set-up for puppy's success (no socks on the floor, no food on surfaces, etc.).
- Make sure your puppy is calm and quiet before letting them out.
- Be in a position to reward all good behavior. Puppies will repeat behaviors they are rewarded for.



# Potty TRAINING PROTOCOL

# Who is this Protocol For?



**New Puppies**  
(First Coming Home)



**New Adult Dogs**  
(New Household)



**Dogs with Issues**  
(Inappropriate Pottying)



## Important Note: Rule Out Medical Issues

It is important to note that you should always rule out a medical issue (such as a UTI) with your vet if your dog is having an ongoing housebreaking issue.

# Understanding Puppy Potty Habits & Supervision

## Bladder Control & Scheduling



Typically, a puppy can control its bladder **one hour for every month of age**. So if your puppy is 2 months old, they can hold it for about two hours. As puppy gets a little older you can adjust your potty schedule.

## Supervision & Habit Formation



Time out of the crate should **ALWAYS BE SUPERVISED**. Potty training success is all about management. Dogs typically are habitual in when and where they eliminate - so its important to make sure they are going where you want them to learn to go.



This is why we **don't recommend puppy pads**.

# The 2-Week Habit & The Power of Tracking

## Sticking to the Protocol (2 Weeks)



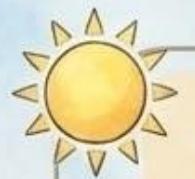
Consistency is key! The average time for good habits to form is 2 weeks. Sleep better knowing your home is **free from accidents.** 

## The Potty Journal: Finding Trends



Extremely useful for **identifying patterns.** Track how long it takes after eating/drinking, and frequency during the **day & night.**

# The Morning Routine: The First Potty Break



## From Crate to Potty Spot



Begin the moment you take your puppy out of the crate first thing in the morning. Take the puppy (**LEASHED**) to the potty area and wait **5-10 minutes** for them to “go”.

## If They Don't Go: The Wait & Repeat Cycle



If they don't go, walk or carry them back to the crate. Wait **10-45 minutes** (depending on age) and **repeat the process** until they **successfully eliminate outside**. Use the chart to track your progress.



# The Path to Freedom: Supervised Liberty

## SUPERVISED LIBERTY



Puppy gains SUPERVISED liberty only after they've 'gone'. Use a drag leash for close monitoring during liberty periods.

## THE CRITICAL RULE!



## THIS IS THE CRITICAL PART!

No unattended liberty until 14 consecutive days of success.  
Accidents reset the clock.

## THE INVESTMENT & REWARD



It's hard work, but foolproof if you stick to it. The freedom is worth the investment.

# Breaking the Habit: The Importance of Crating

## THE PROBLEM: UNSUPERVISED FREEDOM



Dogs quickly learn to eliminate inside when your attention is elsewhere. This forms a habit cycle you **MUST** break.

## THE SOLUTION: CRATE TRAINING



A crate is a tremendous help. Most dogs won't eliminate where they sleep. Use it when you can't supervise to prevent accidents and protect your progress.

# Mealtimes/Training:

## Feeding & Water Schedule



We typically use the puppy's food during training, which should happen in short but frequent intervals throughout the day. Keep track of how much they eat or drink, and when you start/stop feeding.

If the puppy is peeing in the house - don't leave water available to the puppy at all times. You will need to physically provide opportunities for the puppy to drink throughout the day.

## The Potty Routine



Use the chart to help you document when you gave food and water. After the puppy has consumed food/water, begin the process of letting them out to the potty area (leashed), waiting 10-15 mins for them to go, and crating if they do not go. If you successfully get both poo and pee, the puppy can gain supervised liberty in the house again.

