



# Homeward Bound Golden Retriever Rescue Golden Rule Dog Training

## Puppy Care and Training 101

Kathryn Baines  
Training Director, HBGRR  
[goldentraining@homewardboundgoldens.org](mailto:goldentraining@homewardboundgoldens.org)

# The Basics

## Puppy proofing your home

Before you bring your new puppy home, you will need to “puppy proof” your house to avoid any dangerous areas or materials you may not think would be harmful. Puppies are full of enthusiasm and will get into things you never dreamed they could! The following are specific things to look for when you puppy proof your house.

### Inside your home

- Put away floor plants, decorations, shoes, and clothing.**  
*Keep all loose and small items off the floor. Anything the puppy can put in his mouth that is not meant for him can be dangerous and/or your things can be destroyed. If you leave things out where the pup can get to it, then it's your fault, not the puppies! He doesn't know the difference, so don't encourage bad habits that will be hard to break.*
- Secure tablecloths, runners, or other hanging material.**  
*A quick pull on one of these can bring everything from the table down on your puppy. Tape or tack them down or remove them altogether.*
- Put away objects from the coffee tables, end tables, and low furniture.**  
*Puppies can and will put their paws on things until they're properly trained. Make sure there's nothing dangerous for them to knock over. Also make sure there are no heavy items that could fall over on top of the puppy.*
- Put away anything breakable, particularly if it's at tail level.**  
*Tails wag. Expensive things get broken. Make sure all breakables are put away or placed up high.*
- Lock up the lower cupboards to ensure the puppy can't open them.**  
*This includes stowing cleaning products, medications, paint products, plant food or fertilizer, and anything that could be poisonous to your puppy.*
- Remove dangerous phone wires and electric cords.**  
*You can wrap them in plastic sheathing, tie them up or pull them through pvc tubing and secure them behind furniture. Pups love to chew these!*
- Have children put away toys and any parts or accessories.**  
*If the toys are smaller than your puppy, they should be put away. All small pieces of plastic toys, dolls and their little shoes, etc. need to be kept out of reach. There have been cases of puppies swallowing these toys, even the tip of a sippy-cup has ended up in intestines and resulted in an expensive hospital visit. Putting all toys away will keep your child from losing their favorite toys and keeping the dog safe is a great incentive for kids to clean up after themselves.*
- Protect anything made of wood including table and chair legs.**  
*Your puppy knows instinctively that wood is good for chewing. Use thick plastic sheeting or PVC tubing to hide chair and table legs. Start right away telling your puppy no if you catch them in the act, then redirect them to an appropriate chew toy.*
- Check every nook and cranny for danger items.**  
*This includes under and behind furniture and tables or any other dark place a puppy would like to go. Watch your new puppy carefully and see what he gets into so there are no surprises.*

## Outside in the yard

- Clean up the yard and keep it free of dangerous items.**  
*Put away garden hoses, tools, and any plastic pieces/toys. Look for anything your puppy can fall into or put in his mouth and secure it somewhere safe.*
- Block access to the pool and other hazardous areas.**  
*Fence off any area you don't want your puppy to be in and make sure he can't squeeze through the gate or fence. Even a golden that loves to swim can drown in a pool if he doesn't know where the steps are to get out! When he is a few months old introduce him to the pool slowly making sure he knows how and where to get out of the pool.*
- Put away chemicals and potential poisons.**  
*This includes lawn fertilizers, insecticides, and paint products. Also, put all garden tools away that can be dangerous to the puppy. Look at what products you use in the yard he will be playing in! These can be toxic to your puppy!*
- Check fencing for escape routes.**  
*Make sure there's nowhere for your puppy to crawl under. Check for gaps around gates and fence sections and make sure your puppy can't get his head stuck in them.*

Taking the time to puppy proof your house and yard is a simple way to create a safe, friendly environment for the newest member of your family.

## Handling and Socialization

When you get your puppy home, make sure you are spending time playing, exercising and touching him/her. Everyday touch their paws, ears, tail, collar, back, and tummy. This is important for trips to the veterinarian, groomer, and others that may want to touch your dog. They will be used to being touched and will not be afraid as they grow up.

Keep your puppy at home until they have been completely vaccinated! They should only be in your house and backyard until they have had all the boosters, including Rabies and Bordetella shots. This is typically at 16 weeks. Once the pup is completely vaccinated, then you can take him on outings, to the pet store, obedience class, etc. Take the opportunity to work on the handling, teaching "sit", "come" and bonding with your puppy.

