

The 5 Fundamentals for the right start with your dog

Dogs are famous for their role as animal companions in today's society. However, it needs to be said that achieving good, lasting outcomes from this kind of human-animal relationship is not a given. Such bonds take time to build and effort to maintain.

Good behaviour is an essential part of this and applies to all dogs regardless of size, type or age. The benefits of good behaviour include the health, safety, comfort and the fun of everyone involved - **including** the dogs themselves!

Think of this Dogs 101 brochure as a blueprint for shaping better behaviour outcomes. The brochure has been presented in five stages. While the five stages of Dogs 101 can be seen to logically follow one another, no stage is wholly separate from any other stage - nor is any stage more (or less) important than any other.



1. Sensible Selection

Consider carefully the type of dog that will best suit your needs, environment and resources. It is always best to identify the key aspects of your lifestyle as well as the characteristics of different available dog types before making a final decision.

- **Matching lifestyles** - Different dogs have different lifestyles just as people do. A good idea is to think of selection as if you are trying to accurately match your new dog's lifestyle needs with your own. You have to be mindful of issues such as accommodation, property security, exercise effort, time availability, grooming needs, health care, maintenance costs and so on.
- **Plan ahead** - Remember that you and your dog will be looking to spend the next 10 to 15 years together. Think about that carefully, it is a serious commitment!
- **Rehomed dogs** - Rehomed dogs can make excellent pets provided behaviour assessments and owner matching procedures have been appropriately and successfully carried out by shelter staff.
- **Check out 'Selectapet'** - Selectapet at www.petnet.com.au can provide insights into the most appropriate breed of dog to suit your lifestyle. Other online and library research may also be carried out and advice can be sought from breeders, retailers, veterinarians and dog clubs etc.

Selection - What do I need to do?

Stop and think. Don't acquire any pet animal on impulse. Please 'look before you leap'.

Dog ownership is great, but having the wrong kind of dog in the wrong kind of environment is never going to be a real success.

A poor choice or an impulse purchase will often end unhappily for both the owner and the dog!

2. Puppy Socialisation

Puppy socialisation involves the 'shaping' of a puppy's attitude towards the things it is going to live with into adulthood. Socialisation helps puppies to feel more comfortable, more confident and more secure.

- **Socialisation period** is a defined stage of puppy brain development that occurs at the time when puppies are 'ready' to be introduced to their new and wider social world.
- **Socialisation period** is when puppies are striving to understand who they are and how they are expected to fit in with everyone (and everything) around them.
- **Socialisation period** occurs when puppies are between 4 and 14 weeks of age.
- **It is much harder** to socialise dogs later in their lives if they have missed this important window of opportunity.
- **Socialisation is a community thing** that can not be done separately and in isolation.

Socialisation - What do I need to do?

Remember that every interaction is an opportunity to shape behaviour and early impressions are the most lasting. Puppy owners should particularly strive to have a positive influence at this time, because bad impressions can be just as lasting as good ones.

Many Councils, dog clubs and veterinary practices provide expertly supervised puppy socialisation programs.

If /when you get a new puppy (whatever its size or type), one of your first jobs should be to find a puppy socialisation program provider and book in for classes.



About Dogs 101:

The business of positively shaping dog behaviour naturally lends itself to structural dissection because the stages of acquisition, socialisation, obedience, management and control logically follow one another in a constructive sense. Acquisition is a first step, socialisation follows next, then obedience training and so on.

It should be understood however, that while these five stages are presented separately here, no stage is rigidly independent of any of the others and nor is there any hierarchy of importance inferred by the sequence as presented.

Supports this initiative

DISCLAIMER:

The expression of a dog's behaviour (what it may do at any place or time) is a function of an unlimited range of combined effects. Temperament and personality are variables. Situational circumstances are variables. Degrees of control and restraint are variables.

The recommendations put forward in this document as techniques for getting better behaviour outcomes come with no guarantees - they are recommendations. The responsibility for a dog's actions rests with its owner.

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3. Leadership and Training

It is obviously important that all owners should confidently believe that they can control and trust their dog at all times. It should be understood that the terms 'control' and 'trust', when applied in this context, are nothing to do with being cruel or causing fear. They are about providing dogs with clear and consistent boundaries for what is considered appropriate behaviour.

- In the presence of capable leadership, dogs enjoy the peace of mind and the composure that stems from them knowing where they belong and what is expected of them.
- In the absence of capable leadership, dogs make their own arrangements as it suits them. This can result in anxious, unsettled, unpredictable and even dangerous behaviour.
- It is important to appreciate that dominant dogs strongly resent being challenged. It is much harder to re-gain the control you want than it is to establish it properly in the first place.

Remember that training is how a dog is shown what you want it to do while obedience is when it will willingly comply when asked. Training takes skill and obedience takes leadership - control and trust needs both.

Leadership - What do I need to do?

Be aware that by failing to actively and positively obedience train your dog, you will, in effect, be asking the dog to train itself – and it will! The behaviour of dogs that have been left to make their own arrangements will often be behaviour that you *don't* want.

By providing your dog with obedience training, sensible discipline and confident leadership, you will be doing a most natural and normal thing as far as the dog is concerned.

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4. Day to Day Management

Dogs have a number of important environmental needs that are linked to how they have evolved. Meeting these needs helps to create a more natural life style and a better quality of life for your dog.

The K9 quality of life package is another 5 stage plan as follows:

- **Things to do** - Dogs are intelligent animals. They need mental stimulation, games to play and tasks to complete. They like to have purpose. They don't like to be bored.
- **People to see** - Dogs are highly social animals. They like to be socially involved. They enjoy being with others and doing things together. They don't like being 'left out' of things at home.
- **Places to go** - Dogs are mobile animals. They need adequate exercise (provided it is appropriate to their breed and type). They like to get out.
- **Grapevine to tend** - Dogs are unusually sensory animals. They need to be in regular touch with the sights, scents and sounds of their community in their neighbourhood. Getting out for walks is more than just getting exercise.
- **No need to breed** - Pet dogs cope better and have less stress if they have been desexed/neutered/spayed. The notion that they have to be sexually entire and reproducing at some stage of their lives to be healthy and happy is not based on fact.

Management - What do I need to do?

It is important to realise that dogs evolved as highly intelligent, social, mobile, sensory animals. Boredom, loneliness, sensory deprivation and lack of exercise are the root causes of nuisance behaviour.

Remember always that dogs didn't ask to be lumbered with the companion animal role we (humans) have given them. It is a role for which they are uniquely well suited, but even so, we still have an obligation to make it a way of life that works well for them too.



5. Community Consideration

Considerate owners create good public relations for dogs and for dog ownership.

Dog owners sometimes fail to realise that while their dog may be their best friend, to everyone else it is just another dog and not everyone is comfortable around dogs.

When dog owners are seen to be restraining their dogs so as to effectively prevent them from being a nuisance or a worry for other people, the community as a whole is always appreciative.

The flow on effects from socially responsible and considerate dog ownership are remarkable - everyone benefits.

Consideration - What do I need to do?

Keep your dog secure behind *your* fence when it is at home. Dogs at large are a consistent source of public nuisance and risk – including risk to themselves!

Comply with restraint requirements in all public places.

Actively prevent your dog from barking excessively and becoming a noise nuisance in your neighbourhood. Don't let your puppy grow up to be a chronic barker. It is not popular!



Dogs 101

The FIVE Fundamentals for the right start with your dog