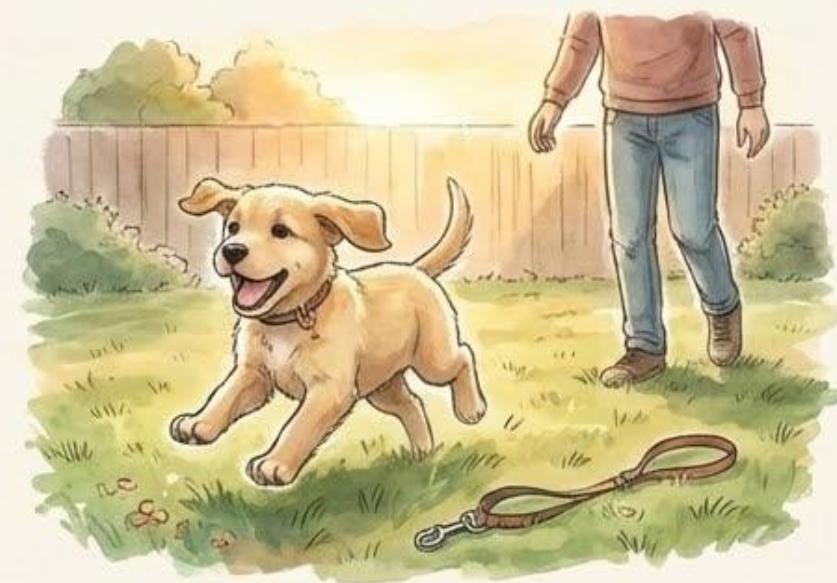
# More on Potty Training

## Distractions & Incomplete Potties



Puppies can get distracted. Ensure they fully empty their bladder; a 'tinkle' often leads to an accident later. Set a 5-10 min limit. If they don't go, neutrally return them to their crate, wait, and try again.

## Reward & Freedom



Reward successful potties with praise and freedom in the yard or house! This teaches the puppy that completing their business leads to liberty.

# Play Away Puppy Problems



# Why Fulfilling Play is Important

## Benefits of Biological Fulfillment:

- Prevents future problem behaviors
- Builds a strong owner-puppy relationship
- Fulfills fundamental needs



## Consequences of Lack of Play:



# Play often mimics **PREDATION**

**your puppy may be predisposed to enjoy  
certain playstyles due to their breed**



# Some aspects include:



**Stalking**



**Fighting**



**Tracking**



**Consumption**

# Create a game for your puppy where they can safely engage in “problem” behaviors it loves.

This game will provide boundaries and the ability to prevent the behavior from happening outside the limits of when it's time to play the game.



# The “Start Game” Cue

Ready? Go!



this is a commonly used phrase and easy to remember

Pick a word or phrase you consistently use to indicate to your puppy that you are starting a game.

Having clear “start” and “end” cues for games can help teach your puppy **impulse control**. This is VERY important, especially if you are playing a game that includes activities like digging, jumping, running away, or wrestling that you would not want them to practice outside of this game. This is an opportunity for your puppy to express some of their biological functions in a **safe way**.

# The “End Game” Cue

Enough.

a little leash pressure is super helpful to pair with this word when the puppy tries to play after you've ended the game.

Pick a word or phrase to end the game. With lots of **practice sessions**, your puppy will learn not to engage in certain behaviors that you play in the game after you say this word.

For this word to have any meaning, though, you must have a way to gently communicate to the puppy that engaging in that activity is off limits.



