



Before and After Getting Your Puppy: The Positive Approach to Raising a Happy, Healthy, and Well-Behaved Dog

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Before & After Getting Your Puppy is a simple, practical guide for anyone bringing a new puppy into the family. In clear steps, with helpful photos and easy-to-follow training deadlines, Dr. Ian Dunbar, who pioneered puppy classes and a loving style of dog training in the 1970s, presents a structured yet playful and humorous plan for raising a wonderful dog. The guide is based on six developmental deadlines:

- completing owner education and preparation
- assessing a puppy's prior socialization and education
- teaching errorless housetraining and chewtoy-training
- completing a socialization program of meeting strange dogs and people
- learning bite inhibition
- a continuing program of ongoing training

In the first half of the book, Dr. Dunbar focuses on what the owner needs to know to select a great puppy. In the second half, he presents the crucial lessons the puppy must be taught during its impressionable early development. Over time, Dr Dunbar's kind, positive program has been proven the most effective.

Before and After Getting Your Puppy: The Positive Approach to Raising a Happy, Healthy, and Well-Behaved Dog Details

Date : Published (first published August 20th 2001)

ISBN :

Author : Ian Dunbar

Format : Kindle Edition 241 pages

Genre : Animals, Dogs, Nonfiction

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sylas says

Helpful.

Angela2932 says

Excellent ideas, especially the encouragement to strongly integrate all kinds of puppy-training into every day life. However, I do think Ian Dunbar is rather unrealistic and terribly discouraging. As I began reading this book, I thought this was IT, the Holy Grail of dog/puppy training. But I quickly realized that with my 9 week old puppy, according to Dunbar, I was already a total failure. Dunbar emphasis error-free house-training (and what new puppy owner wouldn't be excited about THAT concept?), except that this means that once your puppy urinates or poops in the house, EVER, you have now completely destroyed all progress you might ever make with your puppy and are at risk of having to have the dog sent to a shelter where it will be sentenced to death.

Once you decide to just take Dunbar's perfectionism with a grain of salt, it's easy to follow many of his instructions and work extensively with your puppy, when you can, to teach new tricks, to play, to encourage compliance. I found the section on bite-inhibition to be particularly helpful. Dunbar emphasizes that the puppy MUST bite, and that the owner must work toward making it increasingly clear what level of puppy biting, then mouthing, hurts, and will not be tolerated. This is in such stark contrast of other advice I've been given, as a new puppy owner. Our vet immediately grabbed our then 9 week old puppy, said he needed to teach us how to discipline our dog, and gave her an alpha-shake by the scruff of her neck. The Petco dog-trainer-wannabe also pronounced as necessary her version of a "therapeutic grab and hug" by rolling our puppy over on her back, snarling "OFF" at her, while putting her hand in the puppy's mouth, holding the bottom of the mouth, and shaking her. (Our puppy backed away into a corner by the dog food, and peed on the floor.)

Dunbar encourages making it clear to the puppy what is acceptable in biting/nipping, by shouting "ouch", and stopping play for a minute or so. He does not recommend being highly punitive, and proposes that there is value in the puppy learning, very early, with baby teeth, what is "too much", and how to inhibit force. Dunbar strongly encourages using an entire arsenal of dog toys for chewing to establish acceptable items for chewing and off-limit items. Encouragingly, these methods seem to be working well with our now 12 week old puppy.

Dunbar can be overwhelming, however, making puppy training seem like you might not only need to quit your job, but perhaps hire an entire platoon of servants to help with the work load. (Then again, maybe I'm just now tired, as we enter our 5th week of puppy parenthood.)

Anna says

I mean, it's fine, and helpful, but pedantic and fear-mongering.

We all make mistakes. Dogs are resilient. One accident is not the undoing of your puppy training program.

Possibly I just chafed at the tone because at this point I'm relatively well-read in this area, and it felt condescending and unnecessarily absolutist-- there's more than one right way, but you'd never know it from reading this.