*Although puppies learn early, and at 8 weeks they can learn to sit, stay, come, etc., it is very dangerous to take them to an obedience class and be around other dogs until the series of shots are complete. We are very careful as we have seen so many sick puppies that sometimes do not make it; therefore, it's better to be safe and vaccinate first (this includes the Rabies vaccination at 16 weeks of age).*

### The Importance of Socializing

From the very start, puppies learn important lessons through experiencing their environment. As the weeks go by, exposure to a mix of experiences is essential for a pup to become a well-rounded adult and not be afraid of places, sounds and people. In fact, various studies have shown that crucial learning starts within the first three months of life.

I am often asked, "I need to socialize my puppy right away by 12 weeks, but I have to wait until he's vaccinated at 16 weeks, which is the correct answer?" It seems contradictory, but the answer is you must wait until 16 weeks; having all the vaccinations is critical before starting the socialization process. We lose a little time, but we have socialization classes at the ranch so we can ensure the process takes place as soon as possible. And we have great success.

A lack of socialization can affect a dog's lifelong behaviors. For example, at the rescue we see about 30% of the dogs rescued are "reactive" or afraid of other dogs and have a hard time adapting; they also have a hard time finding a home. These dogs did not have the benefit of a caring owner that took the time to socialize them early on in life.

## Nutrition and diet

Keep the following points in mind as you research the right diet for your puppy.

### **Feed a high-quality food designed for growth.**

The puppy's diet should consist of a high-quality dog food designed specifically for growing puppies. Check the label for a statement that the food has been tested in accordance with the procedures established by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO). We do not recommend any food that contains corn, wheat or soy.

Puppy food has a higher level of protein to support the growing pup. We recommend the first four ingredients are meat and that the food does not have the fillers mentioned above (corn, wheat or soy products). *At HBGRR we feed Natures Select Puppy Food.*

We recommend puppies less than six months old should be fed three times a day, dogs between six and twelve months should be fed twice daily, and dogs older than a year should also be fed twice a day.

### **Establish a regular feeding schedule.**

Consistency and schedules are important to all dogs. We feed puppies three times a day and adults twice a day.

We do not recommend "free feeding" which is defined by filling up a bowl with food and allowing the puppy or dog to graze all day. This can cause obesity, so we recommend feeding the designated amount of food, leaving it for 15 to 20 minutes, and then picking the bowl up off the floor. This tells the dog they need to eat in a specific amount of time, and that you control his resources.

## Equipment You Will Need

We only use and recommend positive reinforcement for all training; there is no reason to use old-school techniques that use force, and they are not effective and can cause harm to your dog. This includes equipment such as choke chains and pinch collars! We use human equipment only, which is very effective even for a very active dog.

### **Collar and Leash**

While training your dog, we recommend a Martingale collar. We sell them at Homeward Bound, but you can also find them on-line and in pet stores. These collars do not have a buckle or snap and fit over the dog's head. The advantage is when the dog pulls; the collar puts pressure all the way around the neck and not just in the front. Regular collars will tighten in the front which may cause injuries to the neck. In addition, the dog cannot slip out of the collar or back out of it. Puppies can squirm out of a collar and get away from you; this collar prevents that from happening. You should always be able to put 4 fingers between the neck and the collar to ensure it is not too tight. As the puppy grows check the fit often.

We also recommend a 1" nylon leash that has a loop at the base and a regular handle. This allows you to pull the dog close to you if needed for safety. We also sell these at Homeward Bound and they are available at pet stores and on-line.

## Toys

Puppies have to chew! They like to mouth and chew on things, so have a few chew-approved items around. You don't want to come home to teeth marks on your chair legs or the shredded remains of new tennis shoes.

We use Kongs®, you can find puppy Kongs made for teething puppies at pet supply stores. Putting a little peanut butter and kibble in them it will keep them busy for a while; the peanut butter can also be frozen. It is great for teething and it takes them longer to get the peanut butter out.

Kong® also makes teething toys, which are great for puppies.

The Kongs® are one of the safe toys to leave your puppy with while being crated. **Do not give your puppy or dog any bones, raw hides, or stuffed toys without supervision!** Both puppies and adult dogs can choke on bones and rawhides. Ripping the stuffing out of a plush toy is great fun, but if they eat the batting inside, they can choke as well.

## The Crate

Crate training is the easiest way to encourage good house training manners. A crate can also serve as a safe, comfortable den. A metal crate that has a divider works well as your puppy grows. The crate has to be big enough for the dog to stand up, stretch, and turn around in comfortably.

