

VET OFFICE CHALLENGE

Why should you prepare for and practice vet visits?

Because vet visits are going to be part of your and your pup's life for the next 15 or so years. So much the better if they're stress-free for you both. Puppyhood is hands-down the best time to convince your dog that the vet is on his side—and that he should be on his best behavior when visiting.

At home.

Practice vet visits at home:

- Put your puppy on a table and look in his ears and mouth, gently pull his tail, and practice giving him a "pill" (using a small treat as the pill).
- Give plenty of treats throughout the process.
- When possible, ask friends to play vet, too.

If at any step your dog does not seem completely comfortable (wagging, looking for the next treat), go back a step to build up his comfort. Don't move forward until you're sure he's enjoying himself, and then go slow. Talk to your trainer if you don't see improvement quickly.

Take it on the road.

Visit the vet to practice, as often as you can. This will build up your dog's good impression of the vet office and give him practice waiting his turn with patience and good manners.

- Pack your bait bag with lots of yummy treats, but don't give your dog any.
- Once you're in the vet's office, let the treating begin!
- If they have a scale in the front area, ask if you can weigh your puppy.
- If the receptionist isn't too busy, ask her to get in on the action, too by asking if she has time to give your pup a few treats.
- Practice having your puppy wait calmly on his mat while you read a magazine, treating as needed to work at his level.
- After 5-10 minutes leave the vet office. No more treats once you exit the lobby.

After the visit.

Assess how the training went.

- What did your puppy do well?
- What needs extra practice?
- Is there anything you want to do differently next time?