



Tompkins County SPCA

Dog Care Series

Ten Steps to Doggy Bliss: *Guaranteeing Your Dog a Lifetime of Health & Happiness*

- 1.** Expect your dog to act like a dog. Don't take it personally when he exhibits typical dog behavior. He's not being "bad," he's just being a dog. Supply your dog with acceptable outlets for his doggy behavior, rather than punishing it.
- 2.** No more free lunch. Dogs are happiest when they're exercising their skills. Make her work for her food, like stuffing it inside chew toys, throwing it all over the kitchen floor so she has to run around for it, hiding it around the house, or teaching her tricks for food rewards.
- 3.** Take the leash off! In the safety of your yard, at your local off-leash dog park, or on a pet-friendly trail, let your dog feel the wind in his fur by allowing him to run around free of leashes and chains. Dogs who spend most of their time on a leash or chain in a yard develop behavior problems.
- 4.** Make sure your dog has plenty of opportunities to play with other dogs. Dogs are not people in little fur coats. They need to interact with other dogs. How would you feel if you never got to talk to or socialize with people?
- 5.** Don't lay guilt trips on your dog. Never hit or yell at your dog. Use reward-based training instead.
- 6.** Play with your dog, such as racing, tug-of-war, fetch, or a fun game of hide-and-seek.
- 7.** Allow your dog to live and sleep inside the house like the rest of the family. Provide a wide variety of social interactions every day. What's the worst punishment a person can get in prison? Solitary confinement. Dogs are social animals, too! (P.S. There is NO such thing as an "outside dog.")
- 8.** If you have a puppy, handle her endlessly. And make it as pleasant an experience as possible, so she'll associate being handled with good feelings.
- 9.** Spay or neuter your dog. He'll be friendlier, healthier, and more focused on hanging out with the family than marking his territory, mating, roaming, or reproducing.
- 10.** Enroll in a good positive, reward-based training course. Formal training is fun for your dog, teaches her how to behave, and will encourage her to bond with you.