Ultimate Shih Tzu Puppy Guide

Everything You Need to Know to Raise a Happy, Healthy, and Well-Mannered Shih Tzu Puppy!
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About The Authors

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Introduction

The Ultimate Shih Tzu Puppy Guide is the definitive owner’s manual on everything about the ancient, holy dogs of Tibet, whose more modern name is Shih Tzu.

This book is a comprehensive collection of six books in one, where you will learn all about the ancient history of this beloved breed, how to find a breeder, what to feed them, their health issues, how to train, what treats to avoid, how to teach tricks and hand signals, how to survive adolescence and grieving a lost friend.


You will also find a collection of helpful photographs and web references where you can find exactly what you need for your lovable Shih Tzu companion.

The Ultimate Shih Tzu Puppy Guide is written by a dog whisperer and lover of this wonderful breed, whose own Shih Tzu (Boris) is a working Shih Tzu and an integral member of her dog whispering team.

The Ultimate Shih Tzu Puppy Guide is the definitive, complete, soup to nuts, comprehensive guide and all you will ever need to have the best relationship with your companion Shih Tzu.

Order your copy of The Ultimate Shih Tzu Puppy Guide today!
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The Ultimate Shih Tzu Puppy Guide
Everything You Need to Know to Raise a Happy, Healthy and Well-Mannered Shih Tzu Puppy!

By Beverly Young and Asia Moore

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1. HISTORY and BREEDING

The Royal Palace Dog

Generally speaking, when attempting to track down the origins of a specific canine breed, you will find a variety of theories concerning the true origin, and today's modern Shih Tzu is no exception.

While there is no dispute that the Shih Tzu is a very ancient breed, some believe that it had its beginnings in China as long ago as 800 BC, when their original name was "Chinese Lion Dog", while others believe, perhaps more traditionally, that Tibet is the original birthplace of the Shih Tzu breed.

In Tibet, these dogs were considered to be the smallest variety of the Tibetan "holy dogs" and as such were sacred and held in such
high esteem that the only way to acquire one was to receive it as a gift.

Therefore, it is believed that it was as sacred gifts that the Shih Tzu first found their way out of the Tibetan mountains and into the neighboring royal palaces of China.

In China, the Shih Tzu breed were believed to be earthly embodiments of the sacred Buddhist lion, which explains the name “Shih Tzu” meaning “lion” in Mandarin Chinese and one of their ancient names thus being “Chinese Lion Dog”.

These pampered Chinese palace dogs were jealously guarded by their own servants and slaves, and anyone found to be in possession of this sacred dog outside of the palace courts were subject to the ultimate punishment of death.

With the collapse of Imperial China in 1911, many royal palace dogs were killed or stolen by invaders and locals, which finally brought the Shih Tzu breed to the attention of the outside world.

Dog lovers visiting China became aware of the Shih Tzu during the late 1920's and 1930's at which time they began to export them to their home countries.

One such visitor, was the wife of a Danish diplomat (Mrs. Henrick Kauffmann), who acquired several of the breed and brought them to Scandinavia when she left China, where she established the breed in northern Europe.

One of Kauffmann's puppies, named Choo-Choo, was presented as a gift by Queen Maud of Norway to England's Duchess of York, Elizabeth, who was later to become beloved as the Queen Mother.
Much of the breed standard and existence of the Shih Tzu today is a result of the careful breeding carried out by the Dowager Empress Cixi (T'zu Hsi) of China, who maintained kennels of Pugs, Pekingese, and Shih Tzu, that became world renowned.

Although Empress Cixi was involved in the careful supervision of the breeding kennels during her lifetime and attempted to keep these three imperial breeds separate, the actual breeding was carried out by palace eunuchs who, without sanction from the Empress, secretly crossed the breeds in order to both reduce the size of these dogs as well as produce unusual and desirable markings.

After Empress Cixi’s death in 1908, the kennels were no longer strictly supervised which resulted in palace breeding becoming more indiscriminate or haphazard.

While some breeding was still practiced by private individuals who exhibited their dogs, acquiring these sacred palace dogs was almost impossible, which resulted in the breed becoming extinct in China after the Communist revolution in 1949.

Therefore, just 14 dogs (7 females and 7 males) comprise the entire gene pool of all existing Shih Tzu.

Of these fourteen Shih Tzu, three were those imported from China into Norway by Mrs. Henrick Kauffman in 1932, one of which was the only female Shih Tzu actually bred in the Imperial Palace to make its way to the Western World.

