

Two Puppies or One?

At the Oregon Humane Society, we are careful about placing two puppies together in one home because we know how much work it is to raise both of them properly. Puppies are individuals and each puppy needs early socialization and training. They need to learn human language and what pleases us (such as going potty outside and chewing on their own toys - not the remote control). All this needs to be done one-on-one. As a general rule, each puppy should spend more time with you individually than they spend together.

Common reasons for wanting two puppies at once:

- They are company for each other when I'm not home.
- Each child needs a puppy of their own so they don't argue.
- Dogs are social animals and need to have company.
- They will play and exercise each other.
- I'm gone 12 hours a day. They will get bored if they don't have a playmate.
- I just felt sorry leaving one by herself - she is so timid and does well with her sibling.
- I couldn't leave the last of the litter alone, so I took the last two instead.

Things to Consider:

Think about two puppies with the **adult dogs** in mind. Most puppies get along, so that tells you nothing about how they will do later. Research the breed or mix so that you know roughly how big the adult dogs will be and what their training and exercise requirements are. You want to be prepared for when the two pups are adolescents!

The puppies need to be trained to rest calmly in separate crates while they are young. Putting two dogs in the same crate can lead to all kinds of problems, including excessive stress, fighting, and an over-dependence on each other. If there's a mess, both are confined in it. Plus, they very much need to learn that it is safe to be alone. They also really need to bond with humans, which is hard for them to do when they spend all their time with another dog.

Each pup needs plenty of outings with humans without the other pup. This is an essential part of the puppy developing an **individual identity** and the ability to function without the other one. It also gives the pup the opportunity to learn human language and get in some well needed bonding time.

All dogs need to go out with you for socialization to people, places and things. The difference with two puppies is that you may need to do double outings, ideally one per day for each puppy. This process is best continued until at least a year of age, longer for some dogs.

Each puppy needs to be trained as an **individual**. When you have one puppy, a lot of training can happen in the course of the day. Having two puppies complicates things. The outings will give you necessary opportunities to train the puppies away from each other.

Two dogs will do things you don't want because they over-stimulate each other. Chasing and barking at things can greatly intensify with two dogs, as can escaping. It helps to have an excellent foundation of training with each dog as an individual. You need to be able to train each dog to respond to your voice and have a really reliable recall.

Each will need to go to training class without the other dog (many instructors will not let family members train two dogs from the same family in the same class) and practice the class homework daily away from the other dog. As they become well-trained, you'll also want to practice working them together so they also learn to listen to you when they are together.

Things like housetraining can present huge challenges since the scent of an accident from one puppy stimulates the other puppy to use the same spot.

If they have not learned to function comfortably as individuals, this can stress them at such times as illness or the death of one of the dogs. It is much kinder to the dogs to develop their separate identities right from the start.

It can also be expensive taking care of two puppies and equally so, two senior dogs. Be prepared for double the cost. Another possible concern when you get two pups together is that they will be the same age at the other end of life. It's possible that you will lose them close together, which is extremely tough emotionally on the family. It's much better to space your dogs' ages out if you can.

For a couple of weeks, your kids might compete over who gets to play with the puppies and who gets to train them. Make sure everyone knows exactly what their part is and is consistent with the training and words used so not to confuse the puppies. Once the novelty of taking care of the puppies becomes work, you may find the responsibility rests solely on the adult(s) in the home.

Raising two puppies at the same time can be done well and can result in great joy. Please make sure that you are properly prepared and know what you need to do to bring out the best in both your puppies.

Need help? Call our free pet behavior help line at (503) 416-2983.