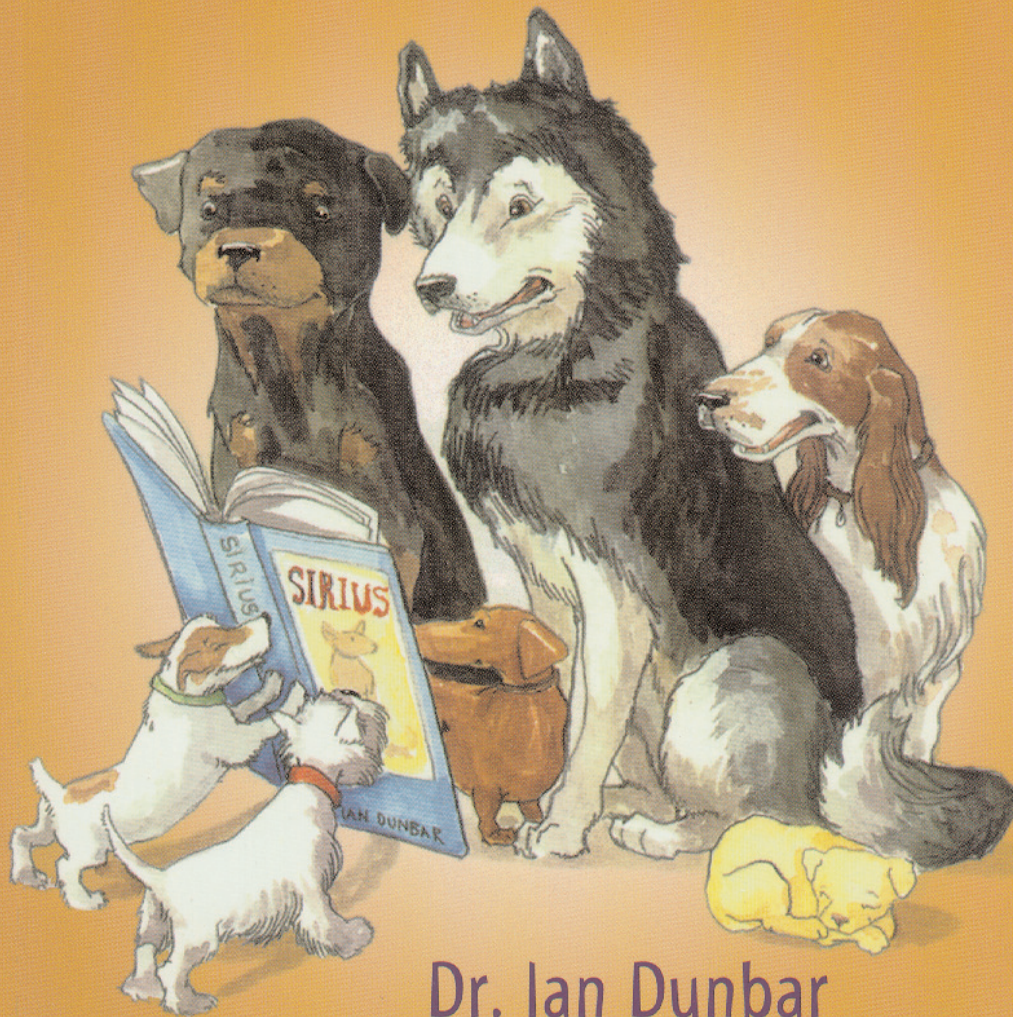


# BEFORE

## You Get Your Puppy



Dr. Ian Dunbar

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**Dr. Ian Dunbar**



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*Omaha*

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## BEFORE YOU GET YOUR PUPPY

To all truly exceptional dog breeders, who care as much (if not more) about their dogs' physical and mental health as they do about their dogs' coat color and conformation.

To all knowledgeable veterinarians, who understand the crucially important role of early socialization and training for the prevention of predictable behavior and temperament problems.

To all caring and responsible puppy owners, who did their very best to choose, raise, and train their puppies to be good-natured and well-mannered companions.