I recommend a wire crate that is big enough for an adult dog and use the separator while he is a puppy. This saves you from buying another crate and the wire crate can be folded up for storage.

Puppies and dogs cannot be left in a crate all day! We do not recommend any longer than 4 hours. Puppy pads can be used in potty training, but that should only be used when really necessary. If you're gone all day, make alternate plans! You may want to have a neighbor or family member come over and let the puppy/dog out every few hours to potty, play and stretch their legs. Many people will hire a dog-walker to come by and take care of the puppy and others take their dogs to a doggie day care.

Do not put a bed or towel in the crate until you are sure the pup will not chew on it! Most puppies put whatever is available in their mouth, which includes a towel or bed. They can ingest the fibers and it may not pass in the intestines, which could result in death (or at least an expensive surgery).

Most people use the crate for potty training and then switch to a dog bed when the pup is older and is successfully trained. Some dogs like the den-like feel of the crate and continue to go in and out on their own.

## Grooming Tools

Even if your puppy will be professionally groomed, you should brush him/her often. As your puppy gets older, we recommend using clippers to remove any mats instead of scissors; scissors can slip and puncture the dog causing injury. Keeping your golden brushed daily prevents matting and helps with any shedding your dog will have; some dogs shed more than others, but goldens do shed!

De-matting tools and strippers help to remove mats. Mars Coat Kings Comb (stripper) is a good tool; we use these at the ranch to remove the mats. If the dogs have dense mats, we use the clippers.

Goldens have such beautiful coats, it takes work to keep them looking good, but well worth the time!

## Dog Tags

No puppy or dog should be without an ID tag. Make sure you have their name and at least two phone numbers where you can be reached. Homeward bound imbeds microchips all dogs before leaving the ranch. Make sure that information is current as well.

**Again, please do not use a choke chain or pinch collar on your dog!**

# Training

## House training your puppy

The first night home with your new puppy can be a trying experience for both of you. It's the first time your puppy has spent the night away from his mother/littermates. Because dogs are pack animals, your puppy knows instinctively that being separated from the pack is dangerous. Whining and crying at night is your puppy's way of calling for his pack to find him. As the pup acclimates, this behavior will dissipate.

If you are using a crate, make sure to put the crate near you in your bedroom so the pup can see you. This will comfort them, leaving them in another room will be difficult for them to fall asleep.

### Your puppy's activities

To anticipate the needs of your puppy, take the age of the pup and translate into hours; for example, if your pup is 2 months old, then expect to take him out every 2 hours. Then set times for food and water, when he plays, when he sleeps. Dogs need consistency and scheduling each activity for the same time every day makes it easier for your puppy to learn the rules and it lessens any anxiety for the pup because he knows what to expect.

1. **During the daytime:** use the crate for potty training. When the puppy is not eating, playing, visiting with you or going potty he should be in the crate for short periods, maybe an hour at a time, not all day!  
**Puppies and dogs cannot be crated for more than four hours;** more time is considered cruel. If you have to leave them longer, have a neighbor, family member, dog walker let them out for potty and exercise.

**In the morning:** First thing take your puppy out to potty. Once he wakes up, he will need to go out and prolonging it and making him wait is not training him. He is likely to go in his crate!

2. **At night,** when he is in the crate, the puppy will wake you up when he has to go out. Don't set an alarm or take him out every hour or two, it will be another pattern and as an adult dog he will want to go out more often. Your pup needs to wake up when he has to go and because he does not want to go in his crate, he will whine or bark to get your attention. As he grows so will his bladder and he will be able to hold it all night and you will get a good night's rest.

### Before Bedtime Tips:

- Remove food or water after seven o'clock p.m. to make sure your puppy is running on empty when it's time to sleep. Otherwise, you'll be making trips to the bathroom all night, or worse, your puppy will eliminate in the house.
  - Shortly before you go to bed, spend some time playing with your puppy. You want him to be tired enough to sleep soundly. Definitely don't let him nap within an hour or two of bedtime or else your puppy will be ready to play when you're ready to sleep.
  - Just before you go to bed, take your puppy outside to his potty area and wait for him to go. When he does his business, say "potty" and praise him and bring him back inside. This reinforces good behavior and begins the house training process.
  - To comfort the pup put a used t-shirt with your scent in the crate; you can also put a stuffed animal for him to cuddle up to (make sure there are no eyes the pup can chew off). This is for night time only while the pup is sleeping. Remove these things in the morning.
3. **Do not leave your puppy outside alone!** That could be very scary and dangerous if he gets into something or finds a way to squeeze out of the fence. The other danger is that hawks (especially for small breed pups) can swoop down and take them out of the back yard! As your puppy grows, he should only need to go out in the morning, after meals and before bed time.

