

THE
ULTIMATE
STREET
SMARTS
TRAINING
MANUAL

URBAN DOG



CIS FRANKEL

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Preparing Your Home Environment

One of the most frequent comments I hear from my clients is that they underestimated the amount of work and commitment involved with owning a puppy.

All too often we decide to get a puppy because we have fond memories of owning a dog as a child. We remember the fun we had playing with our dog, the warmth and love she gave us, but most often we weren't the caretakers of the dog. It was our parents. Or there are those of us who have never had a dog.

So now we get a puppy, expecting nothing but good times. But wait, something is wrong — this puppy is needy, she seems out of control, she just won't listen! Oh, no, I made a mistake! What should I do?

Having a puppy can be fun, but let's face the facts — there is a certain amount of work involved on your part. Developing a relationship with your puppy is like having a relationship with a person. The same qualities are needed: trust and commitment.

Sometimes people get dogs for the wrong reasons — they want security, they want companionship, they think dogs are cute. Now these reasons aren't wrong in themselves, if you also know what your dog needs from you. Remember, your relationship with your dog is a two-way street — your dog gives to you as much as you give to your dog.

Be Pro-Active

Before you bring a puppy home, you must first prepare your house for the puppy in much the same way you would prepare for a new baby (except new babies can't run around by themselves and chew on things). By preparing your home, you are being pro-active rather than reactive to the challenges that may come your way. Preparing your home is an ongoing process — you will need to make adjustments when your puppy reaches different stages in her development.

Let's face it, puppies are going to get into things. Accept the fact that this will happen no matter how careful you try to be. But you can lessen the stress for you and your puppy by creating a secure and happy home environment.

It's important for the whole family to be consistent with the vocabulary of the commands. Nothing is more confusing for a puppy than to hear different words used for the same command.

Set the Rules with a Family Discussion

First, set the rules. If you already have a puppy or are considering getting one, then you need to have a family discussion (or household discussion) to lay out the house rules for your puppy. It's essential that each family member is on the same page in terms of abiding by the same rules. When the rules are made, everyone must follow them.

Inconsistency is extremely confusing for a puppy. Puppies don't thrive on mixed messages. Often, one family member will feed the dog at the table while another member may be more strict about it.

Stay consistent with the rules. Decide with your spouse or significant other the rules you want to establish for the house. If you have kids, they should also be part of the discussion. The things to decide with your family are consistent feeding times and a walking schedule, whether the dog will be allowed on the furniture, where it will sleep, and what rooms in the house are "dog-free zones." Other decisions will come up later, such as whether to feed the dog table scraps or to allow it to sleep in someone's bed; these decisions should be discussed as a household, and then all members of the house should follow the rules.

Don't Change the Rules in the Middle of the Game

You may initially have a rule that your pup is not allowed on furniture, but after a few days, you decide that this cute furry pup is too irresistible, so you let her lay next to you on the couch. After eight months or so, you now have a 60-pound puppy on the couch and you decide that this isn't such a good idea. So now you change the rules

again and try to keep her off the couch. Don't expect your puppy to catch on if you keep changing rules like this.

Changing rules in midstream can cause harm and distrust in your relationship with your puppy. It also confuses the puppy as to what is right and wrong. A human parallel is dating someone who seems nice and attentive at first, but after a few months, shows a nasty side we've never seen before. Just as we all have been

Allowed on the couch, or not?
Either way, pick a side and stick to it.



hurt and confused when we experienced this situation, your dog will feel the same sense of confusion.

Personally, I don't see anything wrong with deciding to let your pup lay on your couch or bed, if that is your rule. I only see a problem with it if you try to change that rule later. So remember, if you make the rules, you must follow them.

Shy pups are especially hurt by changing the rules because they lose trust and confidence in themselves and their learning abilities.

Puppies and Children

The rules you establish for your puppy should also be followed by your children. The best way to get kids to cooperate is to make the rules seem like a game. Again, you want the whole family on the same page, or later training will become that much more difficult.