That said, I know this is a product of an overwhelming desire on the part of the author to avoid the sort of disasters that happen when unprepared puppy owners get in over their heads and end up surrendering dogs to shelters or worse. He's not wrong that many perfect puppies are ruined by their owners, and we ended up doing things that are similar to much of what he advocates in most cases. Notable departures: our vet is a big advocate for feeding on a set schedule, so our puppy is fed out of a bowl and not a Kong. (He does have a kong for when he's crated)

We did not use a puppy toilet. Even in the depths of the Wisconsin winter (i.e. -10 degree temps), we just took him out to the yard to do his business, because we think it's easier to teach the puppy that there's exactly zero places in the house where he should be eliminating.

Dunbar's approach to training uses the cue word immediately, even before you're getting a consistent response from the dog with luring. We took an approach advocated by others and made sure the puppy had nailed the behavior on a lure before adding the cue word, hand motion, and gradually removing the lure, so that the command cues would not become diluted.

Overall, a useful reference if you can get past the tone.

Tamara says

I started off being totally scared when reading this book because the author kept saying the dog would be ruined forever if I messed up! However, he becomes more comforting as the book progresses and I like his straight forward, to the point approach. While there seems to be a lot to do, his checklists and urgency guides help a lot. I really, really found this book helpful- other puppy books are really wish washy in comparison. I think we will have a a very Dunbar trained dog! :)

PoligirlReads says

Good grief. This book is like "Scared Straight," only instead of targeting rebellious youths flirting with prison, Dunbar has his mind firmly set on scaring the crap out of any first-time puppy owner. One wrong move and your dog is headed to an early grave. Or if you're lucky, just severely maladjusted.

A representative passage: "If, on the other hand, your puppy is given unsupervised free run of the house from the outset, the odds are that it will be confined later on--first to the yard, then to the basement, then to a cage at the animal shelter, and then to a coffin." Alrighty then.

Here's a suggestion for Dunbar: the people who pick up the book are not the ones who need the Scared Straight treatment. We're the folks who are interested and invested in raising a happy and healthy dog. Using

fear tactics will not train us well. (Which is a little ironic, since he keeps emphasizing that fear is not a good training tool--the same thing applies to us humans, too!) Puppies and their owners occasionally make mistakes, and that's okay. I refuse to believe that if my puppy has one accident, or hasn't met 100 people before 3 mo., I have failed in her training. That's just ridiculous.

Grave pronouncements aside, Dunbar really knows his stuff. If you can get past the pre-emptive condemnation and unrealistic expectations, you'll find some really good information about puppy development, behavior, and training.

Craig says

I love that Ian Dunbar made this book available for free on his website Dogstar Daily . The book is filled with practical solutions to problems new dog owners are likely to face such as house training, bite inhibition, chewing, separation anxiety and barking. He has some great idea to help your new pup quickly learn the house rules like keeping them confined to a small area, like a kid's playpen, when you can't pay 100% of your attention to them and making sure they go out to the bathroom every hour on the hour.

I didn't like how Dr Dunbar made training feel like a race against the clock where if you miss a deadline your dog is irreversibly damaged. There are too many well-trained dogs that were rescued and trained as adults for me to agree with that idea. Perhaps he is being hyperbolic to stress the importance of training but I don't think it added to the book.

This is a great free resource to the potential/new dog owner. People would be much better prepared reading this book vs. anything by Cesar Millan or other dominance training advocates.

Alika Yarnell says

This book helped my husband and me tremendously when preparing for our first puppy, an excitable Boston Terrier. Dunbar breaks down the training process for you and makes it less overwhelming and more logical. He definitely seems to understand the canine mind and what ways work best to communicate with our favorite furry friends.

Some highlights that helped us:

- * Crate training within a larger confined area
- * The joys of kibble- & treat-filled Kongs and other chewtoys
- * The need to socialize pups with people and other dogs--for a multitude of reasons, one being to help the pup obtain a "soft mouth" and learn that biting is bad

House-training can be challenging and not all dogs take to the same toys, etc. Puppies might take a few weeks or months to want to eat out of Kongs. My advice is to stick with the things you really want your pup to learn--whether it's eating habits, potty training, or cute tricks. Have patience--puppies take awhile to learn new things, just like human babies!

There are different schools of thought with puppy training. Dunbar definitely sides with positive reinforcement and is not keen on emphasizing the negative by punishing dogs (which could cause the dog to

fear you and make more mistakes). All I can say is, his techniques worked for us and we have a happy, healthy, loving dog and never have to worry about him biting anyone!