As well, within this fourteen included a Pekingese dog that was apparently used in an admitted cross that occurred in England in 1952, which created considerable problems for the breed, as this cross was carried out by a newcomer to the breed, and was only reported after the fact.
The remaining foundation dogs were three Shih Tzu imported from China who became the foundation of the Taishan Kennel of Lady Brownrigg in England. As well, there were eight additional imports to England between 1933 and 1959.

Some ancient theories relate that the Shih Tzu originally stemmed from a cross between a Pekingese and a Tibetan dog called the Lhasa Apso, who were selectively bred during ancient times and often seen depicted in Chinese paintings and tapestries.

**Kennel Club Recognition**

The first dogs of the Shih Tzu breed imported into England and Norway were classified by the Kennel Club as "Apsos", and it was not until 1935 that the first European standard for the breed was written by the Shih Tzu Club of England, at which time the breed was re-categorized as Shih Tzu.

The Shih Tzu breed spread throughout Europe, and after the end of World War II, soon made their way into the United States, when returning soldiers fighting in Europe brought these dogs home with them.

The Shih Tzu is also recognized by the Fédération Cynologique Internationale (FCI) or World Canine Organization, which is an international federation of kennel clubs based in Belgium. The goals of the FCI are "...to encourage and promote breeding and use of purebred dogs whose functional health and physical features meet the standard set for each respective breed..."
The FCI also supports the free exchange of “dogs and information between member countries who also organize exhibitions and tests.

According to Canadian Kennel Club (CKC) records, the first Shih Tzu registered in Canada was a male in 1952. Since that time, the Shih Tzu has held its own in popularity holding a top ten ranking for being one of the 10 most popular dogs breeds in the world, out of 175 recognized breeds.

While the American Kennel Club (AKC) accepted the Shih Tzu into the Miscellaneous Class in 1955, at which time there were very few Shih Tzu in the United States, the Shih Tzu breed did not become officially recognized in the Toy category until 1969.

The Shih Tzu breed is now well known and recognized at all major kennel clubs throughout the world.

It was due to the work of Maureen Murdock and her nephew, Philip Price, that the Shih Tzu gained recognition in the US. Murdock and Price were the first to import and breed Shih Tzu in the US when Mr. Price imported “Golden S. Wen of Chasmu” and “Ho Lai Sheum of Yram” in 1955, both of whom were from England.

The Shih Tzu Club of America was formed in 1957 and by 1960 there were three Shih Tzu clubs: the Texas Shih Tzu Society, the American Shih Tzu Association in Florida, and the Shih Tzu Club of America.

Next, the Shih Tzu Club of America and the Texas Shih Tzu Society merged together to form the American Shih Tzu Club in 1963.

Once the American Shih Tzu Club became incorporated in 1968, the American Kennel Club quickly accepted the Shih Tzu as it’s
116th recognized breed in 1969, and in September of this year, the Shih Tzu was shown for the first time in the United States.

**Temperament**

Although the temperament of a Shih Tzu will vary from dog to dog, and depending on their first weeks with the breeder, as well as the human guardian who has trained and socialized them, generally speaking, this breed displays a loyal and affectionate personality with an alert, outgoing and social temperament.

Proper socializing and teaching basic commands should begin at a young age for the Shih Tzu, and while they can be excellent watch dogs because of their alert and active nature, they were never specifically bred for this purpose.

The Shih Tzu is one of the few breeds of canines that have been bred to be true lap dogs, with the purpose of providing love and companionship, and as such, while they prefer to be close to their human guardians, they are friendly and outgoing companions who will also display affection toward strangers.

Due to their naturally friendly nature, the Shih Tzu usually will interact well with other dogs as well as with children and unknown adults. Any dog, including the Shih Tzu, can become snappish if teased, provoked, or feeling that it must protect itself, therefore, a guardian should always be watchful when their dog is in the presence of younger children.

Generally speaking, the Shih Tzu is a small, sturdy and adaptable little dog who is just as happy going for a long walk with you as they will be to sit quietly beside you, or on your lap, while you watch a movie.

While the adult Shih Tzu is certainly strong and capable enough to meet or challenge most human exercise habits, they will get enough exercise when you take them for two or three 30 minute walks every day.
The highest priority for a Shih Tzu is that they be allowed to always be part of whatever the family is enjoying, and because they are quite sturdy for their small size, they can be very good companions for children.

**Regal Appearance**

The Shih Tzu is a purebred, small sized canine, with a round head, short muzzle, large dark eyes, and a black nose.

