



Early learning for your new puppy

This guide is the very first step in your puppy's learning journey.

Marker-based training is a gentle, force-free way to help your puppy understand the world and build clear communication from the start. These early games create the emotional foundation that makes all later learning easier, whether you're working on recall, building confidence, or encouraging calmness and good manners in everyday life.

Getting started

Marker-based training is one of the simplest ways to help your puppy understand what you want. A marker is a short sound or word that tells your puppy the exact moment they've done something right. It becomes a clear bridge between their behaviour and the reward that follows.

You can use a clicker or a word such as "yes". Most new owners find a word easier to begin with, especially when juggling a young puppy, treats and a lead. The aim is to build a strong, positive association with that sound so your puppy feels safe, confident and ready to learn.

The "yes" game

Drop a tiny piece of food on a clean surface or a little mat. As your puppy goes to eat it, say "yes" in a clear, friendly tone. Then drop another piece. Keep the sessions short and cheerful. Ten repetitions, a few times a day, is plenty.

Avoid asking for sits or waits. This isn't obedience work. It's simply helping your puppy learn that the word "yes" predicts something good. Once they understand, you'll notice their eyes brighten and their expression change the moment they hear it.

Early recall foundations

If you have a whistle, practise blowing three short pips. If not, use the word "here". In the garden, with your puppy close by, give the whistle or word and drop a small handful of food between your feet. Point the pieces out so they don't miss any. This builds a positive association with coming close to you, which is the foundation of a reliable recall later on.

Why this matters

These simple games help your puppy feel secure, connected and ready to learn. They create the emotional groundwork for all future training, making later skills easier and more enjoyable for both puppy and owner. A few minutes a day is enough to make a real difference.

Why not use your phone and a simple stand to record short clips of your puppy's training? It's a lovely way to look back on their progress, notice small improvements and keep sessions consistent. Most families enjoy seeing how quickly their puppy grows in confidence.