Puppies bring out the best and worst in people, especially with kids. When kids have a bad day at school or in the playground, they will take it out on a puppy through rough play and teasing. Kids also have a tendency to take their anger out on a pup if she destroys one of their favorite toys.

This is a good time to teach kids the importance of putting their toys away. Otherwise, there are consequences, such as coming home to chewed up toys. This teaches them the responsibility of picking up after themselves.

I think it helps to hold weekly powwows with the family to make sure members can vent their frustration about what the puppy is doing. The worst thing to happen is for a family member to vent their frustration on the pet.

Expect a Change in Lifestyle

Having a puppy is a serious commitment, and the first six months will change your life. You won't be able to work overtime as easily, you won't be able to go to your favorite restaurant or watering hole after work, and you won't be able to stay out as late or sleep in on weekends. The reason for this is simple — your puppy will need to be taken out early in the morning and periodically throughout the day and night. A puppy cannot hold its urine for long periods of time during the first months. If you don't feel you can make this kind of commitment, then be honest with yourself. Maybe now isn't the best time to own a puppy. As some adults elect to have a child later in life, maybe you should wait for a better time to bring a puppy into your home.

*As an urban dog trainer,
I see firsthand how
challenging it is for busy
city dwellers who lead very
active lives to raise a puppy.
Sometimes I advise busy
professionals to get a dog who
is at least one year old.
Fullgrown dogs aren't
nearly as needy
as puppies.*

Another aspect you must think about is establishing a regular routine. Puppies thrive with a scheduled routine, especially when it comes to feeding times and potty times. An erratic schedule will have negative effects when training your puppy.

Owning a dog is a ten to fifteen-year commitment. Yes, it does get easier after the first year, but keep in mind that even an adult dog still needs a regular schedule, plenty of exercise and a healthy amount of attention. If you are still at the research stage of deciding to be a dog owner, this is the best time to consider these issues. It's easy to buy a puppy — everyone falls in love with a puppy — but it is very difficult to return a puppy once you bring it home.

In every city, there are a number of services to make life easier for dog owners who have busy lifestyles. There are dog-walkers you can hire to give your pup or dog a break from the crate during the day. Also available are doggie daycare centers where you can leave your dog when you are working long hours or going on vacation. These services weren't available ten years ago. With daycare or dog walking services, I advise you to get references first. Don't trust a service merely through the Yellow Pages. A good place to get a referral for daycare or dog walking services is through your veterinarian.

*More information about
specific breeds is found
on pages 190-191.*

Educate Yourself About Your Dog's Breed

If you haven't picked a dog yet, then research the different breeds that best suit your lifestyle and temperament. If you already have a particular breed, then still make the effort to research the specifics of your breed through dog magazines, breed-specific club magazines and books.

The more you know about your breed the more you will know about your dog's needs, quirks, strengths and weaknesses. This will make you a better teacher in helping your dog adapt to the city. If you get a Husky, then she will need a lot of exercise. If you are not the type to want to run, bike or skate with your dog, then a Husky may not be for you.

Talk to breeders about the dogs they breed. Reputable breeders will give you straight answers that let you know if their dogs are right for you. Don't rely only on people you meet on the street who own a breed of dog that interests you.

By educating yourself about your dog, you are more proactive. You'll know their special needs and how to handle those needs in the future.



There are many breeds and personalities to choose from. If you do some research beforehand, you may not be so surprised later.

Where to Get a Puppy

Where should you buy a puppy? A reputable breeder is a good place to start, especially if you are looking for a show quality puppy and plan to compete for American Dog Kennel (AKC) or Rare Breed Titles. Make it a point to visit the breeder's grounds. A good breeder has a healthy bitch and clean whelping boxes. The puppies should be socialized to the touch of human hands. If a breeder refuses your request for a visit, then beware — you are probably talking to an owner of a puppy mill. Avoid buying a puppy from a breeder who doesn't want you to visit, as the environment is more than likely unhealthy. As the popularity of dogs is increasing, so too are these types of unethical puppy mills.