While it can be difficult to clearly see the body shape of a Shih Tzu with longer hair, as demonstrated by Boris in his shorter puppy cut (above), you can see that the body that is slightly longer than it is tall.

Most Shih Tzu have a characteristic underbite (required in the breed standard) where the bottom teeth sometimes protrude in front of the top teeth, giving them the appearance of grinning.

The lively little Shih Tzu has an abundant double coat, beard and mustache that never stops growing, and the hair above the nose grows uniquely upward, which is what gives the Shih Tzu their distinctive chrysanthemum-shaped face.

The Shih Tzu double coat is very soft (especially the undercoat) and they typically stand approximately 10.5 inches (26.7 cm) at the withers (top of the front shoulder) with an ideal weight of between 10 to 16 pounds (4.5 to 7.3 kg).

The Shih Tzu ears are quite short, but floppy or dropped and covered with long hair, while the curly tail has a beautiful, silky plume of hair that is carried curled over the back, unless they are upset, at which time they will drop their tail to the ground.
When walking, the Shih Tzu has lively and confident stride with a proud, slightly arrogant carriage.

**Amazing Colors and Qualities**

While the coat may be any color, a white coat, or colored coat with blazes of white are often seen. Often the most commonly seen coat color in a Shih Tzu is black and white, Shih Tzu coat colors include various shades of gold, white, brown, red, and blue, and the coat will often completely change color in adulthood.

For instance, the puppy, 3-year-old and 8-year-old pictures of Boris (below) show the drastic change in coat color that still prompts those who had not seen him in a long while to ask if we have a different dog.

![Boris pictures](image)

You will often see black and white Shih Tzu, and other Shih Tzu coat colors include a black mask with gold, black and white, solid black, solid liver, liver and white, brindle and white or grey and white coat.

Sometimes you might see dark brown pigments near the shoulders and between the armpits as well as a white patch on the chest as you can see on Boris, that becomes more noticeable as his coat color darkened.
The Shih Tzu is considered to be a “hypoallergenic” breed because their silky hair does not naturally shed, however, it is usually the dog’s dander or saliva that causes allergic reactions in sensitive humans.

**Is the Shih Tzu Right For You?**

As with choosing to share your home with any breed of canine, you need to first take into consideration your lifestyle today and what it will look like in the next ten to fifteen years, and then ask yourself some serious questions that you can honestly answer, including:

1. I am (a) a busy person with little extra time and patience, or (b) I have lots of time to devote to a puppy which will grow into a dog who needs attention, training and endless amounts of my devotion?

2. Do I lead a physically active, medium or low intensity life? For instance, am I (a) out jogging the streets, running marathons or climbing mountains, or (b) would I rather spend my leisure time on the couch watching a movie?

3. Do I (a) like to travel a lot to far off exotic locations, or (b) I enjoy outings in my home town or automobile road trips.

4. Am I (a) a messy person who doesn’t care about dust or hair, or (b) a neat freak?

5. Do I (a) live alone or with my partner, or (b) have a young, growing family that takes up all my spare time?

6. Do I (a) suffer from physical and/or mental disabilities, or (b) am I physically fit and healthy enough to be out there walking a dog two to three times a day, every day, rain or shine?
(7) Do I have (a) a very limited income, or (b) I can afford the extra food, grooming and veterinarian expenses that are part of being a conscientious canine guardian?

(8) Is the decision to bring a puppy into my life (a) a family decision, or (b) just for the entertainment of the children, who will quickly lose interest?

(9) Is the number one reason why I want a dog in my life because (a) it’s trendy and I and I want to impress my peers, or (b) because I want to share my life with a loving canine companion?

When you ask yourself these important questions and most of your answers are in the (b) category, you will likely be a very good candidate for sharing your home with a Shih Tzu.

However, if most of your honest answers are in the (a) category, you could be choosing the wrong dog or you should not choose a dog at all, and if this is the case, you will inevitably end up with an unhappy dog which will lead to behavioral issues, which then will lead to an unhappy life for everyone.

Please take the time to choose wisely.

**Noble Breeding**

It has taken many, many generations of dedicated, careful breeding to acquire the qualities that make the Shih Tzu breed appealing to so many humans, on a world wide scale.

The official breed standard for the Shih Tzu approved by the American Kennel Club and the American Shih Tzu Club is based on the first written standard for Shih Tzu, and prescribed by the Peking Kennel Club almost 80 years ago, in 1938.
The American Kennel Club and other purebred registries and conscientious breeders work tirelessly to preserve breed standards and that is why responsible breeders would never consider mixing or tampering with a breed standard just to appeal to the marketability of a passing fad or “designer” trend.

