



## Puppy Kindergarten

### Frequently Asked Puppy Questions

Since 1992, KCFA Puppy Kindergarten instructors have helped hundreds of area families raise puppies to become well-mannered housemates and companions. Through the years, the Puppy K instructors have been asked a wide range of questions about caring for and training puppies, and have found that the following are the most common queries.

#### ***How can we teach our puppy to stop biting?***

Biting and mouthing are how puppies play with each other, but the rule when playing with humans is, "No teeth on skin." Never encourage them to bite a person during play. If they do, say "OUCH!" in a high, sharp tone, pull away and firmly say, "No bite!" If the puppy bites again, simply stop the play session, get up, and leave the puppy for a few moments. The puppy should soon learn that biting a human will bring an end to its fun.

It is also a good idea to give the puppy a specific approved toy to bite on. When the puppy has grabbed something it should not have, "trade up" to this favorite, safe toy (not a treat) for the puppy to chew. By not using a treat (which the puppy will quickly chew and swallow), the puppy will learn what to go get when it needs something in its mouth.



#### ***How can we teach our puppy to stop barking?***

All puppies bark sometimes, especially when excited, but some are naturally more vocal than others. If you feel barking is becoming excessive, take action to prevent it from becoming a habit that is hard to break.

To teach the puppy to stop barking when asked, take advantage of periods of generalized barking, rather than when the puppy is overly excited about something specific. When the puppy barks, interrupt it by making a sudden and distinct sound, such as by clapping your hands sharply and using a verbal cue such as "Quiet!" The interruption should startle and distract the puppy into a brief moment of silence. Quickly praise and reward it with food or a toy. Also, be alert for times when the puppy is being quiet on its own. Strengthen the pup's quiet behavior by rewarding it with quiet praise, gentle petting, or a small treat.

### ***How can we teach our puppy to stop jumping up on people?***

Whether people realize it or not, they are always training their dogs. They may well have rewarded the puppy for jumping up on them without realizing it. If the puppy jumps up and is scolded and pushed off, the puppy has still gotten what it was seeking—the person’s touch, voice, and attention. Rather than give unintentional attention, turn away and ignore the pup when it starts to jump up. Wait to greet the puppy until it is calmer and can keep all four feet on the floor. Even better, teach the puppy to “sit” to receive your attention.

### ***What can we do if our puppy is still having houstraining accidents?***

Puppies develop at different rates. Some seem to almost train themselves at a young age, while others take longer. Puppies do not generally have the physical development needed for houstraining until about 12 weeks of age, so be sure not to expect too much too soon. A good rule of thumb is to add “1” to the pup’s age in months to estimate the number of hours a puppy can be expected to wait between potty breaks. For example, a 2-month-old puppy should only be expected to “hold it” for about 3 hours.



Some messes are an unavoidable part of puppy parenthood! Ignore, then thoroughly clean, any accidents in the house. Punishing the puppy for an accident is not only ineffective, it may also teach the puppy to sneak off and hide when it needs to eliminate.

Never allow the puppy full run of the house until it is 100% reliable. When indoors, keep the puppy confined to an area where it can be watched at all times. When occupied with

stationary tasks such as reading, it can be helpful to tether the pup to your belt or your chair so it cannot wander out of sight. Keep the puppy in its crate when occupied with active tasks such as housecleaning or cooking that make it impossible to keep watch on the puppy.

Several tactics can be used to help the puppy’s houstraining progress. Pay close attention to signs of anxiety that might signal the puppy’s need to eliminate, such as whining, circling, or sniffing. To avoid nighttime accidents, restrict water intake after the evening meal. Take the puppy out frequently—last thing at night, first thing in the morning, after meals and chewing sessions, after playtime, and after waking up from a nap.

Designate a “potty” area outdoors and pair a verbal cue with the activity, such as “Go potty!” or “Hurry up!” Keep the puppy on a leash to help it stay on task, praise it when there is success, and then allow time for play or exploration and sniffing before returning inside. If you feel sure the puppy has to eliminate, but it does not do so when you take it outside, crate the pup for 5 to 10 minutes and then try again. Repeat this process until there is success, then reward with more freedom and playtime.