4. **A potty signal:** Your pup may start to give you a signal, so pay attention; it could be a bark, staring at you, sniffing or scratching at the ground or door, pacing, or whining. Once you see the behavior you can extend the periods between bathroom breaks and wait for his signal.
5. **Take the puppy to a designated potty area.** Always use the same route to get there and don't let him out on his own. You want to be sure he goes in the same place every time and that you're there to give praise. As he gets older he will automatically go to his potty area on his own.
6. **Repeat a housebreaking cue.** When it looks like your puppy is about to go, say, "go potty". Don't stop repeating the command until puppy actually starts to go. This will become the cue for going outside to potty.
7. **Be consistent!**

#### **Potty accidents will happen:**

You should expect a few accidents during the housebreaking process. Whatever you do, **NEVER punish your puppy!** DO NOT use the old method of rubbing his nose in the mess. Also, DO NOT punish him after he's already gone in the house! He does not know what he did and reprimanding will only make him afraid of you; these are archaic methods that are cruel and ineffective.

#### **If you catch him in the act:**

Clap your hands to interrupt the behavior, do not yell and scare the puppy, instead go over calmly and scoop your puppy up and take him outside to the potty area. When he's done, praise him in a kind tone, as usual. It is a learning process, so accidents are expected!

#### **For all other times:**

Clean up the mess and figure out where YOU went wrong in housebreaking puppy. Did you ignore the schedule, give him water late at night, or miss the signs that he needed to go out? If you can see where you failed your pup, you can be better prepared to help him succeed.

Clean up the area with a product designed for pet accidents. If not cleaned well, he may revisit the area!

Learning how to housebreak a puppy is a pretty simple task if you stay alert and stick to your schedule. With consistency and plenty of praise, your puppy will be housebroken in no time.

## **Introducing the Crate**

### **Introducing the Crate to Your Puppy**

If your puppy seems fearful of the crate, or ignores it, occasionally throughout the day, drop small pieces of kibble or dog biscuits in the crate. While investigating his new crate, the pup will discover edible treasures, thereby reinforcing his positive associations with the crate. Use a special treat, one that he only gets when in his crate, this provides a positive association with the crate.

Praise and pet your pup when he enters and **Do Not push, pull or force the puppy into the crate!** He will see the crate as a scary place.

### **Best Steps for Success**

Try crating your pup for short periods of time **while you are home with him.** In fact, crate training is best accomplished while you are in the room with your dog. This will help him get used to your absence from the room; in addition. This prevents an association being made with the crate and you leaving him/her alone.



Make sure the crate is not too big; the pup could potty in one end and sleep in the other. This will interfere with your house training efforts!

Make sure there is water available; try a small water dispenser that hangs inside the crate if he is confined for more than two hours in the crate.

## Bedding

Place a towel or blanket inside the crate to create a soft, comfortable bed for the puppy. **Watch carefully! If the puppy chews the towel, remove it to prevent the pup from swallowing or choking on the pieces.** He may prefer lying on a hard, flat surface, and may push the towel to one end of the crate.

If the puppy urinates on the towel it will inhibit the potty training process. Remove bedding until the pup no longer eliminates in the crate.

### **NEVER use a crate (or any other area of confinement) for the purpose of punishment!**

To use the crate for potty training, he/she should be in the crate for short times during the day and all night for safety.

Once he gets used to the crate, and using a Kong or special treat to coax him in, it will be a welcome place to relax and sleep.

## Training Games for Your Puppy

The best way to train puppies and adult dogs is through games! It makes it fun for both you and your dog while getting some exercise and learning, what could be better?

### Pass the puppy

Pass the puppy is a recall game to play in the house and outside. It gets the puppy used to coming to you when you call him/her. Start in the house, in a hallway with all the doors closed so she has no distractions.

1. Start with two people and both have a handful of treats or kibble, and stand about 3 feet apart to start.
2. Say the puppy's name, and "come" then show the pup you have a treat in your hand. Once he starts to come to each of you on cue, then create a little more distance (if the puppy loses interest, then try a better treat and move in so there is not so much distance).
3. Always have an up-beat voice and a happy tone when calling your pup/dog to you (would you come to someone that is yelling or was insisting you come?); with all dogs, a "come" or recall cue must be a pleasant experience.
4. Once your puppy gets the game, you can add more people in your family. Have them sit in a big circle with the pup in the middle. Everyone takes turns calling the puppy to them, feeding her treats and making a big fuss over her ("good girl!!!!"). This is early come/recall training, and it also teaches the pup that people are fun and trustworthy.
5. If children are playing the game it's important for one person to call the puppy at a time! Too many people saying her name will be confusing. To keep her focused, take turns.