Preserving the integrity of a pure breed is also why “designer” dogs are not permitted to be registered.

**American Kennel Club Breed Standard**

As stipulated by the American Kennel Club (AKC), the Shih Tzu is a sturdy, lively, alert toy dog with a long, flowing, double coat.

Befitting their ancient Tibetan heritage and noble Chinese ancestry as a highly valued, prized companion and palace pet, the Shih Tzu is proud of bearing, has a distinctively arrogant carriage with head well up and tail curved over the back.

Although there has always been considerable size variation, the Shih Tzu must be compact and solid, carrying good weight and substance.

Even though the Shih Tzu is categorized as a a “toy” dog, they are still subject to the same requirements of soundness and structure prescribed for all breeds, and with respect to AKC standards, any deviation from the ideal described should be penalized.

The following is the AKC breed standard for the Shih Tzu, including size, proportion, substance, coat and gait, and all the points upon which a Shih Tzu entering a show competition will be judged:

**Size** - Ideally, height at withers is 9 to 10½ inches; but, not less than 8 inches nor more than 11 inches. Ideally, weight of mature dogs, 9 to 16 pounds.
**Proportion** - Length between withers and root of tail is slightly longer than height at withers. *The Shih Tzu must never be so high stationed as to appear leggy, nor so low stationed as to appear dumpy or squatty.*

**Substance** - Regardless of size, the Shih Tzu is always compact, solid and carries good weight and substance.

**Head** - Round, broad, wide between eyes, its size in balance with the overall size of dog being neither too large nor too small. **Fault:** Narrow head, close-set eyes.

**Expression** - Warm, sweet, wide-eyed, friendly and trusting. An overall well-balanced and pleasant expression supersedes the importance of individual parts. *Care should be taken to look and examine well beyond the hair to determine if what is seen is the actual head and expression rather than an image created by grooming technique.*

**Eyes** - Large, round, not prominent, placed well apart, looking straight ahead. *Very dark.* Lighter on liver pigmented dogs and blue pigmented dogs. **Fault:** Small, close-set or light eyes; excessive eye white.

**Ears** - Large, set slightly below crown of skull; heavily coated.

**Skull** - Domed.

**Muzzle** - Square, short, unwrinkled, with good cushioning, set no lower than bottom eye rim; never downturned. Ideally, no longer than 1 inch from tip of nose to stop, although length may vary slightly in relation to overall size of dog. Front of muzzle should be flat; lower lip and chin not protruding and definitely never receding. **Fault:** Snippiness, lack of definite stop.

**Nose** - Nostrils are broad, wide, and open.
**Pigmentation** - Nose, lips, eye rims are black on all colors, except liver on liver pigmented dogs and blue on blue pigmented dogs. **Fault:** Pink on nose, lips, or eye rims.

**Bite** - Undershot. Jaw is broad and wide. A missing tooth or slightly misaligned teeth should not be too severely penalized. Teeth and tongue should not show when mouth is closed. **Fault:** Overshot bite.

**Neck, Top Line, Body** - of utmost importance is an overall well-balanced dog with no exaggerated features.

**Neck** - Well set-on flowing smoothly into shoulders; of sufficient length to permit natural high head carriage and in balance with height and length of dog.

**Top Line** - should be level.

**Body** - Short-coupled and sturdy with no waist or tuck-up. The Shih Tzu is slightly longer than tall. **Fault:** Legginess.

**Chest** - Broad and deep with good spring-of-rib, however, not barrel-chested. Depth of ribcage should extend to just below elbow. Distance from elbow to withers is a little greater than from elbow to ground.

**Tail** - Set on high, heavily plumed, carried in curve well over back. Too loose, too tight, too flat, or too low set a tail is undesirable and should be penalized to extent of deviation.

** Shoulders** - Well-angulated, well laid-back, well laid-in, fitting smoothly into body.

**Legs** - Straight, well-boned, muscular, set well-apart and under chest, with elbows set close to body.

**Dewclaws** - May be removed.

**Feet** - Firm, well-padded, point straight ahead.
Coat - Luxurious, double-coated, dense, long, and flowing. Slight wave permissible. Hair on top of head is tied up. Fault: Sparse coat, single coat, curly coat.

Trimming - Feet, bottom of coat, and anus may be done for neatness and to facilitate movement. Fault: Excessive trimming.

