



Teenage Troubles; Bonding with your Adolescent Dog

Most people have heard of and are prepared to deal with the craziness of a puppy behavior. Far fewer people have been warned about the other challenging period in a dog's life: Adolescence! You will often hear folks talk of "surviving" or "dealing with" this time and they call it Teenage Troubles!

While it's true that during this time things are changing for your dog, he is going through some biological, physical, and psychological changes. Your dogs' brain and body are growing, and the apparent quirkiness of the process is natural. This coming of age will have many challenging moments and while it is normal to have some growing pains, but it can also be a wonderful and exciting time for you and for them!

Most dogs will enter adolescence around six months, and it will typically end when the dog reaches maturity, somewhere around two or three years of age. You will most likely experience the most challenges at six to twelve months.



Bonding with your Adolescent Dog

One of the most exciting things about this stage is that the foundation of trust you built with them as a puppy is beginning to take shape in more amazing ways. You have had some time to get to know them and to bond. That is a fantastic thing and we love to focus on that. Having a good relationship with your dogs means that it is easier to understand and exercise patience with someone you care about. While puppyhood sometimes felt never ending, adolescence can be surprisingly easy to handle thanks to that bond. While your patience may still be tested, now you have some valuable tools thanks to all the cues we learned in Puppy and Beginner.

Meeting their Needs

As your dog grows his needs will shift. Teething will be almost over; most teething will cease at around seven or nine months. But keep in mind some dogs will still enjoy chewing throughout their adult life. It is still important to take stock of their needs and to provide plenty of durable and interactive toys. What was suitable for a young puppy may no longer be a good option for your growing dog's powerful jaw. While their body is growing so is their mind and you must allow for more mental stimulation as well. We love Puzzle toys and never underestimate the value of a good training session.



As they grow, it's expected that their sleep schedule may change as well. Remember when Fido used to sleep most of the day? It may now feel that there is an endless supply of energy and that they never slow down. Using Puzzle toys, KONGs, LickiMats and other canine enrichment devices can make your life easier. This teaches your adolescent dog to use his problem-solving skills for good, instead of getting himself into trouble. It is important to Play to Learn so that we can engage both the brain and the body. It is very likely that your dog may experience some mild sleep disruptions. He may decide to nap all day and wake up at 9 pm with a wild case of the zoomies. It may feel as though there is nothing you can do to help him settle. Don't worry this will come and go, and with consistency and patience it will get better. Tire out his brain, and his body will follow. Ensure that he is engaged frequently throughout the day. Frequent but short training sessions will absolutely make a difference.



Socialization is still Important

You have done a wonderful job socializing your puppy, but don't stop now. Even if they are new to your home and you don't know their history, it is still important to continue to expose them to different places, people and situations. You may have noticed that all the sudden your puppy has become fearful of certain things, that didn't seem to be an issue before. This is very normal. These moments will come and go many times during adolescence. They may last anywhere from minutes to days. He may try and hide from the scary vacuum or he may even decide he needs to bark at new people or dogs. It's all normal; take these moments in stride and stay calm. Understand that he may not always have full control of his emotions. Remember, don't scold him for what may seem like rude behavior. Please don't push him to "deal" with his fears. Give him time to process what scared him and use it as an opportunity to establish trust by allowing him to move away or helping him to form a new association by pairing it with a special treat. Creating positive new mental associations is an important part of development. If you're struggling with this, please speak to your trainer about private sessions. We can tailor these to help accommodate your dog's specific needs and help him overcome any hesitations.

The Spirit of Adventure Blooms

Young puppies are often weary of wandering too far from home and are perfectly okay with taking shorter walks and sticking close to home. As your dogs move into adolescence the spirit of adventure blooms and you may find their stamina increases. They may have an urge to explore the world around them a bit more. Adventures become more fun with your dog but do resist the urge to let them off the



leash. It's normal that coming when called becomes less reliable as they are more curious at this age. Using a long line is a good option if you want to allow for more freedom. Really work towards a reliable Come when called cue so your dog will respond consistently. Speak to your trainer for some ideas on building a truly reliable Come when Called.

The Adolescent Brain

At a young age, puppies are like sponges and seem to catch on very quickly to new behaviors. They also seem to forget about them in adolescence. It may feel some days that he has forgotten all of his training. Don't worry he hasn't. It's all there, in that intelligent brain of his. He may just be having a hard time accessing it with all the new things happening to him. That's why continuing to stay consistent and building on the foundation of Puppy and Beginner is so important. We will need to remind them through training and patience of our expectations. With a little bit of patience, some practice, and the help of your PetSmart Trainer you can survive the Teenage Troubles.