



*Seattle Humane*  
**THE HUMANE SOCIETY**  
FOR SEATTLE/KING COUNTY

## **Turning Puppies Into Great Dogs**

**By Brenda F. Barnette, CEO**

Having a new puppy in your home is lots of fun and lots of work, too. We often foster young litters of orphaned puppies and also puppies who have their mothers. Pups start to explore their world as soon as their eyes are open. They venture from their safe, warm nest into the surrounding area.

We make the surrounding area interesting to stimulate thinking. I cut the bottom off a five-gallon plastic bucket, and then cut the plastic cylinder into two halves. I lay one half on the ground with the curve facing up so the puppies can take a wobbly walk through it, and the second half facing down to make a tunnel. Another favorite is to use a five-gallon plastic bucket like a stool and cut an upside down “U” on opposite sides of the base so the pups can peer through at each other and run through a differently shaped tunnel. These toys are inexpensive, safe and easy to clean.

### **From Two - Four Months**

Most veterinarians agree that puppies’ vaccines are effective at around four months and it is safe for puppies to go out in public. Prior to this time, your new pup can get to know his human and any other animal family members. Neighbors and friends can be invited in for controlled introductions. Puppies, like babies, go through several phases. Don’t be surprised if he seems totally outgoing one day and somewhat skittish another day. Just continue safe and positive experiences. Let visitors give him treats but don’t let them force interactions if puppy is feeling a little shy.

At home, a small cardboard box with a small amount of kibble inside creates a wonderful toy. Seal it with masking tape. It makes noise when rolled over and has a treat inside once they chew through. Puppies have a great time learning how to find all those great treats. This is a good and inexpensive game for dogs of all ages.

Playing follow-the-leader with your puppy and stopping to give hugs or treats regularly is fun too and will make you very interesting to your puppy.

### **At Four Months**

Puppy training class is a great way to learn with your pup as you develop a common language. Be sure the trainer you select uses only positive methods and believes in lavishly rewarding the puppy. Regular training classes are offered at the Seattle Humane Society. For more information please visit the “Classes & Training” page on our website: <http://www.seattlehumane.org/services/services/classes>

Another favorite game to play with your dog is “find it.” Start by throwing a few pieces of kibble on the floor and saying, “find it.” After your dog knows the command and has learned “stay” at training class, you can put your dog in a sit or down stay and hide in the house or yard. After you are hidden, call “find me.” Keep it simple at first and just go around the corner. As your dog gets better at the game, you can make the game more challenging. My daughter tells her dog to “find grandma,” which is Justy’s instruction to find me wherever I am in the house.

Going for walks in your neighborhood, well-armed with doggie treats, is a good way to practice what you learned at each class. Puppies are adorable and attract a lot of attention. Offer your neighbor one of your doggie treats to feed your puppy, and she will soon learn to enjoy meeting strangers. At first there will be a wide range of sights and sounds in your neighborhood that can produce a variety of responses from scared to curious for a dog who does not know the area. Always reassure a frightened dog, but also encourage her to explore her environment.

Encourage your puppy; give her treats and unlimited affection and praise. Your reward will be the best friend ever who can share life with you. Not a bad payoff for so darn much fun!