Color and Markings - All are permissible and to be considered equally.

Gait - the Shih Tzu moves straight and must be shown at its own natural speed, neither raced nor strung-up, to evaluate its smooth, flowing, effortless movement with good front reach and equally strong rear drive, level top line, naturally high head carriage, and tail carried in gentle curve over the back.

Temperament - as the sole purpose of the Shih Tzu is that of a companion and house pet, it is essential that its temperament be outgoing, happy, affectionate, friendly and trusting toward all.

Showy Dogs

Most Shih Tzu puppies are sold as companions, however, if you have seriously considered the time, money and extreme dedication required with showing a dog, and this is of great interest, you should discuss this with your breeder in advance and ask their opinion to help in the choice of a puppy.

It would also be helpful to choose a breeder who also shows their dogs, so that you are certain they understand the dedication that showing takes as well as which puppies would be most suitable.

Loving Companionship

The Shih Tzu and its long line of distinguished ancestors have been bred exclusively to be companion canines for many centuries, and possibly millennia.
As a result, companionship is certainly a task for which the lively and lovable Shih Tzu is well suited. However, if you are interested in a little more than just lots of love and companionship and have the interest, patience and time to train your Shih Tzu, in recent years this little dog has also lit up the show ring and surprised many by its talents in obedience and agility competitions.

As well, the Shih Tzu has also excelled as a therapy dog, and some have even been used as aids for the disabled.

For instance, Boris, who is featured throughout this book, is also a working dog and valuable K-9 Super Heroes Dog Whispering team member. In his spare time he visits care facilities and retirements homes to bring a little sunshine to those who cannot get out and participates in events where he has won many “best tricks” awards.

**Locating a Reputable Breeder**

Although a good breeder cannot guarantee the lifelong health of any puppy, they should easily be able to give you plenty of information about the health of the puppy’s parents, and you should definitely ask the breeder what sort of health tests they have had carried out on the parents of a puppy you are considering purchasing.

For instance, a reputable breeder will have had their breeding Shih Tzu dogs tested for hip and eye problems and a prospective purchaser should always ask about possible congenital problems the parents or grandparents of the Shih Tzu puppy might have, including any premature deaths.

A good place to begin your search will be at the American Shih Tzu Club website (all web links are provided on the References page). This club also maintains a Breeder Referral Committee and provides other valuable information to those considering the Shih Tzu as their next dog.
American Shih Tzu Club

The American Shih Tzu Club, Inc. (ASTC) was formed in 1963…

“…by a small group of individuals who shared a common interest in, love for, and commitment to the Shih Tzu breed. Since then, the ASTC has continued to grow in membership, in local Shih Tzu club affiliates, and in liaisons with other Shih Tzu organizations throughout the world. The ASTC is a member club of the American Kennel Club. In its efforts to preserve, support, and promote the welfare and quality of our breed, the ASTC and its many members participate in an ever-growing variety of activities designed to further these goals. The following is a brief explanation of some of the most important work undertaken by the ASTC.”

If you are researching a Shih Tzu breeder’s website, check to see if the site contains the ASTC Seal.

If you have located a breeder in your local area, you should always ask them if they are a member of the American Shih Tzu Club or another local club and whether they abide by the ASTC code of ethics in their breeding practices.

ASTC Code of Ethics

- “I agree to follow the regulations as set forth by the American Kennel Club as they pertain to my purebred dog operations;

- I agree to abide by and uphold the principles of the Constitution and By-Laws and this Code of Ethics of the American Shih Tzu Club, Inc.;

- I will furnish a signed registration application, transfer or AKC limited registration certificate and 3 generation
pedigree with each puppy sold. I may have a written agreement with the purchaser at the time of the sale that papers will be withheld;

- I will encourage spaying or neutering of animals not desirable for breeding;

- I will not sell my puppies to pet shops or commercial pet mill establishments, nor will I donate puppies for raffles or auctions;

- I will not crossbreed or advertise for sale puppies that have been crossbred;

- I will not give stud service to unregistered bitches;

- I will advise the purchaser of my puppy to have the puppy checked by a veterinarian within 2 days (48 Hours) of the sale (additional time allowed if the puppy is sold on a Friday or Saturday). I will refund the purchase price or take the puppy back and replace it, if it is found to be unfit by a veterinarian;

- Except for unusual situations, I will not sell my puppies at less then twelve (12) weeks of age;

- I will maintain the best possible standard of health and care in all of my dogs and see that puppies are immunized and checked for parasites. I will furnish complete health record, care, feeding, and grooming instructions with each puppy sold;

- I will attempt to sell my pet puppies within the range of other breeders in my area;

- In my breeding program I will keep alert for and work to control and/or eradicate inherited problems and conditions that are particular to my breed, and breed as closely to the
standard of the breed;

• I will represent my dogs as honestly as possible to prospective buyers and try to assist the serious novice in his understanding of the breed;

• I will try at all times to show good sportsmanship and keep in mind that the good of the breed comes before any personal benefits; and

• I will refrain from deceptive or erroneous advertising.

