



Paw Prints

Resource sheet:

Help your dog settle with massage and T-touch

Condition your dog to enjoy being handled

If you condition your dog to enjoy being handled, s/he won't be so stressed about having toenails clipped, baths, or visiting the vet. It will also reduce the chances of your dog biting small children and other people who may handle her in a startling manner.

Handle your dog often and all over the body. Pick up her paws, look in his ears, lift up the tail, inspect the tummy and peek at the teeth a few times a day. Talk soothingly to your dog and give him treats to help him enjoy the experience. These things, because they're done by someone the dog trusts (you), help the dog to be more comfortable around strangers (visitors, vets, children).

CAUTION: if your dog has an injury or pain sensitivity to an area of his/her body, please do not handle that area without instructions from your veterinarian.

The **key to success** with handling is to **begin things gently and for short periods of time** (i.e., a *one second* look into the ear), to **reward the dog** during handling; and to **always stop BEFORE the dog begins to get nervous** – watch for stress signals.

Try some specific settling techniques

Most dogs enjoy long, slow scratches along the chest area, or slow, circular motions along the sides (across the rib cage). The slower and calmer your movements (and your own mental state/breathing rate/heart rate), the easier it will be for your dog to relax. Try to take deep breaths while you use these techniques.

T-touch: Dog massage!

- Leopard spots: gentle, circular motions just on top of the fur. Use both hands, but only move one at a time. Alternate quickly but smoothly so as not to startle the dog.
- Ear slides: Cup your hand behind the ear and slide it gently forward. Just do a little at a time until your dog gets used to it. Most dogs are nervous about hands near their heads.
- Python grips: Use both hands and slide them from just above the dog's elbow to just above the paws (front legs only). Grip gently but firmly to massage the leg and get circulation going. Gradually work up to the dog being comfortable with your hands nearer his paws.

Teach your dog how to settle on cue

In a quiet environment, get your dog a little hyped up. Then stop the action and quietly sit and wait a few seconds for your dog to settle down a little. As s/he calms, gently stroke his/her sides or chest in a circular motion. Once the dog settles, give him/her a treat. It's fun to do this while watching TV: hype the dog up during the ads, and settle him during the actual program. Eventually you can use the word "Settle" as a cue.