

HANDLING

Why work on handling?

Because you want your puppy—and later your grown dog—to cheerfully accept being touched by many different people (children, friendly strangers, the groomer, the vet, etc.) in many different situations.

How to work on handling.

- Work slowly. Do several short sessions every day.
- Repeat each step many times.
- *Only* move to the next step when your puppy is comfortable with the current step. Look for a relaxed body, enthusiastic tail wags, no mouthing of your hand, and your puppy not trying to avoid your hand but instead eagerly awaiting a treat.

Tail. Tails are magnetic to children; they simply have to grab those waggy things and pull. Vets need to lift tails for temperature checks.

Step 1. Run your hand down the tail. Treat.

Step 2. Run your hand down the tail, then hold the tail for a second. Treat.

Step 3. Run your hand down the tail, then gently lift the tail for one or two seconds. Treat.

Step 4. Imitate a child by pulling on the tail a little more firmly for two to three seconds. Treat.

Paws. Children like to pick up dogs' paws to 'shake hands.' You have to be able to clip your puppy's nails, dry her feet when she comes inside after playing, and check for burrs.

Step 1. Touch a paw. Treat. (Do each step with all four paws.)

Step 2. Gently hold or cup the paw. Treat.

Step 3. Hold the paw for three seconds. Treat.

Step 4. Hold the paw and gently press as you would for nail trimming. Treat.

Step 5. Hold the paw and gently probe between the toes. Treat.

Neck. You and your family need to be able to grab your puppy's collar without startling her before she dashes into trouble.

Step 1. Reach out and stroke the neck. Treat.

Step 2. Reach out and touch the collar. Treat.

Step 3. Reach out and hold the collar. Treat.

Step 4. Reach out, hold the collar, and move your puppy a step or two. Treat.

HANDLING (CONTINUED)

Head. People are going to pet your dog's head, sometimes without asking permission.

Step 1. Reach out and lightly touch the head. Treat.

Step 2. Reach out and pat the head. Treat.

Step 3. Reach out and stroke from the top of the head down along the neck. Treat.

Ears. Ears dangle or stick up—either way, children find them irresistible. You have to be able to clean your puppy's ears, and a groomer might have to trim around them.

Step 1. Touch an ear. Treat. (Do each step with both ears.)

Step 2. Lift the ear. Treat.

Step 3. Lift the ear and rub it with light pressure. Treat.

Step 4. Lift the ear and rub it with a little more pressure. Treat.

Mouth. You have to be able to brush your dog's teeth, and the vet needs to be able to examine them.

Step 1. Lift the upper lips. Treat.

Step 2. Lower the bottom lips. Treat.

Step 3. Fully open your puppy's mouth as if you were going to give her a pill. Treat.