

Teenage Dream or Teenage Nightmare?

Dog owners who haven't had a puppy in a while might think that puppyhood is the hardest and most stressful Time. It is, no doubt, a work-intensive and nerve-wracking period. Thankfully, the cute, fuzzy puppy and snuggles help get one through the biting and pee...

People may forget the hard puppy work, but they completely block out the teenage stage that comes next, likely due to the trauma of it all.

Adolescent dogs are a lot. Intense feelings and very small amounts of impulse control, combined with a shaky newfound independence and some very big adult teeth make for many challenging moments for both the pup and their family. It is no surprise that more dogs of this age group (6mos to 3 years) get surrendered to rescue or shelters than any other.

What people need to understand about young dogs is that they, too, are having a hard time being a teen. The intense neurological changes occurring in this stage are second only to those during the first few weeks of their lives. Essentially, an adolescent dog's brain is offline a good amount of the time, and predicting when it is working and when it's not is a bit of a dice roll.

Some of the most common behaviours we see at this stage are not responding to known commands, counter surfing, resistance to handling even when previously "fine" with vet and grooming visits, reactivity, and frustration barking. In some dogs, you will see territorial aggression, reduced tolerance to other dogs and even aggression. This does not mean this dog is a bad dog, it means the dog's parent needs to manage things better, prevent incidents and up the training to get through this phase. Management, training, patience, and time are the keys to surviving dog adolescence, and it is part of the deal when getting a young dog. By two or three years, your dog will be coming into adulthood, and you should have another ten years of great companionship and love to enjoy.

If you need help managing your dog, please contact a qualified positive trainer before you get over your head. Your dog deserves it and so do you.



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