# Scenario One

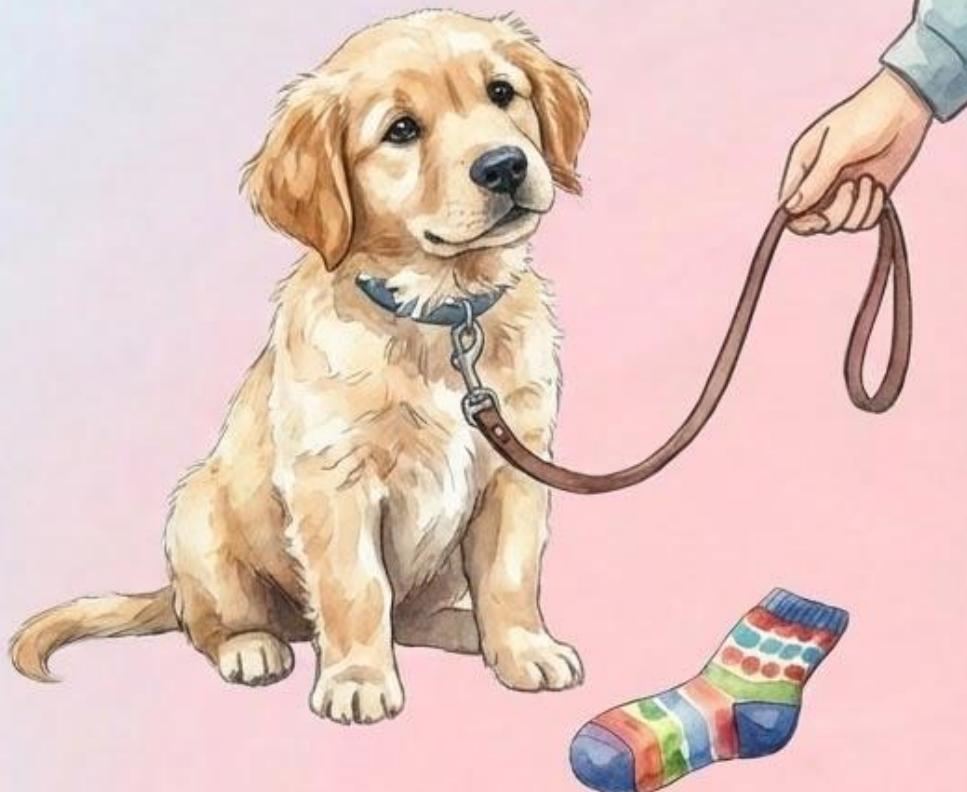
Does your puppy like to steal things like socks or paper towels, and have you chase them to try to get the item back? This is a puppy that wants to play **keep away!**

Set up a scenario where you bring your **LEASHED** puppy over to an area with an interesting (but safe) object they may be interested in picking up. Use your “start word” and encourage your puppy to pick up and run with the object while dragging the leash. Playfully chase the puppy and periodically pick up the leash. Let the puppy think he got away from you and drop the leash. Practice ending the game and restarting it. Don’t let the puppy learn that when you pick up the leash, it means you are about to end the game.



# Scenario One: Reinforcing “Enough”

Make sure to practice using gentle leash pressure and a word like, “uh-uh” if the puppy tries to engage with the object after you have ended the game.



# Other Scenarios



Puppies that have occasional bouts of nipping or seem to enjoy competitive combat will most likely enjoy tug or personal play (wrestling)!



Puppies that like to chase things usually love a good flirt pole!



Puppies that like to eat and use their sniffers will enjoy food puzzles and “easter egg hunts”. Find ways to make it interactive with you!



If space allows, build your hole-loving puppy their own sandbox and bury toys for them to find!

# SOCIALIZATION

# CRITICAL PERIOD OF SOCIALIZATION

## 3 to 16 WEEKS

Puppies are primed for learning about the world around them. They will form opinions about the world based on their experiences during this time.



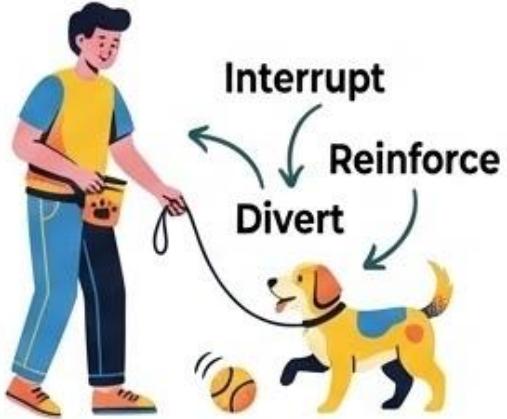
# PUPPY SOCIALIZATION: QUALITY, GUIDANCE, & STRUCTURE

