



HAPPY DOG INSTITUTE'S ONLINE PUPPY CLASS: VET CHALLENGE

Emma Holly | MS, CPDT-KA,
CSAT
Behavior Consultant



SETTING THE SCENE: THE VET OFFICE

- Teach your puppy to lay down and stay there, little by little
- Prevent aggression and anxiety issues with strangers, people in uniforms, new places by:
 - Associating handling with positive experiences
 - Desensitizing to the vet office
 - Teaching puppy to relax in said environments
- Remember developmental milestones – loving the vet, handling, new people etc. between 8-12 weeks does not guarantee longevity
- Work through your checklist for first year, social maturity at 2 years old



TEACHING DOWNS



Step One: Say It

With a treat in your hand, tell your puppy “Down” in a cheerful tone of voice.

Step Two: Show It

Pause a second or two (one-one thousand, two-one thousand), then “lure” your puppy into a down by putting the treat up to their snout and slowly moving it down to the ground. Be sure to keep the treat lure near your puppy’s nose—if you move your hand down too quickly and too far away from their mouth they may give up and lose interest.

Step Three: Pay It

As soon as your puppy’s knees and elbows hit the ground praise and treat. Continue to treat as long as the puppy remains in the down. Stop treating when she gets up.

TIP: If your puppy is having a hard time laying down with a lure (which is really common!), avoid using the word until your puppy understands the behavior itself. This is a good behavior to practice “capturing” when they do it.



BUILDING A STAY

Step One: Come Prepared

Lure your puppy into a down with all the treats you'll need to keep them there. Expect to need five treats for a five second down, two treats for a two second down – you get the idea.

Step Two: Make Sure Puppy is Successful

Staying in a position isn't interesting by itself, and our puppies aren't born knowing what "stay" means. Make sure they learn it by being 100% successful and making sure it's fun, each time.

Step Three: Teach Puppy the Word

You should tell your puppy "Good Stay" as they maintain the behavior so they learn what it's called. You're also praising them at the same time - double duty!

Step Four: Tell Puppy When They're Done

After a few seconds, say "Okay!" and release them to go do something else. Remember that puppies have a short attention span, so don't expect them to stay long. And don't expect them to stay without constant reinforcement!



SOCIALIZATION: HANDLING PRACTICE

Check off each assignment as you complete it.

For all exercises, remember to touch first and then treat. Don't do both at the same time.

For each of the assignments, use the following order:

1. Start off touching lightly
2. Then hold on longer
3. Then apply more pressure
4. Finally, apply gentle restraint

Be sure to move to the next level only when your puppy is obviously comfortable (wagging, wanting more) with the one you're on!





Handling Diagram

Pet all over your puppy's body. Look for any trouble spots as evidenced by your puppy seeming uncomfortable or upset (pulling away, freezing). Concentrate on these areas, but go slowly.

#1: Touch your puppy's hindquarters and tail.

#3: Touch your puppy's ears, outside and (gently!) inside.



#2: Touch your puppy's paws. When your puppy is completely enjoying steps 1-4, probe around between his toes, too!

#4: Lift your puppy's lips to examine her teeth.

#5: Get family and friends in on the fun: Have them Touch and Treat your puppy. Once they've gotten her warmed up by doing Touch and Treat all over, have them work on any tough spots. Teach them to go slowly at your puppy's comfort level.

#6: You keep at it, too!



WEEKLY CHALLENGE: VET VISIT

Preparing for vet visits at home

Once you've completed your Handling Practice Homework, begin to practice "vet exams" at home. Put your puppy on the table and look in your puppy's ears and mouth, gently pull their tail and practice "pilling" with a treat. When possible, have friends practice this too but be sure they offer plenty of treats and monitor your puppy's comfort level. If at any point she does not seem completely comfortable (wagging, looking for the treat), go back a step to build up her comfort level. Don't move forward to the next step until you're sure she's enjoying the one she was having trouble with. If you don't see improvement call a trainer for help.

Taking it on the road

Making a trip to the vet office is not usually good news for puppies. In fact, repeated trips for shots or while they are in pain can lead to fear of the vet and the vet office. To prevent this, practice vet trips while your puppy is healthy and make the visits fun. And what better way to prepare for long waits in the waiting room than to start with some short visits first?





WEEKLY CHALLENGE: VET VISIT, CONT'D

1. Pack your bait bag with extraordinarily yummy treats, but don't give your puppy any. Stop at your vet's office, take your puppy into the lobby and immediately start feeding him the special treats.
2. Approach the receptionist and ask if she or other vet staff will give your puppy a treat.
3. Next, practice having your puppy wait calmly on his mat while you read a magazine.
4. After 5 -10 minutes, leave the vet office and as you exit close your bait bag and stop treating.

After your vet visit, ask yourself the following questions and use them to plan your next trip:

What was the most challenging part of this visit for you or your puppy?

What did you do to help your puppy be successful, to work at her level?

Is there anything you think you'll try differently next time?

Try to visit the vet office as often as you can. If your vet is on the way to something else, get in the habit of bringing your puppy so that you can stop for a quick visit to give treats and practice settling in the lobby.