And to all overworked pet dog trainers, shelter staff and volunteers, and animal rescue organizations, who try their best to solve the many problems created by other dog breeders, veterinarians, and dog owners who failed to grasp the big picture.



## Foreword

**S**adly, the majority of puppies fail to live long enough to enjoy their second birthday. They suffer from the terminal illness of being unwanted—failing to live up to the promise and expectation of the Lassie–Benji–Eddie dream. Instead they develop a number of utterly predictable behavior, training, and temperament problems and are surrendered to animal shelters to play lotto with their lives. Many people blame irresponsible ownership for this tragic situation. I would cite lack of know-how. Most prospective puppy owners are simply unaware of the problems that lie ahead and unfortunately, they have little idea how to prevent or resolve them. Ironically, the demise of many dogs stems from novice owners following misleading, erroneous, and in some cases downright bad advice from out-of-date training books.

Dog owners' lack of know-how has to be the responsibility of all doggy professionals, including dog breeders, trainers, veterinarians, animal control officers, and shelter personnel. It is the fault of dog professionals like myself, who have failed to adequately advertise the much easier, quicker, gentler, and altogether more effective and efficient way of raising and training puppies.

This booklet will outline common, predictable puppy problems, provide a timetable for their development, and suggest a variety of dog-friendly preventative measures and



## BEFORE YOU GET YOUR PUPPY

solutions, emphasizing the overwhelming importance of early socialization, confinement, prevention, and lure/reward training techniques.

Feeling that education can range from boring to hilarious, I have always tried to make my writing enjoyable as well as informative. However, a delicate balance always exists between education and entertainment, so I have also tried to stress the urgency of many of these ideas and repeatedly drive home the facts that new puppy owners absolutely need to know.

When choosing a puppy, you need to know how to determine whether his behavioral development and education are up to par. Assessing a pup's developmental and educational status depends on *your* education about puppy education.

Your pup's first month in your home is the most crucial developmental period of his life. This short, make-or-break period pretty much determines whether your puppy will develop into a well-mannered and good-natured companion that will bring joy to your life for many years to come, or whether your puppy will develop numerous, predictable behavior problems and grow up to be fearful and unfriendly. You stand at the crossroads. The course of your prospective puppy's development is in your hands.

To help you get a grasp on all the important information you need to learn, I have outlined six essential developmental deadlines, which form the backbone of this book. But before we explore these deadlines, let's get an overview of what to consider *before* you get your puppy. After introducing these ideas, we'll explore them in detail over the course of the book.

## Synopsis

If you have your heart set on raising and training a puppy, do make sure you train yourself beforehand. Remember, it takes only a few days to ruin an otherwise perfect puppy. Without a doubt, the most important developmental deadline comes before you even think of getting your puppy—*your* education about puppy education!

Many first-time puppy owners are surprised when they discover their new companion bites, barks, chews, digs, and marks the house with urine and feces. Yet these are all perfectly normal, natural, and necessary doggy behaviors.

Your canine newcomer is just itching to learn human house manners. He wants to please, but he has to know how to please. It's no good keeping house rules a secret. Somebody has to tell the puppy. And that somebody is you.

Before inviting a puppy to share your life, surely it is only wise and fair to find out beforehand what you might expect from a normal developing puppy, which behaviors and traits you consider unacceptable, and how to modify the pup's inappropriate behavior and temperament accordingly. Specifically, owners need to know how to teach the youngster where to eliminate, what to chew, when to bark, where to dig, to sit when greeting people, to walk calmly on-leash, to settle down and shush when requested, to inhibit his otherwise quite normal biting behavior, and to thoroughly

## BEFORE YOU GET YOUR PUPPY

enjoy the company of other dogs and people—especially children, men, and strangers.

Whether selecting your prospective pup from a professional breeder or from a family breeding a litter for the very first time, the criteria are the same. Look for puppies raised indoors around human companionship and influence—specifically around people who have devoted lots of time to the puppies' education.