### Hide and Seek

When the puppy is occupied with something else, hide some treats.

Start by hiding scented treats under a blanket in the puppy's crate or pen. Then add other interesting places (don't hide treats under your couch cushions, you may end up with a puppy that likes to go digging for treasure in your furniture as an adult).



Make the game easy, then more difficult making sure he is always successful! Start by putting a treat on the floor, near the corner of a chair where he can see it; as he goes for the treat say, "find it!" This will become a cue that the game is to begin and there are fun things to find.

Once he gets the hang of it, switch to a toy for added fun.

## Training - Obedience

We only use and recommend positive reinforcement for all training; there is no reason to use old-school techniques that use force, and they are not effective. This includes choke chains and pinch collars! We use human equipment only, which is very effective even for a very active dog.

### Using food lures to teach obedience

To teach the puppy a cue use his /her kibble (try holding back about ¼ of the food to train with after she eats so she is not ravenous and will pay attention); this is a positive reinforcement method we use to motivate and teach cues in a humane manner.

#### Example for teaching "Sit":

1. Hold a treat slightly above your dog's nose and bring it back slowly over her head (almost touching her nose so she does not jump up to get the food) so the pup is following the treat. She will sit as the treat moves over her head.
2. When your dog's bottom hits the ground, say "sit", Good Girl!
  - a. If your dog keeps backing up, practice against a wall so she can only go so far. Also look at how high you are holding the treat, as it has to be close to the nose.
  - b. It may take many repetitions for the puppy to understand, so be patient.
  - c. Try it about 5 times and then take a break (if she is sitting or not).
  - d. Puppies have a very short attention span, so if they are not focused and become distracted, stop the training and try again later.
3. Repeat this until your dog is offering a sit readily.
4. As you practice, the "sit" will become second nature as it is an easy cue for the puppy to learn.
5. Encourage her to stand up again and repeat the step above until your dog readily follows the food lure and goes into the sit position when you say "sit."

## Nipping and Mouthing Behavior

There is a big difference between nipping, mouthing and biting; a puppy nips and mouths as it plays and has to be taught nipping with other puppies is fine, but with human skin it's not appropriate.

Some adult dogs do nip or mouth as well; they may have never been trained as a puppy, or someone possibly played rough with them in the past, or they simply get over- excited so they nip. In any case, this is a natural behavior for puppies and we have to teach our dogs not to nip or mouth us.

Nipping and mouthing is how the puppy learned to play with his littermates. All puppies need to learn "bite inhibition"; as they play with their littermates they may bite too hard, then the puppies yelp and this tells the other puppy "you're biting too hard!" This is bite inhibition.

To stop the nipping/mouthing behavior, follow the steps and ideas below. You will need a toy you can place easily in their mouth, such as a small rope toy. Also have some treats handy!

### Steps:

- The goal is to teach the puppy that nipping hurts, say “OUCH!” very loud so it startles the puppy, and then ignore her by turning away. Do not jerk your hand away; she will think it is a game and will continue to nip. This means you will have little teeth marks on your hand! If she gets no attention for that activity it will not be so much fun and she will stop. *This mimics the puppy play and learning bite inhibition.*
- Immediately replace your hand with an appropriate chew/teething toy for the puppy to chew on instead. Wait three seconds and praise the pup for chewing on the toy (instead of you) by saying, “good girl!”
- Along with praise and attention, try to have delicious food treats handy and ignore him when he engages in any rough nipping behavior. Use the food treat three seconds after the mouthy behavior stops, and say “good boy!” *He will get the idea that nipping or mouthing does not get him what he wants, but when he stops he gets a treat and praise. The three seconds is used to pause between cues so the dog does not confuse one with the other.*
- Replace his need to nip or mouth with an appropriate chew toy; by redirecting the behavior he will learn what he CAN chew and what he cannot. This is the most effective choice, be consistent and have a toy ready to replace the behavior. Say “OUCH!” loudly, then immediately put the toy in his mouth, pause and say “good boy!” *He will get the idea the only thing he can put his teeth on is the toy!*
- You can also add some Bitter Apple®, or Vic's Vapor Rub® on your hands as a deterrent.
- Implement leadership techniques as soon as possible (see the leadership article in the Golden Rule Library). Leadership is about setting rules in a positive manner that lets the dog know early on you own all the resources and you share them with the puppy. These are stepping stones that set an important foundation with your dog long-term.

