



Teaching Pet Parents to Succeed

Restraint and Handling

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Learning how to calmly tolerate being restrained and handled is important for your dog. You, your vet, groomers, and others will inevitably need to touch your dog.

How to Practice Restraint

Do this training when your puppy is tired and calm. If they get too excited, start mouthing you or try to play, end the session on a positive note and do something else with your puppy.

Step 1: Touch

Touch the puppy all over using gentle pressure. Lift their lips gently, touch their head, face, chin, back, tummy, tail, teeth, paws, legs, ears, nose, etc. Food share frequently throughout this process.**

Step 2: Light Restraint

Position yourself standing behind your puppy or sitting behind them if they're small. Put your hand on their chest. They can back up if they want to. If they do back up, it probably means the pressure is too much for them – go back a step. Increase pressure slightly.

Step 3: Increased Duration and Relaxation

Breathe deeply, sigh, yawn and calmly massage your puppy as you keep them in place. Food share and consider listening to some calming music with them.

Step 4: Varying Restraint

Note: It's nice to have a helper for this step.

Change the way you're restraining the dog and their position. Try it sitting, laying down, in your lap, in front of you, on their back, being held, being lifted, being cradled upside down, etc. Food share at consistent intervals.

Step 5: Distractions

Gradually add treats, toys, other dogs, people, etc. while you're restraining your puppy. For example, you could throw some treats or a toy on the ground a few

feet in front of the puppy and praise them for being patient. If they resist, you're moving too fast - go back a step.

Step 6: Grooming and Handling

Introduce new items such as brushes, combs and other grooming tools on the floor so your puppy can investigate at his pace. Let them sniff and touch and become comfortable with the items before you pretend to use them.

Practice with the tools and handling techniques you or your groomer will be using. Start by just briefly touching the dog with the tool and gradually increase the criteria. If you take this process slowly, your patience will be rewarded with a calm, confident dog!

Tips

- It is important that your dog **never** feels forced during this process. We want them to have a calm, positive association with being touched, and any kind of force will make them scared and reduce their confidence. They should know that their participation is their choice and that they can trust you, that is the purpose of these exercises.
- Food and water share before your start. Keep your water bowl easily accessible (within a few feet of you) and don't restrain your dog if they're trying to get to the water.
In some dogs, food sharing might cause over arousal. If food gets your puppy really excited, it might be best to do just water sharing for this activity because we want the puppy to practice being calm.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G1Otlr6RX7o>
This is a good restraint video demonstrating some techniques to practice – don't pay attention to the "Shy" video on Kikopup's channel – it's not as good.
- Stay calm throughout the process and have some treats nearby. Keep the session short, only a minute or two long.
- Your dog should be calm throughout these exercises. If they turn away, walk away, or avoid you, they aren't having a good experience. Listen to them and take it at a pace they're comfortable with.
- It's a good idea to do Step 6 with the tools your vet will use. Set up an appointment with your vet and let your dog explore the tools. Latex gloves, syringe (no needle), thermometer, stethoscope, scale, etc.

Related Reading: Food Sharing, Building Confidence, Meeting Your Dog's Needs, Puppy Socialization, The Three D's, Nail Trimming Tips