Your puppy needs to be prepared for the clamor of everyday domestic living—the noise of the vacuum cleaner, pots and pans dropping in the kitchen, football games screaming on the television, children crying, and adults arguing. Exposure to such stimuli while his eyes and ears are still developing allows the puppy (with his blurred vision and muffled hearing) to gradually become accustomed to sights and sounds that might otherwise frighten him when older.

Avoid pups that have been raised in an outdoor run or kennel. Remember, you want a puppy to share your home, so look for a puppy that has been raised in a home. Basement- and kennel-raised puppies are certainly not pet-quality dogs. They are "livestock" on par with veal calves and battery hens. They are neither housetrained nor socialized, and they do not make good companions. Look for litters that have been born and raised in a kitchen or living room.

Choosing a breed is a very personal choice—your choice. But you will save yourself a lot of unnecessary problems and heartbreak if your choice is an informed and educated one. Choose the breed you like, investigate breed-specific qualities and problems, and then research the best way to raise and train your pup. Make sure you test drive several adult dogs of your selected breed or type before you make your final choice. Test driving adult dogs will quickly teach

you everything you need to know about a specific breed. Test driving adult dogs will also pinpoint gaps in your education about dog behavior and training.

Regardless of your choice, please do not kid yourself that you will get a "perfect" adult dog simply by selecting the "perfect" breed and the "perfect" individual puppy. Any puppy can become a marvelous companion if appropriately socialized and trained. And, no matter what the breed or breeding, any puppy can also become a doggy delinquent if not properly socialized and trained. Please make an intelligent, researched choice when selecting your puppy, but remember: appropriate socialization and training is the single biggest factor determining how closely the dog will approach your view of perfection in adulthood.

No matter your eventual choice—success or failure is entirely in your hands. Your puppy's behavior and temperament now depend completely on good husbandry and training.

Your puppy's living quarters need to be designed so that housetraining and chewtoy-training are errorless. Each mistake is a potential disaster, since it heralds many more to come.

Long-term confinement prevents your puppy from learning to make mistakes around the house, and allows your puppy to teach himself to use an appropriate toilet, to settle down quietly and calmly, and to want to chew appropriate chewtoys. Confinement with chewtoys stuffed with kibble and treats teaches your puppy to enjoy his own company and prepares him for those times when he might be left at home alone.

Short-term close confinement also prevents your puppy from learning to make mistakes around the house, while allowing your puppy to teach himself to settle down quietly and calmly, and to want to chew appropriate chewtoys. Additionally, short-term confinement enables you to accurately

## BEFORE YOU GET YOUR PUPPY

predict *when* your puppy needs to relieve herself, so that you may take your puppy to an appropriate toilet area and reward her for using it. The knack of successful housetraining focuses on being able to predict when your puppy "wants to go."



*Your puppy's playroom (long-term confinement area) requires a comfortable bed, a fresh supply of water, a chewtoy, and a toilet. Long-term confinement prevents mistakes around the house and encourages the pup to use her doggy toilet and chewtoys.*

*Short-term confinement allows you to predict when your puppy needs to go.*

## CHAPTER ONE

# The Developmental Deadlines

**F**rom the moment you choose your puppy, there is some considerable urgency regarding socialization and training. There is no time to waste. Basically, an adult dog's temperament and behavior habits (both good and bad) are shaped during puppyhood—very early puppyhood. In fact, some puppies are well on their way to ruin by the time they are just eight weeks old. It is especially easy to make horrendous mistakes when selecting a pup and during his first few days at home. Such mistakes usually have an indelible effect, influencing your pup's behavior and temperament for the rest of his life. This is not to say that unsocialized and untrained eight-week-old pups cannot be rehabilitated. They can, if you work quickly. But while it's easy to prevent behavior and temperament problems from the beginning, rehabilitation can be both difficult and time-consuming, and it is unlikely that your pup will ever become the adult dog he or she could have been.

