

Puppy Impulse Control

Impulse control plays a significant role in preventing common behavioural issues such as jumping up, pulling on the lead, excessive mouthing, and over-excitement. Puppies are naturally impulsive because their brains are still developing, and they often struggle to regulate excitement and frustration. Teaching your puppy calmness and patience in everyday situations will pay dividends when it comes to training and living alongside your puppy.

Developing impulse control should always be approached gradually and positively. Short, successful training sessions help to achieve better learning outcomes. It can be tempting to push your puppy training further and further quickly to see how amazing your puppy can be! But pushing ahead too soon can lead to the puppy making mistakes and getting confused about how to behave. You will achieve your training goals much sooner if you increase the difficulty incrementally.

It is equally important to ensure puppies are getting adequate sleep, appropriate enrichment, and opportunities to engage in natural behaviours such as sniffing and chewing, as overtired or overstimulated puppies will find self-control far more difficult. One of the most effective ways to build impulse control is through simple exercises that encourage the puppy to pause and think before acting. Over time, these exercises help improve focus, emotional regulation, and responsiveness around distractions.

Puppy Impulse Control Game

- Hold a small piece of food in your closed hand on the floor.
- Your puppy may lick, paw, or nibble at your hand initially - remain calm and patient.
- The moment your puppy moves away or stops trying to get to the food, calmly praise your puppy with “Good” and reward them with the treat in your hand.
- Repeat several times until your puppy begins offering calm behaviour more quickly.
- As your puppy improves, gradually increase the difficulty by opening your hand slightly or placing the food on the floor whilst rewarding patience and self-control.
- Progress to training this exercise in different environments such as in the garden, in the park or in the vets waiting room.

Keep sessions short, positive, and achievable. The goal is not perfection, but helping your puppy learn that calm, thoughtful behaviour is rewarding.

If you want professional advice on any of these topics please contact Poppys Dog School to book in a puppy training one-to-one or a puppy socialisation walk.