Ask the Right Questions

Medical Questions

Every good breeder will ensure that their Shih Tzu puppies have received vaccinations and de-worming specific to the age of the puppy, and you should always ask the breeder what shots the puppy has been given and when it was last de-wormed.

If you find that the breeder has not carried out any of these procedures or they say they don’t know when the last shots or de-worming was done, look elsewhere.

Always ask to see the breeder’s veterinarian report on the health of the puppy you may be interested in purchasing, and if they cannot produce one, look elsewhere.

Temperament Questions

You will want to choose a Shih Tzu puppy with a friendly, easy going and congenial temperament. Therefore, always be certain to ask a breeder if a puppy you are interested in has displayed any signs of aggression or fear, because if this is happening at such an early age, this could indicate that you you may have behavioral troubles later on in life.
Guarantee Questions

A reputable and ethical breeder will be interested in the lifelong health and well-being of any of the Shih Tzu puppies they sell and good breeders will want you to call them should a problem arise at any time during the life of your puppy.

A good breeder will also want to take the Shih Tzu back, if for whatever reason you are unable to continue to care for it, rather than seeing the dog go to a shelter or rescue facility. If the breeder you are considering does not offer this type of guarantee, choose one who does, because no ethical breeder would ever permit one of their puppies to end up in a shelter.

Return Policy Questions

Reputable and conscientious breeders offer a return contract. They do this for a couple of very good reasons: (1) to protect their reputation, and (2) to make sure that a puppy they have sold that might display a genetic defect will not have the opportunity to breed and continue to spread the defect, thereby weakening the entire breed.

They also do this because purchasing a purebred Shih Tzu puppy from a breeder is usually an expensive proposition, and if you take your new puppy home only to find out that later they have a worrisome genetic defect, this could cost you a great deal. In such a case, most good breeders have a return policy, and will be happy to take back the puppy and provide you with another.

Testimonial Questions

It’s always a good idea to ask a breeder to provide you with testimonials from some of their other clients, so long as you actually take the time to contact those people to ask them about their experience with this breeder.
A happy Shih Tzu owner will be only too happy to tell you all about their experience with the breeder and the health and temperament of their dog. A good breeder will be happy to provide you with testimonials because the absolute best recommendation is a happy customer.

**Breeder Reputation**

The Internet is also a valuable resource when checking out the reputation of a breeder, and you will be able to post on most forums discussing breeders to quickly find out what you need to know from those who have been there first.

Also, don’t be surprised when a reputable breeder actually wants to ask any prospective purchaser their own questions, because a good breeder will always want to satisfy themselves that you are going to be a good caretaker of their puppy.

You may want to ask the following questions:

Will the breeder permit you to visit their facility and will they give you a tour?

Is the breeder familiar with, or have they worked closely with both parents of the puppy?

Can the breeder provide you with a lineage chart for the puppy tracing back several generations?

How often does the breeder allow the females and males to breed and reproduce?

Will the breeder let you see the other dogs in the kennel and is the kennel clean, well maintained and animal friendly?

Will the breeder permit you to see other adult dogs, or other puppies that the breeder owns, socialize together?

Does the breeder limit the amount that you handle the pups? A reputable breeder will be concerned for the safety and health of
all their puppies and therefore will only permit serious buyers to handle the puppies.

Does the breeder have a contract of purchase clearly outlining the guarantee of health and a return or refund policy for any dog you purchase that doesn’t work out as anticipated?

Is the breeder recognized by your local, state or national breed organization?

Does the breeder have a veterinarian report outlining the health of the puppies ensuring that they have had their first vaccinations and are de-wormed?

Just as it’s important to do your homework about the breed you are considering, once you’ve decided on the Shih Tzu, it will be just as important to do as much research as you can about the specific Shih Tzu breeder you may be considering, before making your initial visit to their facility.

The more information that you have gathered about the breeder and the more information the breeder knows about you, the more successful the match will be.