Learn how to make intelligent choices when selecting your pup. Learn how to implement a course of errorless housetraining and errorless chewtoy-training the moment your puppy arrives at her new home. Any housesoiling or chewing mistake you allow your puppy to make is absolute silliness and absolute seriousness: silliness because you are creating lots of future headaches for yourself, and seriousness because millions of dogs are euthanized each year simply because their owners did not know how to housetrain or chewtoy-train them.

## BEFORE YOU GET YOUR PUPPY



*Nancy's house after a Shepherd party! Chewtoys stuffed with food would provide the dogs with appropriate amusement and occupational therapy to pass the time when left at home alone.*

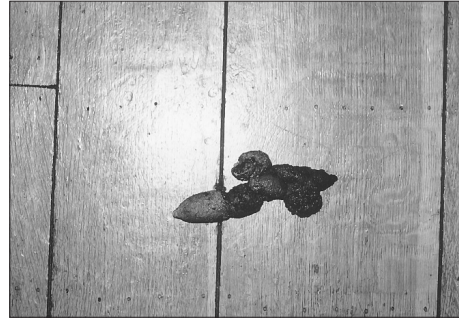
If your pup is *ever* left unsupervised indoors he will most certainly chew household articles and soil your house. Although these teeny accidents do little damage in themselves, they set the precedent for your puppy's choice of toys and toilets for many months to come.

You should treat any puppy housesoiling or house-destruction mistake as a potential disaster, since it predicts numerous future mistakes from a dog with larger bladder and bowels and much more destructive jaws. Many owners begin to notice their puppy's destructiveness by the time he is four to five months old, when the pup is characteristically relegated outdoors. Destruction is the product of a puppy's boredom, lack of supervision, and a search for entertainment. Natural inquisitiveness prompts the lonely pup to dig, bark, and escape



## DEVELOPMENTAL DEADLINES

*Allowing a single housesoiling mistake is a disaster since it sets the precedent for your puppy's toilet area and signals many more mistakes to come.*



in his quest for some form of occupational therapy to pass the day in solitary confinement. Once the neighbors complain about the dog's incessant barking and periodic escapes, the dog is often further confined to a garage or basement. Usually though, this is only a temporary measure until the dog is surrendered to a local animal shelter to play the lotto of life.



*Digging, barking, and escaping are usually secondary problems of unhousetrained adolescent dogs which have been relegated to a life of solitary confinement and boredom in the yard. Housetrain your dog, and then you may leave him indoors. Magically, the digging and escaping problems will disappear.*

## BEFORE YOU GET YOUR PUPPY



*One of the best ways to reduce excessive barking is to teach your puppy to speak on cue. Training your pup to bark on request facilitates teaching him to shush on request, since you may now shush-train the pup at your convenience. Instead of trying to quieten your puppy when he is excitedly barking, you may request your pup to bark and so teach shush at times when the pup is calm and focussed.*

Fewer than 25 percent of surrendered dogs are adopted, of which about half are returned as soon as the new owners discover their adopted adolescent's annoying problems.

The above summarizes the fate of many dogs. This is especially sad because all these simple problems could be prevented so easily. Housetraining and chewtoy-training are hardly rocket science. But you do need to know what to do. And you need to know what to do *before* you bring your puppy home.

As soon as your puppy comes home, the clock is running. Within just three months, your puppy will need to meet six

## DEVELOPMENTAL DEADLINES

crucial developmental deadlines. If your puppy fails to meet any of these deadlines, he is unlikely to achieve his full potential. In terms of your dog's behavior and temperament, you will probably be playing catch-up for the rest of your dog's life. Most important of all, you simply cannot afford to neglect the socialization and bite inhibition deadlines.