Andie Murray says

This was a good primer for raising a puppy, with good positive reinforcement training techniques. Dunbar is a well-respected trainer and seems to really understand dogs and how they think. However, I was irritated that Dunbar really never offered any advice for what you should do if your dog doesn't respond the way his theoretical dog did. For example, he would say "hold the treat above his head and say 'Puppy, sit'. Your puppy will sit his butt down on the floor to get a better look at the treat." Which my dog (and I'm assuming most dogs did just fine) but what if he doesn't? Then what?

There were many instances of this, where the author would tell you what to do, then tell you what your dog would do in response, and then how you should respond to that response. But no attention was paid to the fact that not every dog is necessarily going to make the expected response, so he doesn't provide any guidance in that scenario. Still a very useful book, but it lost a star for that because it was less useful than it could have been.

Ren says

This is very comprehensive, reasonably up-to-date, and for the most part scientifically sound, so it's no wonder that so many people recommend this book.

The author seems to be very extreme in his advice, saying for instance that you should invite 100 different people to your home, including 20 children, to give the puppy a treat while training them a handful of tricks and handling their mouth, ears, feet, tail, rear, and genital area. Only 25 people a week! I have to believe that he exaggerated the number to get people to take it seriously enough to invite over as many people as they could, not because you actually need 100 people to do this. I sure hope not! I don't know that many people, let alone that many people I trust to train my dog and would ask to touch their genitals!

He also advocates not taking your puppy anywhere other unvaccinated dogs may have been until they are done with their vaccinations at 12 weeks, which is a controversial topic. Those first 12 weeks are the most critical weeks of a dog's life for learning about the world and others, and today it seems to be more accepted that you need to take calculated risks rather than sequestering your puppy away entirely (by the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior among others). While this book is great, I would not recommend it without the caveat that most people agree that the risk of not socializing a puppy before 12 weeks is far worse than the risk of disease, depending on where you live. Your vet should be able to tell you if there's been a disease breakout in your area.

Sherrie says

A must read for anyone who is thinking of getting a puppy.

Two caveats however due to new info and updates since it was written.

1. He says puppies under 12 weeks shouldn't go to puppy classes. This is no longer the case. See the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior's Statement at <http://avsabonline.org/uploads/positi...>

2. He supports taking dogs to dog parks which now most trainers do not recommend - for why go to <http://www.dogstardaily.com/blogs/dog...>

It is now recommended that daycare is better. How to choose a daycare at <http://pets.webmd.com/dogs/guide/choo...>

Bark says

This book is a comprehensive guide to selecting, preparing and caring for a puppy and a must read for anyone considering adding a canine baby to their lives or for anyone who needs to housebreak and train an older pup from scratch.

The author tackles everything in a way that is understandable for even the newest puppy owner and he doesn't talk down to you and has a great sense of humor about things instead. As an example he says if your puppy dog makes a potty error inside the house, you should pick up a newspaper and smack yourself with it because it's your fault for not following the rules. The puppy doesn't know the rules. I thought that was a very cute and tactful way to handle owner stupidity without calling out said stupidity in an insulting way as some trainers are prone to do.

The rules can look intimidating at first glance and I won't be doing them all (there's no way on earth I can introduce my pup to 3 **new** people a day) but training a pup/dog is a huge time investment and an on-going process that will pay-off in a well-trained dog for the rest of its life. Letting the dog out every hour on the hour, training him to sit, stand, come, be gentle, take food from your hands -- all that stuff is so important in the beginning. My older doggies, who are now in doggie heaven, were angels only to me, LOL. They were what many would call naughty. They jumped on visitors, begged for food and barked like lunatics at strange men (well, I must admit that "quirk" never bugged me at all) but I was young, busy and yes LAZY when I got them and didn't follow through on the basic training. I was just happy they did their business outside, didn't eat the house when I left and never bit anyone but they could have been so much better if only I'd invested the time and found this book way back when.

I highly recommend this book to anyone pondering a pup.

Jen Medos says

This book should be 100% mandatory for people getting puppies. It has so many valuable ideas and a specific timeline on what needs to happen when as far as puppies' development goes. Science based training and positive reinforcement are the foundations of this book and if you follow these recommendations you will have such a great family member.