Finally, before deciding whether to purchase your puppy from a reputable breeder, and which one, you might want to consider checking out your local shelter or rescue organization, because many purebred puppies and dogs who need loving forever homes also make their way into shelters and rescue organizations.

NOTE: there are also many breed specific rescues organizations.

**Meeting the Parents**

Meeting the mother and father of your new Shih Tzu puppy can tell you a great deal about what the temperament and demeanor of your puppy will likely be when they grow into adulthood.
Since the puppy’s personality or temperament will be a combination of both the early environment and the genes inherited from the parents, it’s important to visit the breeder several times, see the parents, interact with the puppies and ask lots of questions so that you can get a good feel for the sincerity of the breeder.

Just as in any young life, the early environment provided by the breeder and the parents of the Shih Tzu puppies can have a lifelong impact on how your puppy behaves as an adult.

Ask the breeder about the temperament and personalities of the puppy’s parents and if they have socialized the puppies. A good breeder will have noticed personality traits very early on in their puppies and should be able to provide a prospective purchaser with insight about each Shih Tzu puppy’s unique personality.

**Choosing the Right Shih Tzu**

Even when you have made your decision to share your life with a Shih Tzu, it is still just as important to take the time to choose wisely and always take into consideration the particular temperament and energy level of the particular puppy within the litter that you may be choosing, because if your energy level is not equal to or a little bit higher than that of the puppy you choose, this could be a difficult match.

Energy is very important factor that is often overlooked when choosing the right puppy to be compatible with your lifestyle.

For instance, if you have a laid back, quiet lifestyle, you would not want to choose the most feisty or combative puppy in the litter that is always beating up on all the other puppies, but rather the one that is more quiet and friendly without being overly excited.
**Pet Store Problems**

Think twice before considering buying a puppy, of any breed, from a pet store because almost all puppies found in pet stores come from puppy mills, and if you purchase one of these puppies, you are helping to enable and perpetuate this horribly inhumane breeding practice.

Although kind hearted humans may think they are helping a poor puppy, what they are really doing is helping the pet store stay in business by being part of the process that is helping puppy mills to thrive and multiply.

Every popular breed, such as the Shih Tzu will make their way into pet stores because puppy mill breeders see a quick and easy profit here.

Every time someone buys a Shih Tzu (or any) puppy from a pet store, the store will order more from the puppy mill. As far as the pet store is concerned, the puppies are simply inventory, like bags of dog food, and when one item drops off of the inventory list, another is purchased to replace it.

Further, your kind hearted gesture of “rescuing” the puppy from the pet store is an indication to the store owner that this particular breed of puppy is in demand by the public, and now you’re part of a nasty chain of events that all started because you felt sorry for the poor puppy. Your good intentions have now rewarded a pet store’s questionable practices of selling puppies at five to ten times what they paid for them and helped to perpetuate the horror of commercial breeding. Most ethical pet stores will not sell puppies.

Finally, the puppy you just purchased from the pet store may develop many health and/or behavioral problems later on in life as a result of terrible breeding practices.
Pregnancy for Profit

Everywhere there are puppies being sold, there will sadly be puppy mills or “commercial breeders”, which means that if you are not careful about where and how you purchase your Shih Tzu puppy, you may unknowingly end up promoting this inhumane practice.

Simply stated, a puppy mill is a cruel and inhumane world of canine pregnancy for quick profit.

Not only do puppy mills seriously contribute to overpopulation, they produce diseases, and genetically flawed puppies that may have behavioral and health related problems that will cut their lives prematurely short.

These dogs suffer in ways most of us could never imagine. For instance, most of these poor breeding dogs have never walked on solid ground or felt grass as they are kept in cramped wire cages their entire short lives.

Females are bred continuously until they can no longer produce puppies at which time they are sold to laboratories for experiments, killed or dumped on the side of a road.

Of the approximately 3,500 pet stores who still sell puppies in the United States alone, it is estimated that they sell more than 500,000 puppies every year.

Although the puppy mill problem is certainly not exclusive to the United States, as it happens all over the world, it is so rampant in the US that several states are actually labelled as "puppy mill states“, including Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Pennsylvania.

It’s difficult to shut down these horrible mills because, just like the drug trade, selling puppies for profit is business on a large
and lucrative scale. As an example, in Missouri alone, it is conservatively estimated that the commercial puppy breeding industry nets $40 million dollars a year.