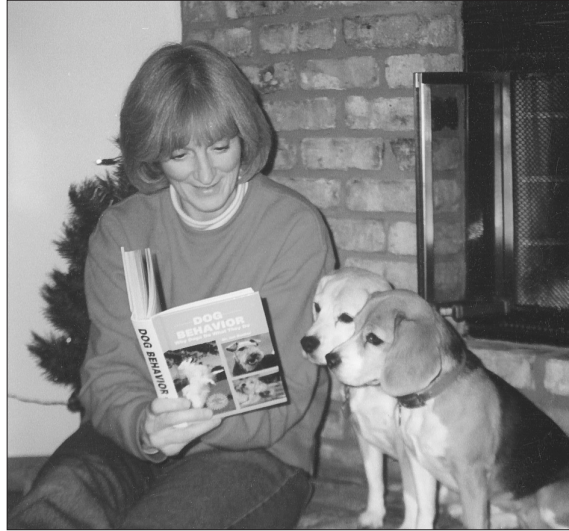
### SIX DEVELOPMENTAL DEADLINES

- 1. Your Doggy Education** (before searching)
- 2. Evaluating Puppy's Progress** (before selection)
- 3. Errorless Housetraining** (before homecoming)
- 4. Socialization with People** (by 12 weeks of age)
- 5. Bite Inhibition** (by 18 weeks of age)
- 6. Preventing Adolescent Problems** (by five months)

If you already have a puppy and feel that you are behind, do not throw in the towel. You must acknowledge, however, that you are well behind and that your puppy's socialization and education are now a dire emergency. Immediately do your best to catch up. Call a pet dog trainer at once. To locate a Certified Pet Dog Trainer (CPDT) in your area contact the Association of Pet Dog Trainers at 1-800-PET-DOGS or [www.apdt.com](http://www.apdt.com). Invite family, friends, and neighbors to help you with your puppy's remedial socialization and training. Maybe take a week or two off of work to devote to your puppy. The younger your puppy, the easier and quicker it is to catch up on its developmental timetable and minimize losses. Every day you delay, however, makes it harder.

BEFORE YOU GET YOUR PUPPY

## 1. *Your* Doggy Education



*Planning for a new puppy begins with  
the owner's education about puppy education.*

Before you look for your perfect puppy, you need to know what sort of dog to look for, where to get it, and when to get it. An educated choice is generally far better than an impulsive puppy purchase. Additionally, you need to thoroughly familiarize yourself with the developmental deadlines; they become urgent and crucial the day you select your puppy. Take your time to review this booklet, observe a number of puppy classes, and then make a thoughtful choice. Your dog's future depends on it.

## 2. Evaluating Puppy's Progress

Before you select your puppy (usually at eight weeks of age), you need to know how to select a good breeder and how to select a good puppy. Specifically, you need to know how to assess your puppy's behavioral development. By eight weeks of age, your puppy must have become thoroughly accustomed to a home physical environment, especially to all sorts of potentially scary noises; your puppy should already have been handled by many people, especially men, children, and strangers; your puppy's errorless housetraining and chewtoy-training should be underway; and your puppy should already have a rudimentary understanding of basic manners. At the very least, your puppy should come, sit, lie down, and roll over when requested. In other words, in preparation for household living, the litter of puppies must have been raised indoors and around people and not in some secluded backyard or fancy kennel.

*This candidate for  
Rocky Mountain  
Search and Rescue  
was carefully selected  
at eight weeks of age  
from a carefully  
selected litter.*



### 3. Errorless Housetraining

You need to ensure that an errorless housetraining and chewtoy-training program is instituted the very first day your puppy comes home. This is so important during the first week, when puppies characteristically learn good or bad habits that set the precedent for weeks, months, and sometimes years to come.

Be absolutely certain that you fully understand the principles of long-term and short-term confinement before you bring your new puppy home. With a long-term and short-term confinement schedule, housetraining and chewtoy-training are easy,