## 1. QUALITY & POSITIVE FOCUS



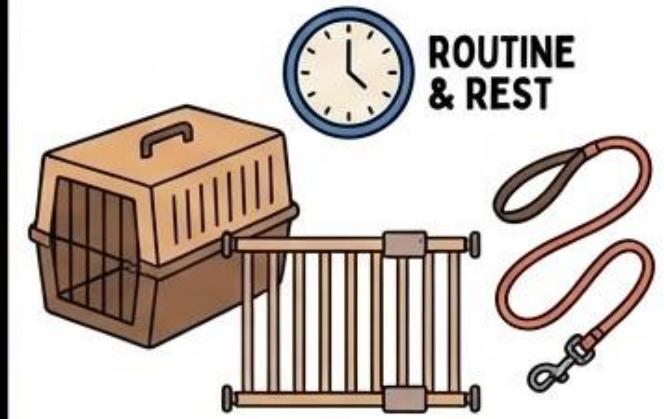
**QUALITY OVER QUANTITY.**  
Prioritize positive associations with people, places, sounds, surfaces, and animals. The goal is **POSITIVE** experiences, not neutral or bad ones.

## 2. PROACTIVE GUIDANCE



Be prepared to interrupt unwanted behavior, divert attention, and reinforce good choices. Turn **EVERY** situation into a learning opportunity. It requires active effort!

