

## **Puppy Training**

Experienced dog owners usually have developed a number of resources for training their dog to be a responsible and valuable family member, and many go well beyond that to train the dog for hunt, obedience, agility, tracking, or other specialty fields. However, for other people, having a puppy is something that only occurs rarely, so a few words about puppy training may be in order.

### **Housebreaking**

Dogs are den animals. They do not like to mess in their own nest. We've found that the use of a crate will provide your puppy with an area large enough to live in comfortably, but not so large that he will want to mess it up. The use of a crate is by far the best way to housebreak a dog and will accomplish the task in a short time. Later, the crate will provide a safe home for the puppy while you are out of the house and will eliminate the chance of him chewing on furniture. The initial cost of the crate will be more than saved by clean carpets and undamaged furniture.

Purchase a good quality crate large enough for a fully grown Golden: at least 21" wide, 36" long and 24" high. The Midwest fold down crate is ideal. If you plan to do much traveling with your dog, a crate is the safest means of transporting and many hotels will allow crated dogs in their rooms.

Your puppy should have plenty of opportunities to go outside. The more frequently he goes out, the less likely he will soil inside. ALWAYS take him outside immediately after eating, and immediately after letting him out of the crate (with a very young puppy, I carry them outside to avoid the possibility of accidents on the way). When you let your puppy outside, take him to the area of the yard where you want him to relieve himself. Stand with him until he does, and then praise him. It's not as easy as just putting him outside, but he will catch on much more quickly if you go out with him.

At first he should only be out of his crate when he is being actively supervised, but as he becomes more trustworthy, he can be out more on his own. Remember, BE PATIENT, BE FIRM, USE POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT, and USE YOUR CRATE. You'll be glad you did.

### **Chewing**

Goldens are great chewers, particularly during the barracuda phase before the mature teeth erupt, but many continue this until around two years of age. Use your crate to limit the puppy's activity whenever you are unable to actively supervise him and keep a constant eye on him. He won't know not to chew on electrical cords and plants, or any other undesirable objects. He should have ample time to play and socialize after going outside, but only under supervision.

Make sure he has his own toys to chew on – old shoes or socks are not a good idea, as the puppy can't tell the difference between an old shoe and your best Italian leather pair. In our experience, sterilized bones and Nylabones make excellent toys. I only recommend squeaky toys with supervision, because they are easy to destroy and the squeaky mechanism can be swallowed.

Rawhide bones are also fine, but only with supervision. Golden Retrievers do have a preference for dirty socks and underwear, so beware. Large dog biscuits are great – it takes the puppy a while to chew them up. Kongs filled with cheese or peanut butter are also a good occasional treat.

## **Grooming**

Start teaching your puppy at a very early age to accept being groomed. That includes brushing, trimming toe nails and cleaning out ears. Golden Retrievers' coats will go through various stages throughout the year. Dogs kept indoors most of the time will have less variation in their coat than those who spend a lot of time outdoors. Most dogs will go through a major shedding sometime in the spring or summer. Bathing in warm water will help the dead hair release and get the shedding process done more quickly, but never bathe a dog that hasn't been brushed out as the water will set any mats into cement.

## **Other Training Resources**

A dog training club, if there is one in your area, is the best way to train your dog in whatever field you want to pursue. Puppy training classes are invaluable for socializing your puppy and getting a good start on basic obedience. The support and advice from other dog owners is extremely helpful in whatever field of training you are pursuing.

The internet is a wonderful resource for advice and tips on puppy training. One very good site is <http://www.perfectpaws.com/>, which has a variety of articles on puppy training such as the first week at home, housebreaking, dealing with the barracuda stage, etc.

One book that we highly recommend is How to Raise a Puppy You Can Live With, by Rutherford and Neil. The fourth edition paperback is now available from Amazon.com for \$9.60 and is well worth the price.

<http://www.dogproblems.com/> This site has lots of information about training, corrective training, and offers an online book. I have not read the book personally, but have had it recommended to me by several people who have said it is a valuable resource that focuses on positive reinforcement techniques.

And not least, we highly recommend the puppy training classes that are available in many locations through various dog training clubs. These are a wonderful resource for socializing your puppy with other people and dogs, and getting the puppy off to a good start in his or her future career, whether it be champion working dog or beloved couch potato.

## **Golden Retriever Club of America**

This organization is the national breed club for our breed. You may already be a member; if not, you might want to consider joining. They send out a gorgeous magazine full of color pictures of Golden Retrievers in many different activities. Additionally, their website, <http://www.grca.org/>, has a wealth of information on the breed and on various topics of interest. There's an online copy of a very interesting booklet, *Acquiring a Golden Retriever*, available at <http://www.grca.org/acquiring.htm>.