

# Shy, Timid and Fearful Puppies

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Fear is an unpleasant emotion for humans and animals. Keeping this in mind will assist you in being patient and understanding with your puppy as you help him build confidence through socialisation and desensitisation. It is extremely important that you move slowly in the socialisation and desensitisation processes. **Always work at your puppy's pace.** Try not to force, pull, or demand anything unless you, your puppy, or others are in danger. Never scold him harshly or punish him in any way. This will only make him more concerned with his new world.

Getting timid puppies to wear a collar, walk on a leash, or allow anyone to pet them can be very challenging. The best thing you can do is to let your puppy experience new things at his own pace. If he pulls away from you, stop what you are doing. If your puppy freezes, stop what you are doing. The faster you stop what you are doing, the easier it will be for both you and your puppy the next time the same situation occurs.

Dogs are very good at trusting us. We can build this trust if we let them know quickly we are listening to them (by watching and interpreting their body language) and we are willing to accommodate their fear by responding to them. Stopping what you are doing when your puppy gives you a signal that he doesn't want you to continue lets your puppy know you are paying attention to his concerns. Knowing you are listening will help him trust you and begin to trust others.

## When Dealing with Strangers

Other people should not try to pet your puppy unless he first actively moves toward them for a pet. Many shy, timid and fearful puppies are **more willing to get a treat** than to be petted by strangers. Have the new person offer your puppy a treat. If he does not want to take the treat from the stranger, have the person throw a treat gently toward him, so he will not have to get too close to the person to receive it. Do this many times with different people until the puppy is comfortable walking up to a stranger for a treat. Strangers can gradually drop the treats closer and closer to themselves until he feels comfortable getting the treat right out of the person's hand. Repeating this exercise a few times a day over a few weeks can help build your puppy's confidence.

## The Do-Not-Carry Rule

Carrying your puppy from point A to point B should be done as little as possible. When you or other family members are constantly carrying your puppy, you are sending him a message that he cannot handle anything on his own. Although it may be difficult for you to not carry your puppy a lot, letting him experience life with all four paws on the floor will be better for him in the long run.

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*If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us*