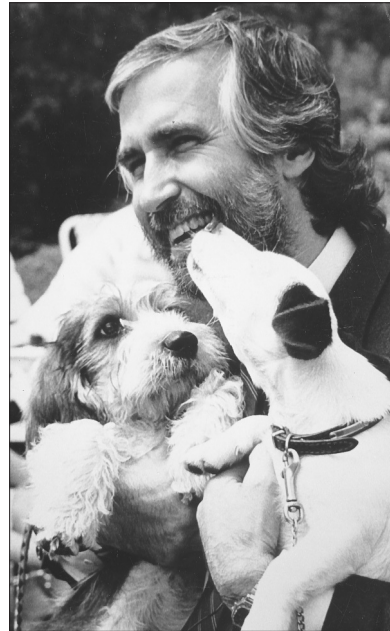


efficient, and errorless. During her first few weeks at home, regular confinement (with chewtoys stuffed with kibble) teaches the puppy to teach herself to chew chewtoys, to settle down calmly and quietly, and not to become a recreational barker. Moreover, short-term confinement allows you to predict when your puppy needs to relieve herself, so that you may take her to the right spot and reward her for eliminating.



## 4. Socialization with People

*Puppies must be socialized to people,  
especially men and children,  
before they are three months old.*



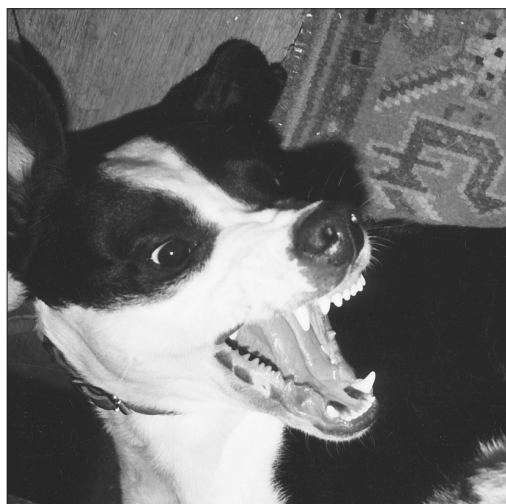
The Critical Period of Socialization ends by three months of age! This is the crucial developmental stage during which puppies learn to accept and enjoy the company of other dogs and people. Thus your puppy needs to be socialized to people by the time he is twelve weeks old. However, since his series of puppy immunization injections is incomplete at this point, a young pup needs to meet people in the safety of his own home. As a rule of thumb, your puppy needs to have met at least a hundred different people before he is eight weeks old and then meet an additional hundred people during his first month at home. Not only is this easier to do than it might sound, it's also lots of fun.



BEFORE YOU GET YOUR PUPPY

## 5. Bite Inhibition

Bite inhibition is the single most important lesson a dog must learn. Adult dogs have teeth and jaws that can hurt and harm. All animals must learn to inhibit use of their weapons against their own kind, but domestic animals must learn to be gentle with all animals, especially people. Domestic dogs must learn to inhibit their biting toward all animals, especially toward other dogs and people. The narrow time window for developing a "soft mouth" begins to close at four-and-a-half months of age, about the time when the adult canine teeth first show. Providing your puppy with an ideal forum to learn bite inhibition is the most pressing reason to enroll him in puppy classes before he is eighteen weeks old.



*Bite inhibition is all-important. Puppies must learn to inhibit the force of their biting before they are taught to stop biting and mouthing altogether.*

## 6. Preventing Adolescent Problems



*Maintaining socialization requires ongoing socialization throughout puppyhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Your dog will continue to gain confidence with continued exposure to unfamiliar people, to unfamiliar dogs, and to unfamiliar situations.*

To ensure that your well-rounded and well-schooled puppy remains a mannerly, well-socialized, and friendly dog throughout adulthood, your dog needs to meet unfamiliar people and unfamiliar dogs on a regular basis. In other words, your dog needs to be walked at least once a day. Your puppy may be taken for rides in the car and to visit friends' houses as early as you like. Start walking your puppy as soon as your veterinarian says it's safe to do so.

## BEFORE YOU GET YOUR PUPPY

*BEFORE You Get Your Puppy* addresses the first three developmental deadlines, covering the search and selection for a suitable puppy and his first week at home. The first three developmental deadlines are extremely urgent and crucial, and leave no room for mistakes. A second booklet—*AFTER You Get Your Puppy*—addresses the final three developmental deadlines, covering the first three months the puppy is in your home. The clock is still running, but you do have three months to get things done.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *THE FIRST DEVELOPMENTAL DEADLINE*

# Your Doggy Education

(Before You Search for Your Puppy)

Without a doubt the most important developmental deadline comes before you even begin your search for a puppy: namely, *your* education about puppy education. Just as you would learn how to drive before setting off in a car, you should learn how to raise and train a puppy before you get one.