## Adult Dogs and Nipping

When older dogs nip humans it really hurts and can cause bruising and can draw blood. This may still be nipping or mouthing, and is not considered aggressive behavior! Just because the dog is older does not automatically mean they have been taught the difference between playing with dogs versus humans.

One reason adolescent dogs still nip and mouth is typically because they were not taught as puppies. Another reason may be that someone played rough with them and that is how they now play with humans and they don't know any better. We also see dogs coming in that were left alone in the backyard, receiving little to no attention and are overly excited when they do get human attention, so they nip and mouth to get someone to play with them.

The rules and directions above still apply; however, because it can be more detrimental, you may need professional assistance. Please contact a certified trainer for more help stopping this behavior.

## Jumping up on people

Usually the reason for jumping is to get attention from the family. It may be okay with the owner if the puppy or small dog jumps up and sees it as very cute, but for a larger dog it can be dangerous if not annoying. For any reason jumping up is not a desired behavior for most dog owners. If a dog jumps on visitors coming into the house, or when the dog meets people on the street, he typically is excited and wants to say “hello”.

When the dog jumps up, say nothing, do not give eye contact and turn your back to him and ignore him. This tells the dog, in his language, stop it! Dogs do what works, and by ignoring him he is not getting what he wants, your attention. So this will cause him to think, how do I get your attention?

Then when he is sitting and calm, he gets a treat and attention (say, good boy! Do not pet him, as that will just get him excited again).

If the dog is starting to jump up, give him the “sit” cue instead; the dog receives praise only when he is calm and not jumping; using a “sit” is called “redirecting” (the dog has to know the “sit” cue first).

When entering your house, do so very calmly and not make it a big deal. Come in and ignore the dog, this means no attention, no high-pitched hellos. Yelling may be interpreted as attention. Go about your business for a couple minutes, then ask your dog to sit and say hello.

Teach the “off” cue by putting their paws on the floor, and then give the cue. If you use the cue as they are jumping up and they do not understand what “off” means, they will think jumping up is actual “off”. Just remember, when they have all four-on-the-floor and say “off”!

### **Jumping up on Guests**

#### **Doorbell Practice Set up**

Use a leash and have some treats available.

If visitor(s) or neighbors are willing to help, explain the dog is in a learning stage, and can they help by letting the dog practice good behaviors. Tell them that when you open the door, if the dog starts to jump up to turn their back to the dog, and not give the dog attention until the behavior stops; no talking, no praise, completely ignore the dog.

1. Ask them to wait outside for a minute and then ring the doorbell.
2. In the meantime you take the dog into another room on a leash.
3. Once the doorbell is pushed, take the dog to the door as calmly as possible.
4. If he starts to jump up, remind them to say nothing and turn their back. You wait and if the dog responds and sits or looks at you, praise him and give him a treat. If he continues to jump on you, you also ignore him until he stops.
5. Try up to three times and take a break.
6. If your dog knows “sit”, then give that cue; when he is more clam and sits, you give the treat and praise (good boy!).

#### **As you progress:**

Someone knocks on the door or rings the bell.

Bring the dog away from the door when someone knocks and tell him to “sit”, and then work towards “sit-stay-release.” The dog has to be released before he is able to greet the guest.

It may be difficult for the behavior to stop and while training, you may have to put the dog in another room or in a crate as a last resort. Keep working on it, the dog will get the idea that jumping is not getting him the attention he wants. Jumping up is one of the hardest behaviors to stop; be consistent and take every opportunity to practice.

# Safety

## Setting rules for dogs and kids

A study by the American Animal Hospital Association found what most people already knew to be true: parents are the primary caretakers of their children's pets. But it doesn't have to stay that way. If you set a few rules for dogs and kids before bringing home a puppy, you can get your kids to do some of the work, ease your dog's transition into his new family and keep everyone safe.

### Make a dog care schedule

Setting a schedule for your dog helps to keep your family organized and your kids will understand your expectations. Consistency is important to dogs; if they know what to expect, they are calm and start to trust more readily. Feed and walk your dog the same time everyday (or as close as possible) and this will also help your children learn what they need to do to care for him.

We recommend puppies less than six months old should be fed three times a day, dogs between six and twelve months should be fed twice daily, and dogs older than a year should also be fed twice a day.