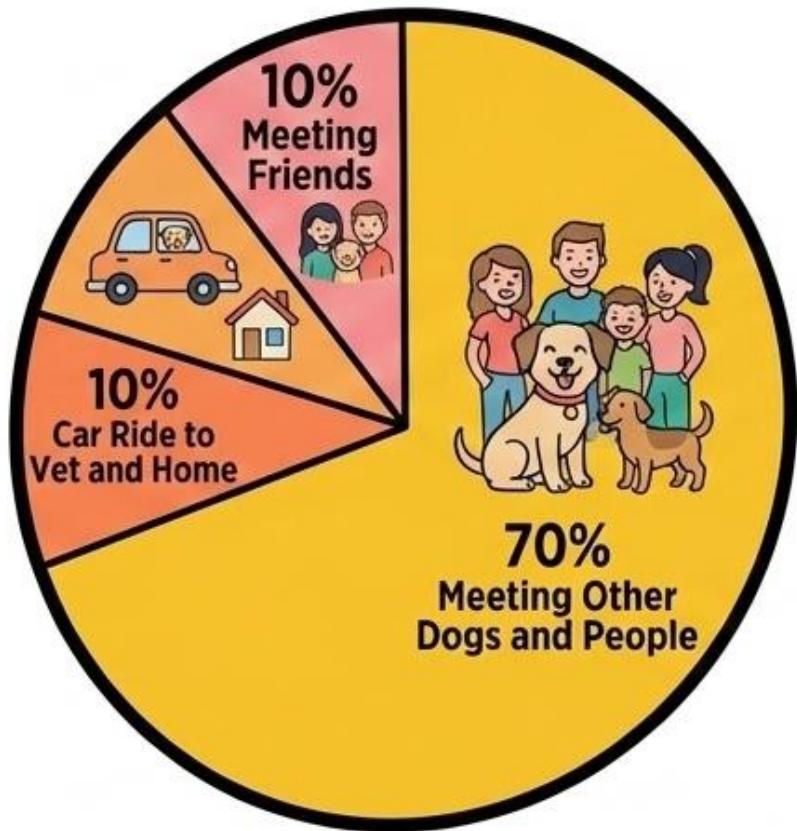
## 3. STRUCTURE & TOOLS



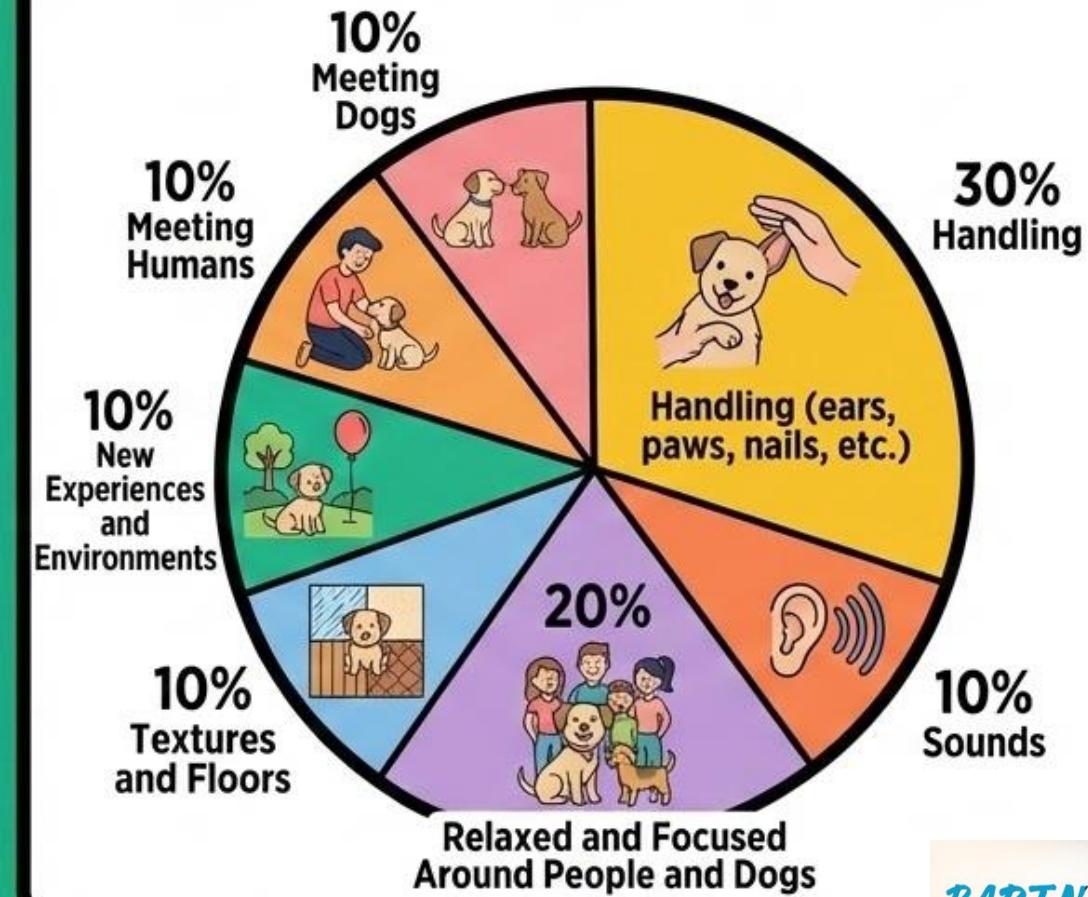
Use tools like crates, gates, and leashes to set up success and prevent bad habits. Establish strict routines and ensure plenty of rest for fulfillment.

# PUPPY SOCIALIZATION: MYTH VS. REALITY

## What People Think Socialization Is



## What Socialization Actually Is



# PUPPY SOCIALIZATION ESSENTIALS



## HUMANS

- TALL PEOPLE
- SHORT PEOPLE
- PEOPLE WITH BEARDS
- PEOPLE WEARING HELMETS
- ELDERLY
- YOUNG
- KIDS WITH FOOD / TOYS
- BAGGY CLOTHING
- ETC...



## DOGS

- DOGS OF DIFFERENT AGES
- DOGS OF DIFFERENT BREED
- DOGS WHO PLAY WELL
- DOGS WHO WILL REPRIMAND PUPPIES WITH APPROPRIATE FORCE AND RESTRAINT FOR GETTING INTO THEIR PERSONAL SPACE
- PUPPIES WHO DON'T BECOME OVERLY AROUSED WHILE PLAYING



## EXPERIENCES

**POSITIVE HANDLING:**  
Form a positive association with being handled by using food.

**HEAD TO TOE CHECKS:**  
Handle puppy from head to toe, looking at their teeth, tails, ears and paws.

**MEDICAL EQUIPMENT:**  
Introduce them to different medical equipment they may see at the vet or groomer.

# PUPPY PLAY: DO'S AND DON'TS

## DO'S



- Allow sniffing & loose leashes. No tension.
- Separate over-excited/nervous puppies to calm down.
- Parallel walks can be a good introduction.
- Give frequent rest breaks and interruptions.
- Look for appropriate body language: play bows, shake offs, loose bodies.

