

Quick Guide to Your New Labrador

5 Basics to Raising a Happy and Healthy Dog

- 1. Pack leadership:* Establish clear pack leadership. Dogs are pack animals. It is important to establish yourself and your family as the puppy's new pack. If there are other dogs in the home, the puppy will soon find a place in the "sub-pack" of dogs. It is very important to ensure that any children in the home are above the puppy in the pack order. If the child is seen as below the puppy, dominance behaviors could develop. Being the pack leader will make training easier and give the puppy a clear structure to exist within. Proper pack dynamics will also help avoid socialization issues and destructive behavior.
- 2. Crate training:* Crate training creates a safe place for your puppy to call his/her own. A quiet place for the puppy to rest when needed, or be contained when necessary is essential to a balanced puppy. Once the puppy recognizes the crate as home, you have a place to keep her calm and safe when necessary. Keeping the puppy in the crate when she is not being supervised and during the night will also avoid destructive behaviors and potty training accidents.
- 3. Exercise:* Ensure the puppy receives plenty of exercise and play time. Labradors need lots of exercise and stimulation—they are happiest and healthiest when they receive walks, outdoor play, and plenty of exercise daily. A dog with excess energy will find an outlet for the energy, such as barking, chewing, or other destructive behaviors. Attempt to tire your puppy before placing the dog in the crate and before bedtime. A tired dog will result in a happy and well behaved dog.
- 4. Quality feed:* Labradors are not picky eaters, but owners should strive to provide their dogs with a quality feed. Meat should be the first ingredient, with minimal fillers and grain. Puppy food should be fed for at least a year before switching to adult feed. Feed your puppy measured amounts three times a day. Free feeding can have detrimental health effects later, including obesity and bone diseases. Spending more on quality feed will likely save you heartache and costs later in your dog's life.
- 5. Boundaries and calm correction:* Labradors are naturally oriented towards wanting to please their human pack members. They quickly adapt to the routine of the home and learn which behaviors please their owners. Owners need to establish which behaviors are acceptable, where the dog is permitted to be, and which routine the dog will follow. Your leadership and communication of those boundaries will naturally lead the dog towards good behavior. Being consistent and calm is key. Dogs respond readily to the tone of a person's voice and body language. Yelling or harsh punishment is not necessary or helpful. Calm, consistent corrections is the best approach.