You can also purchase puppies from friends whose bitch had a litter, animal shelters and pet stores. Though some pet stores are diligent in purchasing and caring for their animals, unfortunately, some aren't. Be aware of the health concerns to watch for when buying a puppy from a pet store (discussed in greater detail on p. 203). If you are buying a pure breed from a pet store, make sure to ask for the papers and the phone number of the breeder. Call the breeder and ask why he sold his puppies to a pet store. Most good breeders never need to sell puppies to a pet store.

If you purchase a puppy who is a mixed breed, BOB (Best of Breeds) dog, then you should also pay close attention to the environment where it was raised.

In general, no matter where you purchase your puppy, make sure your puppy doesn't have fleas or other health problems. Make an appointment with your vet for an examination on the day you will be bringing the puppy home.

If a breeder refuses your request for a visit, then beware — you are probably talking to an owner of a puppy mill.

Choosing a Veterinarian

The best way to choose a veterinarian is through a referral from friends or family members who are pet owners.

There is nothing wrong with introducing yourself to your vet before bringing your puppy home. This will give you a chance to learn what the vet's style is like — I always advise people to pick a vet that takes the time to answer your questions and explain the issues thoroughly. The main objective is that you want good communication. This will be essential when you need to call him or her if your puppy is experiencing any problems — all puppies throw up from time to time, and swallow items around the house. You want a vet who responds to you promptly and takes the time to listen to your concerns.

It is best to choose a vet whose office is close to your home in case of an emergency.

Along with finding a vet, it is a good idea to arrange for someone who will be available to walk your dog before you even purchase a puppy. Living in a large city, many people work a long commute away from their homes, making it impossible for them to run home and take the dog out during the work day. You will need to either hire a dog walker, or if you can't afford it, get a friend, relative or neighbor to help you out in the early months of your puppy's life. While a grown dog may be left alone in the house or crated for long periods of time, no puppy should be left crated for more than four hours at a time.

Overall, you want a vet who makes you feel comfortable. You want to establish a strong relationship with him or her, so they will know your dog in its first months and throughout its life.

Keep Important Phone Numbers On Hand

Having phone numbers handy on your refrigerator saves precious time when a crisis arises.

The list should include:

1. Your vet
2. 24-hour emergency vet service (every city has such emergency services available)
3. Anti-cruelty and animal shelters (just in case your pup gets lost)
4. Dog walkers/dog daycare service (if you choose to have them)
5. Responsible kids or neighbors who can watch your dog during an emergency

Owning a dog in the city has a completely different set of challenges than owning a dog in a rural or suburban setting. The city is full of distractions for your dog such as congestion, noise, crowds of people, cars, buses, bicycles, rollerbladers, trash, sewers, alleys, roadways and other dogs. Where you can exercise your dog is limited, and maneuvering a dog through city streets and across busy roadways is often hazardous.

Cis Frankel has trained a multitude of urban dogs in Chicago, including Oprah Winfrey's cocker spaniels. Believing that the best city dog is a well-trained dog, Cis thoroughly covers the basics and then delves into the particularities of training and owning a dog in the city, including information on collars and leash handling, housebreaking in a high-rise, navigating parks, crowds and roadways to create street-smart dogs, stressful situations to avoid, and healthcare specifics for city dogs. The author includes tricks to teach your dog that will increase your level of control as well as your dog's confidence.

This one-of-a-kind book shows how to get the most out of your dog while living in the city, and how to get the most out of the city for your dog.

Grab your mocha, blades and Ray-Bans. Settle down to learn about your cosmopolitan canine. Cis Frankel has written a clear and enjoyable manual for the urban dog owner. This book is chock-full of information and time-tested examples by one of Chicago's leading dog trainers.

—Thomas P. Cogan, Ph.D.

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