



AKC S.T.A.R. PUPPYSM

Socialization★Training★Activity★Responsibility

PUPPY PLAY TIME

Playing with your puppy every day will build a bond that will last a lifetime. Simple games stimulate your puppy's mind and they teach problem-solving skills. And, they're fun for both your puppy and you!

1. "Find it!"

Sit on the floor. When your puppy is close to you, show the puppy a toy, then hide it behind your back, under one of your hands on the floor, or under your leg. Tell the puppy, "Find it!" When the puppy gets the toy, use lavish praise in an enthusiastic voice. For very young puppies, you may need to make the game simple to start. Show the puppy the toy and cover only a portion of it with your hand. You'll eventually get to where you can hide the toy behind your back or for older dogs, somewhere in the room, and they'll find it.

2. "Fetch it!"

Start with a ball (for larger dogs) or toy. In the beginning, throw it a short distance only a few feet away. Tell the puppy, "Fetch it." When the puppy gets the toy, call the puppy back to you. You can clap your hands and use encouragement to call the puppy. Give lavish praise, hugs, and pets when the puppy brings the toy.

3. Nothing like a good massage

Petting, holding young and small dogs in your arms, and a gentle massage are all good activities for bonding. Start at the head and ears, gently massaging your puppy. Work your way down the body. Some puppies will resist having their legs or feet touched, or they won't want you touching their ears. If your puppy squirms, tries to get away, or tries to bite, you'll know you've identified a target behavior that you need to work on.

4. Hide and Seek

To play hide and seek, when the puppy is distracted, you can go out of sight not far away and call, "Find me." When the puppy comes and finds you, praise the puppy. For older dogs, you can go to a different room in the house and call the dog to find you. You'll eventually want to teach the command, "Stay," so the puppy does not learn to try to find you every time you leave the room. Make sure that you go out of sight sometimes and don't call the puppy.

5. Scheduling a Play Date

Young puppies learn through play while they are still in the litter. Chances to play with other puppies in safe, controlled situations can teach your puppy canine social skills.