I do have a few criticisms though. One, the average person would have a very hard time doing everything Dr. Dunbar recommends. I definitely understand the intent but we also need to be realistic of the time commitment most people will be willing to give to a puppy.

Secondly, I found that the part about dog parks to be incomplete. Dr. Dunbar says that ppl with very large and very small dogs tend to end up staying away from dog parks because those dogs are more likely to either be a bully or get bullied and the owners (understandably) wish to avoid conflict. It is reassuring that he also states most dog fights are a lot of noise and not much else. However, he leaves the discussion there. So if you

are a small dog owner, how are you suppose to mitigate the (in my opinion) very large risk of taking your dog to the dog park?

Overall though, I highly enjoyed this book and will be reading more by him as soon as I am able.

Justin Podur says

The most in-depth and indispensable how-to for the positive approach to dog training. Trying to use this book with a real (and wonderful) puppy taught me that I didn't have what it takes to raise one. Dunbar talks about the importance of crate training, bite inhibition, and socialization in puppyhood. I found I didn't have the heart to keep the poor thing in a crate, and I knew 100% that if I did not crate train him, he would end up developing all the problems with chewing up all of the stuff in the house that Dunbar warned about. So, the puppy ended up finding a better home with someone who could crate train him properly, had the requisite experience and understood how to read and treat a dog. My point is that Dunbar's instructions are unimpeachable. Use them if you want a happy, healthy, and well-behaved dog. Or, like me, you may realize you don't have what it takes to have one, because by reading Dunbar you will know exactly what needs to be done to have one.

Dunbar offers most of the instructions as free PDFs online, but it's worth getting the book if you can.

Lisa says

Dunbar has some interesting techniques for raising dogs. But "puppy receiving all of his food from stuffed chewtoys or being handfed by people vs food quickly gobbled down "for free" from a bowl"...I'm not so sure but I will give it a try once I get my puppy.

The biggest one for me was Dunbar's socialization technique - "Your puppy must socialize with *at least one hundred people* before she is three months old. That's *just* twenty-five people a week, or four a day." Really?! Since that's before puppy is fully immunized, Dunbar suggests inviting those hundred-plus people over to your home, take their shoes off before entering and after each being handed a bag of kibble to proceed to handfeed puppy while teaching him to come, sit, lie down, stay, off, take it and "gennntly". And to have guests to offer kibble to pup after examining his muzzle, ears, paws and rear end. Oh, and what I love is for guests to offer kibble to pup after "examining and cleaning the pup's teeth and clipping the puppy's nails"! Sure, I know that's so puppy can get used to somebody other than me in preparation for a groomer and vet, I just can't wait to see how my guests will react to my request. LOL! And there's no way I'll meet Dunbar's 100+ people socialization requirement. Perhaps 25? Unless I have hubby invite everybody from the pub to come over and meet his new puppy every time he stops by there in that 4 week window. Hmm...that might work...

Peacegal says

I have good and bad news about this book.

The good is that this is my favorite puppy book I've read so far. The author advocates gentle and intelligent ways of handling Puppy's misbehavior, rather than the painful or frightening correction methods advocated

by other authors. He explains exactly why you should use certain training methods rather than simply taking a “because-I’m-the-expert” stance. The result should be a happy, well-behaved, confident dog companion. I was especially thankful for his copious information on bite inhibition and developing a soft mouth. Since we have three cats, this is of vital importance to me.

The bad news is that if you are a nervous pet parent, Dunbar won’t do much to reassure you. He is big on the “developmental deadlines,” the idea that a puppy must learn this and that by age such-and-such or else he could be scarred for life. Needless to say, that made this first timer’s teeth chatter! He also is a strong believer in errorless housetraining...yikes. It would seem to me that if Puppy were pacified with all of those food-stuffed Kong toys, it would be harder to anticipate when he has to “go.” Dunbar also suggests that your puppy meet 100 new people in your home in order for him to become socialized—a nice idea in theory, perhaps, but I don’t know ten people I’d feel comfortable inviting into my house, let alone 100!

Clearly, I’ve got to start researching puppy kindergartens in my area (an idea also boosted by Dunbar).