## DON'TS



- Immediately take dogs off leash and assume they'll get along.
- Allow pinning, humping, or bullying.
- Force interaction if one dog is uncomfortable.

**TAKEAWAY:** Puppies need help learning to modulate their play.  
If they return to play after a break, it's a good sign!

# The Exam-Room Behavior Toolkit: Client-Ready Explanations for Lasting Change



## Positive Reinforcement | The Foundation

**Goal:** To increase desirable behaviors by rewarding them.

### Key Principles:

- **Immediate:** Reward within 1-2 seconds.
- **Motivating:** Use high-value treats, toys, or praise.
- **Consistent:** Reward the behavior every time, especially when new.

"We want to **reward the behaviors we want to see** the moment they happen. Use anything your pet loves—treats, praise, or attention. The reward needs to be immediate so they make the right connection. This way, your pet learns that good choices lead to good things."



## Desensitization | Turning Down the Intensity

**Goal:** To gradually expose a pet to a trigger at a level so low they remain calm.

### Key Principles:

- **Low Intensity:** Start with the trigger far away, quiet, or brief.
- **Stay Under Threshold:** Watch for zero signs of fear or stress.
- **Go Slow:** Increase intensity only when the pet is completely relaxed.

"Think of it like **turning the volume down** on something scary. We introduce it at a level so quiet your pet barely notices, so they can see it's not a threat. We only turn the volume up very slowly, ensuring they stay comfortable at every step."



## Counter-Conditioning | Changing the Feeling

**Goal:** To change a pet's emotional response from fear/anxiety to positive.

### Key Principles:

- **Pairing:** The trigger is consistently followed by something the pet loves.
- **Prediction:** The trigger starts to predict the "good thing."
- **New Association:** The emotional response to the trigger changes.

"Here, we teach your pet a new emotional reaction. **When the scary thing appears, something wonderful happens**—like a piece of chicken. Over time, your pet's brain rewires. Instead of thinking 'Oh no!', they start to think, 'Oh, good! Chicken is coming!'"



## The Power Combo: DS + CC

Desensitization keeps the trigger manageable, while Counter-Conditioning actively builds a positive emotional association.

"We use these together for the best results. We **keep the scary thing gentle** (Desensitization) while we **add a positive experience** (Counter-Conditioning). This combination teaches your pet they are safe, builds their confidence, and creates lasting change without force."

# Welcome Home, Baby!

A Pet Owner's Guide to Preparing Your Dogs and Cats for a New Family Member

## Part 1:

### The Pre-Arrival Prep

Success starts months before your due date. Focus on changing routines gradually so your pet doesn't associate the baby with "losing" their old life.



**Adjust Schedules:** Start varying feeding and walking times now.



**Sound Desensitization:** Play "Baby Noise" playlists (crying, squealing) during meal times to create a positive association.