### ***Should we discipline our puppy?***

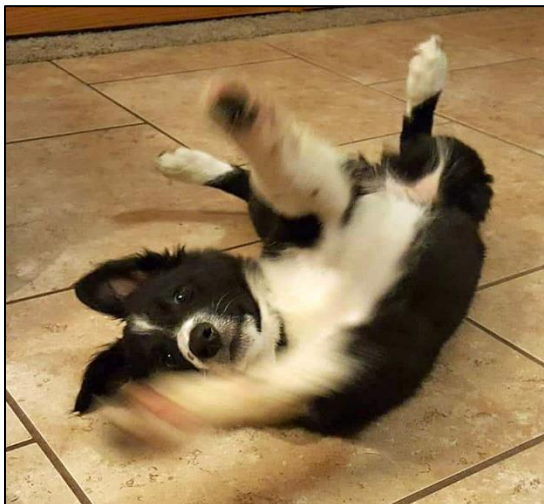
The “golden rule” of teaching a puppy how to behave appropriately is to *interrupt unwanted behaviors and reward the behaviors you want*. Never raise a hand to a puppy or dog. Above all, you want your pup to trust that all good things, and only good things, come from you, its benevolent master.

Puppies can be very single-minded and have complete focus on what they want, but sometimes that focus can result in an unwanted behavior. Interrupting that unwanted behavior might be as easy as picking the puppy up and walking quietly away with it to a different room. There are a number of other ways to interrupt unwanted behavior and get a puppy’s attention—clapping hands, making a “correction” noise or sound, or even running away from the puppy while talking in a happy voice, encouraging the puppy to follow. When the puppy responds correctly, follow through with praise or a treat.

It is also important to teach the puppy alternate behaviors to replace unwanted behaviors, such as teaching it to find its chew toy when it wants to chew, or teaching the puppy to get attention from people by sitting instead of jumping up.

### ***Does our puppy need to learn to use a crate?***

A comfortable crate or kennel should be the puppy’s safe, quiet place when it has to be left unsupervised. A crate also helps in housetraining, because a puppy does not like to eliminate where it sleeps.



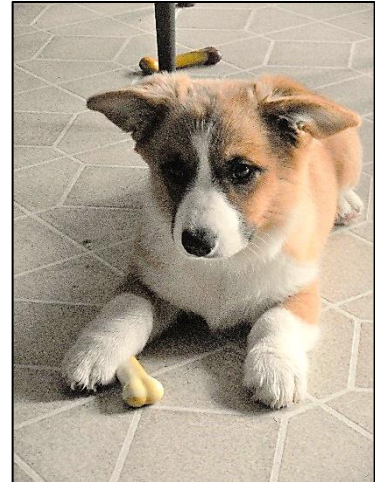
A crate is a good place to keep the puppy safe when it needs a break from a high level of activity in the household—or even if the household needs a break from the high energy of the puppy! Crates also help if there is a lot of in-and-out activity, workers in the house, or guests who are not comfortable with dogs. The crate should never be used as a punishment. Put the puppy in its crate—its “happy place”—with a smile and a safe, fun toy or long-lasting treat. Be sure to leave only safe chew toys that the puppy cannot tear up and swallow (no rawhide!). Remove the collar before putting the puppy in the crate, since the buckle can get caught on parts of the crate,

potentially injuring or strangling the puppy.

Don’t stop using the crate when the puppy grows up. A crate-trained dog will often go in the crate by itself when it wants to relax or take a nap. These dogs will have an easier time adjusting to a kennel environment, or if they need to be boarded at a vet’s office. A final word on the benefit of crates. After the current safer-at-home period, family members will, eventually, return to work and school. Crate training will help the puppy become accustomed to spending periods of time alone.

When the current health concern is past, KCFA will resume our training classes. In the meantime, we encourage you to begin now to work with your puppy so it learns the acceptable behaviors you desire. Every day that the puppy practices unwanted behaviors makes those habits more difficult to unlearn. KCFA's puppy instructors hope their suggestions about training methods and responses to training questions will add to the positive learning interactions between puppies and their families.

We invite you to visit the club's website at [kcfadogs.org](http://kcfadogs.org) for details about the reopening of classes and follow The Kennel Club of Fort Atkinson's Facebook page for links to online dog training resources and some upbeat stories and entertainment, as well.



KCFA is an all-volunteer, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization established in 1992, with a mission to enhance the well-being of dogs, to promote responsible dog ownership for the betterment of the community, and to foster the human-animal bond by providing education, training and activities.

### *Acknowledgments*

#### **KCFA Puppy K Instructor**

Julie Asmus  
Debbie Gressle  
Rita Hasel  
Jan Holewinski  
Merry Russell

#### **KCFA Training Committee**

Donna Ingham, Chair  
Tammy Green  
Jan Holewinski  
Marleen LaPlant  
Margaret Majors  
Mabel Schumacher  
Heather Traxler

