

Gently rubbing the pup's inguinal area (where the inside of the thigh joins the abdomen) will also help the puppy relax. While your puppy is calm and relaxed, periodically pick him up to give him a short hug and maybe a kiss on the nose. Gradually and progressively increase the length of the hugs (restraint). After a while, pass the puppy to someone else and have them repeat the above exercises.

If Your Puppy Resists

Should your pup struggle violently, or especially if he has a tantrum, you must not let go. Otherwise, your puppy will learn that if he struggles or throws a tantrum, he needn't calm down and be handled because the owner gives in. Bad news! With one hand on your pup's collar and the palm of your other hand against the puppy's chest, gently but firmly hold the pup's back against your abdomen. Hold the puppy so that his four legs point away from you and sufficiently low down against your abdomen so that he can not turn his head and bite your face. Hold the pup until he calms down, which he will eventually do. Continue massaging the pup's ear with the fingers of one hand and his chest with the fingertips of your other hand. As soon as the puppy calms down and stops struggling, praise the pup, and after a few seconds of calm let him up.

Training Your Puppy to Accept Handling and Examination

Teaching your eight-week-old puppy to enjoy being handled and examined is as easy as it is essential. Moreover, your pup's veterinarian, trainer, and groomer will be forever grateful, as will be you and your puppy. It is a truly unfortunate puppy that finds it scary to be handled and examined.

Many dogs have a number of "hot spots," which if not defused in puppyhood can be extremely sensitive to touch. Handling the ears, paws, muzzle, collar area, and rear end often provokes a defensive reaction in an adult dog if these areas have not been desensitized during puppyhood. Similarly, an adult dog may act fearfully or defensively when you stare into his eyes, if as a puppy he was not taught to enjoy direct eye contact.

Some areas become sensitive over time simply because nobody bothers to examine them. For example, few owners regularly inspect their dog's rear end, or open his mouth to examine the teeth. Some areas are naturally sensitive and may provoke a reaction even in puppies. Handling and examination exercises serve to defuse the hot spots and help the puppy form positive associations with being handled. Desensitizing the puppy and teaching him to enjoy handling is simple when combined with hand feeding him kibble. It is so simple, in fact, that it is surprising there are so many hard-to-handle adult dogs.

Use your puppy's daily allotment of kibble as training treats to teach him to enjoy being handled. Take hold of your pup's collar and offer a treat. Gaze into your pup's eyes and offer a treat. Look in one ear and offer a treat. Look in the other ear and offer another treat. Hold a paw and offer a treat. Repeat with each paw. Open his mouth and offer a treat. Feel his rear end and private parts and offer two treats. And then repeat the sequence. **Each time you repeat the process, progressively handle and examine each area more thoroughly, roughly, and for longer periods.**

Once your puppy is quite happy being handled and examined by family members, it is time to play Pass the Puppy with your guests. One at a time, have each guest offer the pup a treat, take hold of his collar, look in his eyes, handle and examine his ears, paws, teeth, and rear end, and offer treats as described above before passing the pup (plus the bag of dinner kibble) to the next person.