### Set up dog zones in your house

We highly recommend setting up designated areas in your home for your dog. A routine is good for the dog and your kids will have safety boundaries and will understand what they are allowed to do with the dog and where.

Your dog's routine should include:

- Where the dog sleeps – do not touch the dog while sleeping
- Where he eats – do not touch the dog or his food while he is eating
- Where he goes to the bathroom – let him have some privacy
- Where he chews on a bone, toys, treats – do not take anything from the dog – ever!
- Where he should be kept when he can't be supervised – no fingers in the crate or teasing the dog

### Teach kids respect for dogs

Once your kids have been assigned their tasks and understand the basic rules of dog care, they should be taught how to treat dogs with respect.

Make it clear:

- NO roughhousing (can make nipping and mouthing worse)
- NO ear-pulling, tail tugging
- NO putting your face in the dog's face
- NO teasing the dog
- NO poking
- NO smothering hugs, kissing his face, patting them on the head and other such behavior can cause the dog to bite. *You can use a stuffed animal to explain to younger children how to pet and hold a puppy without traumatizing the dog.*
- No riding the dog like a horse (can damage the dog's back)

By setting the rules before you adopt a dog for kids, you can commit them to doing some of the work in caring for their pet, make your dog feel welcome in his new family and keep everyone safe.

Instead play games with the dog, such as, "Pass the Puppy", "Hide and Seek", or teach him how to play fetch.

# Dog bite prevention

When bringing a puppy or dog home, make sure to take the necessary steps to protect your kids by understanding dog bite prevention. Always supervise your children when they play with the dog, teach them how to play with the dog respectfully, explaining dogs are animals and they can bite.

Most dogs that nip or bite a child is due to the parents not understanding what a dog needs or how to read their body language. This is crucial to teach, along with proper handling, and will go a long way in bite prevention (see the complete article on Kids and Dogs in our training library).

## Rule number 1: **Never leave kids alone with a dog!**

Even if you think your pet is safe, **never leave a child unsupervised with a puppy or dog**. Kids can be curious and may pull the dog's ears or poke at him, scream and yell; all of these things can be annoying or scary to a dog. Just having your children and the dog in sight is not enough. Always be in a position to intervene immediately if anything happens, for the safety of your kids and the dog.

## Follow The RULES:

After supervision, the most important step in dog bite prevention is to teach your kids how to behave around a puppy or dog. Have your children follow the rules below to keep a dog from biting unexpectedly:

- 1. Never grab an object away from a dog**  
Dogs can be protective of their toys and may bite if you try to take them. If you want the toy, use an obedience command or treat to distract the dog. It's better to outsmart him than to provoke an unnecessary dog bite. If you must get something from him, trade a treat for the object in his mouth.
- 2. Never grab their collar;** this can scare the dog and he may bite (as a puppy we recommend touching the collar all the time to prevent any sensitivity).
- 3. Never bother a dog when he's sleeping or eating**  
Give a dog plenty of space when he's napping and leave the food dish alone while the dog eats. Do not try and put your hands in his food bowl!
- 4. Never sneak up on a dog** - always let your puppy or dog know that you're nearby before you pet him. Let the dog smell your open hand and then slowly reach out to him or call him to you.
- 5. Never bark or growl at a dog or stare into his eyes:** These are aggressive behaviors and if a dog feels threatened, it could cause him to bite.
- 6. If the dog has a child's toy in his mouth, do not grab it away!** Trade his toy or a treat for it and make sure all human toys are picked up! The dog does not know the difference between what to chew and what not to chew!
- 7. Tell an adult if a dog growls, nips, or bites.** These are warnings from the dog that he is uncomfortable, threatened or fearful.
- 8. Never rush up to a strange dog!** Always let the dog come to you, if they don't then do not approach. The dog may come up to you when he is sure you're friendly.

If your kids warn you of aggressive tendencies in your dog, don't ignore the situation. The longer you wait to deal with the behavior, the more dangerous your dog will become.

**Stray dogs:** Once your kids understand the rules of dog etiquette for the family pet, they should learn to protect themselves from stray dogs. The simplest means of dog bite prevention in these cases is to advise your children to avoid dogs they don't know. If they're approached by a strange dog, they should never make sudden movements, scream, or try to run away. Tell them to do the following instead:

**If you're standing,** keep your hands at your sides and avoid eye contact with the dog. Slowly back away until there's a safe distance between you and the dog.

