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Review :- **Life Skills for Puppies.**
Laying the foundation for a loving, lasting relationship.

By Helen Zulch and Daniel Mills.
Published by Hubble and Hattie at £12.99

I like it. The more I read the more I liked it. It is what it says it is and there is no unnecessary padding.

It gives a clear and consistent manner in which to build up a firm and understanding bond with a puppy. It looks at things from a puppy's perspective. It is not a training manual nor does it purport to be but in managing and developing the skills in the puppy which will turn it into a well-balanced adult any further training is going to be made a heap easier all round. No one can argue with that.

So, this book covers ten skills that a puppy should have in order to be well-behaved - not just obedient.

The authors go into how to deal with building confidence, how to react when the pup is surprised by new sights and sounds, how to make sure your pup likes being touched and handled, how to let the pup learn that he can be calm, that he can follow certain rules, that he can respond to cues in the right way as long as the whole family uses the same ones, that he can learn to be 'polite' without having to be reminded and that good behaviour as we see it can be rewarding to him.

In return we must be there to help him learn to make the right choices if he finds things difficult, if he wants to chew something he shouldn't we must offer him something better. He can learn self-control and be calm if we arrange rewards in the right way. We must respect the fact that he should be allowed to be a dog and have time to himself, he may sniff here and there on a walk, he is not a slave, and he has a right to do some dog things or to put it another way we should arrange his life so that in being a dog he doesn't have the chance to behave inappropriately.

It is illustrated with hundreds of colour shots of puppies showing beautifully what is written about in the text.

It is so good that I am tempted to let it off with no criticism at all and indeed I can from the aspect of content but I did have one or two annoyances about minor details of the production. Split infinitives always cause me to trip in my reading and there were a few. Practice/practise was spelt incorrectly at least once, and the illustration captions disturbed me a few times in that on one occasion you have to turn two pages to carry on the thread. I felt that in some instances the illustrations would be better if reduced in size so that when there were three or more showing a sequence they could have been all on the same page.

It is the best puppy book I have seen for many a year. I hope it sells well It will do a lot of good.

Janet Martineau. 6TH JUNE, 2012