Raising Two Puppies at Once

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What could be cuter than one puppy but two? Getting two puppies at the same time often seems like a good idea: they have company, can play together, keep each other entertained and may lessen some of the socializing work you have to do. Well, this is what you MAY be told. Is it really a good idea to raise two puppies at the same time? You decide.

Puppies are individuals and must be treated as such, even if the pups are littermates. Two puppies raised together, especially in homes that do not give them enough individual time, may bond closer to each other. Getting littermates may be even more difficult as the pups have already a close bond with each other. That bond many continue to grow for some time and the humans not be as much of the family unit. Dogs that do not see the humans and part of the closer unit are more likely to be "problems" later. In reality, they are just being dogs. If the pups are in a home where the owners work all day, raising them properly for what a pup needs to handle life in a human house may be more than the average owner is prepared for. It is vital that each puppy get quality time alone with the humans in the household every single day. This means just one puppy-at-a-time interaction.

Raising two puppies at once significantly increases the socializing work the human has to do. You can never force a dog to like another dog, in or out of the house. In fact, pups that are only with each other and get out only as a team may develop fears of things when they are out without the sibling. Many aggressive behaviors are borne out of fear and anxiety as opposed to true "hate." Pups must get out in the world as individuals, not as part of a puppy team. This means increased walks and various outings for the owners. As the pups hit young adulthood, this "always apart while working" can be cut back. However, the first year or so, alone time so the pups can develop as wholes as opposed to parts of a whole is crucial. Now, this means YOU are taking each pup out individually and not just shutting each pup in a separate room while you are away.

Puppies should never be crated or penned together unsupervised. Each pup must have his own space for sleeping and eating. As the pups grow, you may end up with severe fights over space. If you are not home when this happens, the results can be devastating. Some of the worst fights can occur amongst siblings. Breaking up a dogfight can be very risky for the human, even for professionals.

Consider altering puppies before sexual maturity (six months) unless you are seriously able to maintain intact dogs. Yes, there are worries about juvenile altering if it is not needed. However, as hormones start to surge, the issues that could possibly arise may be more intense in the situation of raising two puppies at once. If one pup is a female, strongly consider altering before her first heat or neuter the male before his sister comes into heat. A male WILL breed his sister and CAN breed as young as five months or even younger if he can figure out what to do. It is possible to maintain unaltered dogs, but it is

time consuming and can be stressing for the average owner when sister comes into season and brother is going all out trying to breed with her. Altering younger becomes a sanity factor at this point. Though, please, make an educated decision based on solid research and discussions with your vet.

Ideally, the pups should go to different dog classes if possible. They need training time alone and it is common for the owners to spend more time watching the puppies and less listening to the instructor. If this is not an option, keep the pups away from each other in class.

Can you make it work? Yes, but you have to be honest, open, treat the pups as individuals and make that extra time (and never rely on children to do it for you, this is an adult job). It is enough work to raise one puppy; two can be tough which is why most trainers, good breeders and rescues recommend against it. In addition, you must be willing to admit if it is NOT working and before things get too far. You need to be willing to rehome a pup if needed if you cannot make things work out. Living life in a high state of stress is not fair for the dogs, or the owners.

My personal recommendation is to get one puppy at a time. Raise and train the first puppy to a level where you are happy. Remember that dogs often react to stress and change by regressing in behaviors. I like to have the older pup almost out of adolescence before adding a second pup. This gives me a year or more to get the first puppy where I like behaviorally and means I will not have two in adolescence at the same time. Never let someone try to talk you into taking two puppies. You need to do what is sanest for you. No good breeder or rescue will encourage you to take two puppies. They know the work just one entails.