Some owners want heaven and earth from their pups; others only demand magic and miracles. Owners want the puppy to be perfectly well-behaved and to amuse herself when left at home alone for hours on end. And they assume the pup will magically grow up to act this way without guidance.

It is simply not fair to keep house rules a secret from your puppy, only to moan and groan when she predictably finds doggy ways to entertain herself and break rules she didn't even know existed. If you have house rules, somebody needs to teach them to the puppy. And that somebody is you.

Luckily, dogs have their natural activity peaks at dawn and dusk, so many are quite happy to settle down and snooze the day away. However, some dogs are not. Some dogs are simply more active than others, and when left at home alone become exceedingly stressed and may destroy the house and garden in the space of a day.

## BEFORE YOU GET YOUR PUPPY

Puppy owners are often surprised when their new puppy bites, barks, chews, digs, and decorates the floors with urine and feces. Yet this is what dogs do. How did you expect your dog to communicate? To moo? To meow? And what did you expect your dog to do to pass the time of day? Housework? To mop and clean floors and dust the furniture? Or to amuse herself reading books, watching television, or doing macrame?

Many owners appear to be at a further loss when confronted by utterly predictable problems, such as jumping up, pulling on-leash, and expressing the boundless energy and exuberance accompanying doggy adolescence. Additionally, owners are incredulous if their adolescent or adult dog bites or fights. When dogs are undersocialized, harassed, abused, frightened, or otherwise upset, what do we expect them to do? Call a lawyer? Of course they bite! Biting is as normal an ingredient of canine behavior as wagging the tail or burying a bone.

Before inviting a puppy to share your life, surely it is only wise and fair to find out beforehand what you might expect



*Dogs are dogs.  
Not surprisingly,  
puppies behave like  
dogs: they chew, dig,  
bark, communicate  
largely via body  
language and p-mail,  
and spend much of  
their free time  
sniffing rear ends.*



from a normal developing puppy, which behaviors and traits you might consider unacceptable, and how to modify the pup's inappropriate behavior and temperament accordingly. Specifically, owners need to know how to teach the youngster when to bark, what to chew, where to dig, where to perform his toilet duties, to sit when greeting people, to walk calmly on-leash, to settle down and shush when requested, to inhibit his otherwise normal biting behavior, and to thoroughly enjoy the company of other dogs and of people, especially men, strangers, and children.

It is vital that you know *what* and *how* to teach your puppy, *before* you get him. So in addition to this book, read other books, watch videos, observe puppy training classes, and above all, test drive as many adult dogs as possible. Talk to owners at puppy class and discover what types of problems they are experiencing. New puppy owners are ruthlessly honest when describing their puppy's problems.

## Which Type of Dog?

There are many things to consider when choosing a puppy, including which breed or type, and the optimal age of acquisition. Obviously, you want to choose a dog that is best



suited to you and your lifestyle. Rather than listing my preferences, I will discuss some of the more important guidelines.

First, please do not kid yourself that all you have to do is select the "perfect" breed and the "perfect" individual puppy and he will automatically grow up

into the "perfect" adult dog. Any puppy can become a marvelous companion if appropriately socialized and trained. And, no matter what his breed or breeding, any puppy can become a doggy delinquent if not properly socialized and trained. Please make an intelligent, researched choice when selecting your puppy, but remember: appropriate socialization and training is the single biggest factor determining how closely the dog will approach your view of perfection in adulthood.

Second, seek advice from the best sources. Common mistakes are to take breed advice from veterinarians, health advice from breeders, and all-important behavior and training advice from veterinarians, breeders, and pet-store personnel. The best plan is to seek training and behavior advice from trainers and behavior counselors, health advice from veterinarians, breed advice from breeders, and product advice