

Proper Handling and Touching of Your Puppy

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Handling is one of the most important things to work on with your new puppy while he is still in his critical socialization window. By teaching your puppy to be comfortable with handling when he is young, you can help prevent issues that may arise when he is older.

Always keep in mind that touching your puppy should be something he really enjoys. The goal isn't for your puppy to tolerate handling, the goal is for him to LOVE handling.

Five minute sessions just a couple of times a day is all that it should take. By putting in the time with your puppy while he is young you will help set him up for a variety of life experiences that otherwise might be challenging or scary for him.

How to do it:

Sit on the floor and begin with dropping a few treats near you so your puppy can find them. This will convince your puppy that being near you is a great thing! His only job at this point is simply to eat the treats, so it is best to not ask him to do anything. Once your puppy is lingering near you for more snacks, begin your handling.

Use high value treats (cheese, meat, chicken) to help condition your puppy to LOVE having his body handled; it's important that the handling come first and then is immediately followed by a delicious treat.

Identify a part of the body to work on first. It is always best to start with something easy and gradually make things more challenging. To get your puppy to like having his ears handled, start with touches to the side of his head. You'll touch the side of his head, wait a second, then give him some treats with your other hand. You'll want to keep your touching hand on his ear until you're done giving him treats, then you can take both hands away. As your puppy gets the hang of the game you can make the steps more difficult. For instance after an ear touch, you might try flipping his ear over. Try and accomplish each step 4-5 times before moving on to a harder step. We really want our puppy to feel comfortable and happy before making things harder. If your puppy seems scared or upset at any time simply go back a step and do more repetitions before making things more difficult.

Always be sure to allow your puppy to leave if he is feeling uncomfortable with any of this training. If your puppy seems to be getting more sensitive or growls, snaps or cries at any time, stop what you're doing and reach out to a trainer.

To see some handling techniques in action, [click here for a Puppy Handling Demo video.](#)



If you have a pet behavior question or would like some training assistance,
San Diego Humane Society is here to help!
Visit our website at www.sdhumane.org to view our behavior and training options,
or call our **Behavior Helpline at 619-299-7012 ext. 2244** to speak with a trainer.