**Set Boundaries:** Use baby gates to establish "pet-free zones" like the nursery.



**Scent Familiarity:** Introduce the smells of baby powder and lotion.



## Part 2: Species-Specific Checklists

### For the Dogs 🐶



**Stroller Practice:** Walk your dog with an empty stroller to practice steering and pace.



**"Place" Command:** Master a solid "stay" on a specific bed or rug.



**Gentle Handling:** Reward your dog for staying calm while you touch their ears and paws.

### For the Cats 🐱



**Vertical Space:** Ensure cat trees are available so they can observe from a safe height.



**Litter Privacy:** Move litter boxes to quiet, low-traffic areas.



**Safe Zones:** Provide "hiding spots" where the baby (and later, the toddler) cannot go.

## Part 3: The Introduction & Beyond



**The Scent Greeting:** Before the baby comes home, bring a worn baby onesie for the pet to sniff.



**Calm Energy:** Greet your pet alone first to get the "excitement" out before introducing the baby.



**Treat the Presence:** Give high-value treats whenever the pet is calm near the baby.



**The Golden Rule:** Never leave any pet alone with a baby, regardless of their history.

### References

American Humane. (2023). Introducing your pet to a new baby. <https://www.americanhumane.org>; American Veterinary Medical Association. (2024). Pet and baby safety.; ASPCA. (2022). Dogs and babies. <https://www.aspca.org>; Family Paws Parent Education. (2025). Dog and baby safety resources. <https://www.familypaws.com>; The Humane Society of the United States. (2024). Preparing your pet for a new baby. <https://www.humanesociety.org>

# Your Guide to Stress-Free Vet Visits

A toolkit of positive techniques to build your pet's confidence and make healthcare easier for everyone.



## Prepare for the Visit

- **Practice Gentle Handling:** Daily, for just a few seconds, gently handle your pet's ears, paws, tail, mouth, and belly. Follow immediately with a treat or a favorite toy.
- **Create Positive Car Associations:** Take your pet on short, fun car rides that don't end at the vet. Offer praise or treats to build a positive connection with travel.
- **Try "Happy Visits":** Pets are masters at reading our stress. Your calm demeanor is one of the most powerful tools you have.



## Positive Muzzle Training for Dogs

### A Muzzle is a Safety Tool, Not a Punishment

- **Introduce it as a Treat Bowl:** Start by leaving the muzzle on the floor and dropping high-value treats inside. Let your dog voluntarily put their nose in to get them.
- **Add a Verbal Cue:** Once they are comfortable, say a fun cue like "Muzzle!" right before they put their nose in.
- **Build Duration Slowly:** Gradually increase the time they must keep their nose in the muzzle before getting the reward, second by second.
- **Practice Fastening:** Gently fasten the straps for just one second, then reward and unfasten. Slowly increase the time over many sessions.
- **Normalize Its Use:** Use the muzzle occasionally during non-stressful times, like walks or playtime, so it doesn't only predict a vet visit.



## Make the Carrier a Safe Space for Cats

### Turn the Carrier from a Threat into a Treat

- **Keep it Accessible:** Leave the carrier out in your home all the time, transforming it into a normal piece of furniture or a cozy nap spot.
- **Make it Comfortable:** Add soft bedding, a t-shirt with your scent, or calming pheromone sprays.
- **Associate with Good Things:** Regularly feed your cat or give them special treats inside the carrier.
- **Choose a Top-Loading Carrier:** These can minimize the stress of getting your cat in and out at the clinic.
- **Reduce Visual Stress:** When traveling, cover three sides of the carrier with a light towel or blanket.



## Cooperative Care: Teaching Stillness

### FOR DOGS:

- **Teach Foundational Cues:** Practice "sit," "down," and especially a "chin rest" (having your dog rest their chin in your hand or on a pillow), which is invaluable for exams.
- **Use Touch-and-Treat:** Build comfort with being handled by pairing touch with a reward. Touch a paw → give a treat. Touch an ear → give a treat. Gradually increase pressure and duration.

### FOR CATS:

- **Practice Towel Wraps:** At home when your cat is relaxed, practice gentle towel wrapping for brief moments.
- **Keep Handling Sessions Short & Sweet:** Engage in gentle handling practice only when your cat is calm. Never force an interaction when they are stressed or playing.



## The Foundation: Early Socialization

### Build a Confident Pet for Life

**For Puppies (3-14 week window):** Safely expose your puppy to a wide variety of new sounds, surfaces, and people. Attend a positive reinforcement puppy class once vaccinations are complete.

**For Kittens:** Introduce them to common household noises like vacuums and doorbells. Allow them to meet new people in a calm setting. Structured play builds confidence.

**The Golden Rule:** Socialization should always be a positive experience. Pair new things with treats and praise, and never force an interaction or overwhelm your pet.