

Normal Puppy Behaviors

Bringing a puppy home is exciting, fun, challenging and confusing at the same time. We love our puppies like children BUT they're not children - they are baby dogs and their behavior is purely instinctive and is motivated by their basic needs - sleep, food, water, attention and elimination. AH! Welcome to the world of puppy-parenting. It's the same as having a toddler at home. You need to always watch-over the puppy and then there is this constant feeling of "am I doing the right thing?" Let's quickly go over a few behaviors you can expect when you have a puppy and that are considered normal.



Biting or Nipping: Puppies are little biting machines. They bite things that move, things that don't move, each other, your hands, clothing, anything. Not only is this normal, it is an important part of their development. When puppies play, they learn from their playmates' yelps and body language when a bite is too hard. Over time, a puppy figures out how to use her mouth more gently (inhibit her bite) to keep play going. Your puppy needs to learn that human skin is fragile and can't be treated as roughly as a fur coat. Let your puppy bite you every now and again so you can let her know which bites are too hard. Otherwise she won't learn to inhibit her bite and, if she is ever startled and bites on instinct, she may cause serious injury.

Chewing: Biologists tell us chewing is all about toning jaw muscles. All dogs chew some and some dogs chew *a lot*. Puppies do chew more, yes. But chewing isn't like teething in babies; it won't peter out and eventually stop. What is certain is that chewing is normal and healthy, not a behavior problem. But it can still be a regular problem—for you and your furniture. Whether you have a puppy or a newly adopted grown dog, give him plenty of allowed things to chew right away to get him hooked on those instead of your shoes. Here's a list of puppy chew toys you can use for your puppy.

Jumping: Puppies jump to get attention. They jump up to say hello, quite simply. Obviously, they don't know how humans prefer to be greeted. It all looks cute when they are puppies but they might knock us over or ruin our clothes as they grow up. Thankfully, consistent anti-jump training can quickly solve the problem for good and it needs to start from puppy hood.

Accidents: It's normal to have accidents in the house if you leave your puppy unsupervised. Accidents are not "on purpose" and dogs do not have accidents out of spite. Puppies don't know that human beings have designated places to relieve themselves :). Supervise your puppy in the house. Use a crate when you are not sure if your puppy is empty. *Reward your puppy for going outside.* Praise at the right moment, i.e. the second he starts "going." Reward with a treat after he is finished. Here's a hand-out on house breaking to help you.

Short Attention Span: Think of toddlers for just a second and now think about trying to teach something new to the toddler. For how long can you hold their



attention? Now replace the picture of the toddler with that of a puppy. This is exactly how a puppy is. Puppies get distracted pretty easily. This is normal. You'll need to gradually build on the attention span.

While these are NOT all the behaviors, this is definitely the most common list a lot of puppy-parents struggle with. It's ALWAYS a great idea to consult a puppy behavior specialist to help you set the puppy on the path to a well behaved, well socialized and well adjusted adult dog.