



Little by little

It's easy for your puppy to feel overwhelmed by their environment, which is why an easy-does-it approach is the best way to coax them out of any insecurities, as Lez Graham explains

It's always a really interesting time, having a puppy. You feel as if they stay small for such a long time, then you look at a photo of them and you're taken aback by how much they have grown.

It is the same with the training. You feel as if you are forever letting your puppy out to toilet, luring them around with a piece of food, amusing them, occupying them, putting them in the crate. And then, one day, you realise that you're not luring them, you're rewarding them; you're not bundling them into the crate for a bit of peace and quiet, you're letting them sleep quietly at your feet.

This month has seen young Emrys come on leaps and bounds. The biting has, at last, settled down a bit, which is a relief, and the little training hooks

that I've been putting in since bringing him home have started to pay off: he will now sit, stand, down and come pretty much on command using no food to lure him into position – food is instead being used as a reward.

His lead is now on, and we've been practising walking on a loose lead by my left leg around the home and in the garden whilst we were waiting for his second vaccination so we could get out and about. It was exciting walking him out on the street to watch his reaction toggle between being supremely confident and strutting his stuff to sitting back on his haunches while he checked something out, before then heading off again, head high, tail high.

The big thing this month for Emrys, though, has been learning how to walk up and down a ramp. Living on the side of a hill means that, regardless of which door you go

out of, there are several stairs involved. Our front garden is not secure, so it has been a case of getting not one, but three car ramps to go over the three sets of four stairs to get down into the back garden.

Initially, I had a ramp lying flat in the hallway, which I lured him back and forward over with a treat. Then, when he was confident, I raised it slightly at one end to create an incline – no problem. It was a completely different kettle of fish, however, when the ramp went outside. He was so wary, and no number of treats could lure him on. So, I quietly put him on it so that he knew the ramp wasn't going to kill him. Then, when he relaxed, I started to slowly roll treats down it to entice him on.

He didn't go all the way down the first time; rather, he hit reverse a couple of times when he was halfway down. But after breaking for an hour

TOP TIP

This is the month to really instil self-control with your puppy, whether that's insisting on calmness around feeding time, sitting for attention or not barging out of doorways in front of you. Any calm and steady training you do this month will pay dividends for what's to follow.

Emrys has really come on leaps and bounds this month



PICTURES: LEZ GRAHAM

Transitioning from the ramp inside to outside took a little encouragement, but Emrys soon got the hang of it



ABOUT LEZ GRAHAM

Lez Graham is author of The Pet Gundog series and a canine behaviourist and gundog trainer. Focused on training the next generation, she runs the Accredited Pet Gundog Instructor programme which is now in its 5th year.

Contact her via lez@thepetgundog.co.uk or visit www.thepetgundog.co.uk

‘The big thing for Emrys, this month, has been learning how to walk up and down a ramp – he now goes up and down it like an old hand’

or so, we tried again. Now he goes up and down it like an old hand.

Psychological growth

At around 12-13 weeks, a puppy moves into the Seniority Classification Period, lasting until he’s around 16 weeks or so – the point at which he starts moving into adolescence. It doesn’t happen overnight; it can be a bit of a slow burn that can kind of creep up on you without you realising.

It can be a bit challenging for the new puppy owner, as it feels as if their beautiful bundle of fluff and fur is doing all that he can to wind them up and push all their buttons. They’re really not though; they’re just trying to figure out where they sit in the pack, what the boundaries are and which ones can be pushed.

This time is also called the ‘Age of Cutting.’ Towards the end of this growth period, the puppy will start to ‘cut’ his teeth... and, probably, the apron strings! ■



Emrys is now sitting of his own accord at mealtimes



Food is now being used as a reward, rather than a lure



Lez has introduced some loose lead work around the home