**If you're on the ground,** curl into a ball with your knees pulled close to your chest and hold your hands over your ears. Lie still and be quiet until the dog leaves.

*For more information on dog bite prevention, see our training library*  
<http://www.homewardboundgoldens.org/training-resources/golden-rule-training/library.html>

## Preventing Unwanted Behavior

Puppies are very impressionable because they have no frame of reference, so it is the best time to reinforce good behaviors and prevent bad ones. Puppies can learn obedience cues, positive play with humans and appropriate behavior as early as 8 weeks old; however, they can just as easily learn negative behaviors and habits if we inadvertently reinforce them.

### Preventing Toy Guarding and Play the Trade Game

The same theory applies to guarding dog toys; make sure you can take the toy out of his mouth. Start by trading the toy for a treat and playing with your puppy, taking one toy away and giving him another. All resources are managed by the leader in the home, you!

Teach a "give it" or "drop it" command; when your puppy has a toy in his mouth, gently take it from him, saying "give it", wait a few seconds and then give him the toy back. Be sure to show him you do not always take things away.

You can also teach him to drop an item by trading the object for a treat. By rewarding him with a treat he will learn that giving something to you, means getting something even better!

### "Leave-it" and "Take-it" Game

Learning to leave an object alone (used before they grab the item) when asked is really important to ensure there are no guarding issues later in life. This game shows the puppy that all toys are really yours and not hers to possess.

**The steps:** Start with a handful of treats in your left hand and just one treat in your right hand. *You're going to use the treat in the right hand as the reward; having treats ready in your left hand makes it easier to continue to practice without him seeing you grab more treats.*

1. Put a treat in your right hand and close your fist.
2. Show your dog your closed fist and put it right up to his nose to get his attention.
3. He will probably paw, nose or lick your hand; be patient and keep your hand closed (your hand will be sloppy!) While he is licking or nosing your hand say, "leave it" over and over until he gives up.
4. Once he stops licking or nosing open your hand and say, "take it" (do not pull your hand back, keep it steady) and let him take the treat. *This teaches two cues at once.*
5. Repeat the exercise of "leave it and take it" six times in a session.

Once he understands the game, switch to a favorite toy in place of the treats.

# What NOT to do, a few reminders

- **Potty accidents will happen:** You should expect a few accidents during the housebreaking process. Whatever you do, **NEVER punish your puppy!** DO NOT use the old method of rubbing his nose in the mess. Also DO NOT discipline him after he's already eliminated in the house! He does not know what he did and punishment will only make him afraid of you; these are archaic methods that are cruel and ineffective.
- **Please do not use a choke chain or pinch collar** on your dog; this can harm the neck and it simply teaches the dog to avoid pain. This equipment was used years ago, when we did not know any better and is antiquated and unnecessary.

Instead, use a Martingale collar on Easy Walker Harness®.

- **Never yell at your puppy or dog!** This only makes them afraid of you and does not teach them anything. You have to be patient and train your dog so he learns what is expected from him.
- **If your puppy or dog growls, do not scold him!** A growl is a warning to stay away or he is uncomfortable or feeling threatened. Respect the growl and back away; this is how they communicate and scolding teaches them not to warn us, which can be more dangerous!
- **Do not expect your puppy or adolescent dog to learn quickly;** they are like human teenagers and forget what you just told them. See our article on Surviving Adolescence in the Golden Rule Library.
- **Do not chase your puppy or dog;** if you're trying to get something he has taken and you chase him it becomes a game you will never win. Instead teach him the "leave it" and "drop it" it will make your life a lot easier. If you need your dog to come to you, teach recall right away. If you need to get him to come to you, crouch down, use a happy voice and call him to you (never be rough or yell, the dog will not come!).

If you play a chase me game with your pup, you're going to teach a bad behavior that is really hard to break. Bottom line, no matter what do not chase your dog or puppy!

Puppies are adorable, but they are also a lot of work. Please be prepared and take the time to raise your puppy in a healthy and positive way. Golden Retrievers are happy and sweet dogs by nature, but they also need a lot of attention. They need to be with their owners and not kept in the back yard.

Please consider putting your puppy through obedience training early on; he can learn at an early age who is the leader and what his role is in the family, which will make his life with you a rewarding experience.

Congratulations on your new addition!

---

Sources:

RaisingSpot.com  
American Dog Trainers Network  
[www.dogguide.net/food-guarding.php](http://www.dogguide.net/food-guarding.php)  
ASPCA <http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care>  
[www.asPCAbehavior.org](http://www.asPCAbehavior.org)  
American Dog Trainers Network