Although puppy mill puppies are sold in a variety of different venues, pet stores are the main venue for selling these puppies, who are taken away from their mothers far too young (at 4 to 5 weeks of age) and sold to brokers, who pack them into crates to ship them off to pet stores. Many innocent puppies die during transportation.

Puppy mill puppies are also sold at flea markets, on the side of the road, at the beach, through newspaper advertisements, fancy websites and Internet classifieds.

The only way to put these shameful, commercial businesses out of business is by spreading the word and never buying a puppy from a pet store, or any other advertising medium, unless you have first personally and thoroughly checked them out by visiting their facility.

If you answer an advertisement for a puppy for sale and the person selling offers to deliver the puppy to you, this may be the first sign that you are about to be involved with a puppy mill operation.

Educating yourself and spreading the word to others about what you know about puppy mills, is the first step toward ensuring that you and your friends and acquaintances are never unknowingly involved in this horribly inhumane practice.

**Rescuing a Shih Tzu**

When you are considering rescuing a specific breed of dog or puppy, the first place to start your search will be with your local shelter and rescue groups.
**Shelters**

Most shelters or local pounds or SPCA’s will charge an adoption fee to cover the cost of spaying or neutering, but this will be only a small percentage of what you would pay a breeder, and you may be saving a life by giving a deserving Shih Tzu a second chance.

**Online Resources**

There are many rescue groups specifically for a particular breed, including the Shih Tzu (listed on the References page).

There are also websites such as Petango, Adopt A Pet, and Pet Finder, which are central gathering places for hundreds of local shelters, humane societies and rescue groups.

**Canine Clubs**

Another place to search when considering rescuing a Shih Tzu will be local Shih Tzu Clubs and organizations, and a phone call to local breeders might also point you in the right direction.

**Rescue Check List**

Before actually rescuing a Shih Tzu, you need to ask yourself a few important questions, including:

1. Why do you want to rescue a Shih Tzu?

2. Do you have the time and patience to work through any behavioral problems?

3. Have you carefully considered how having a dog will impact your life?
4. Are all members of your family on board with your decision to rescue?

5. Do you have small children who might be in harm’s way if the dog you rescue needs work to help them overcome behavioral issues?

6. What do you want the rescued Shih Tzu to contribute to your life?

7. Do you have plenty of time and patience to commit to a dog?

8. Can you afford the extra financial burden?

9. Will you engage the services of a professional to help you with behavioral issues you may not know how to handle, so that the rescue does not end up back behind bars?

If you can positively answer all of the above questions, you may be a good candidate for rescuing a Shih Tzu.

**Shih Tzu Vital Statistics**

**Country of Origin**

The Shih Tzu is an ancient breed, originating in Tibet in 800 BC.

**Height and Weight**

The Shih Tzu generally weighs between 8.6 and 16 pounds (4 to 7.25 kilograms) and stands between 7.9 and 11 inches (20 to 28 centimeters) at the withers (top of the shoulder).
**Temperature & Heart Rate**

Temperature: 100.5 to 102.5 degrees Fahrenheit (38.05 to 39.16 Celsius).

Respiratory Rate: 10 to 20 per minute

Pulse: Puppies, 120 to 160 per minute. Adults, 60 to 140 per minute.

Gums: should be pink

**Litter Size**

1 to 8 puppies.

**Lifespan**

While there are always exceptions within every breed, The Shih Tzu is generally long-lived, which means that this little dog will, on average, live 10-16 years, with many living as long as 20 years.

**Smarter Than You Think**

Stanley Coren, a professor of psychology at the University of British Columbia, in Vancouver, B.C., Canada, published *The Intelligence of Dogs* in 1994. Since then this book has become the standard for rating the particular intelligence of different canine breeds.

Coren’s book describes three categories of dog intelligence:

1. instinctive intelligence
2. adaptive intelligence
3. working and obedience intelligence
Instinctive intelligence refers to a dog's ability to carry out tasks it was bred to perform, such as guarding, herding, hunting, pointing, retrieving, or supplying companionship.

Adaptive intelligence refers to how well a dog is able to solve problems on its own.

Working and obedience intelligence refers to how quickly a dog is able to learn from humans.

The Shih Tzu is listed in 70th position, out of a possible 79, in the “Lowest Degree of Working/Obedience Intelligence” category.

In other words, if one is to agree with the findings of Stanley Coren, the Shih Tzu is only able to understand new commands after more than 80 repetitions, and that this breed will only obey a first command less than 30% of the time.

My personal experience with this wonderful breed is that their level of intelligence far exceeds what Stanley Coren believes, and that perhaps the only reason that this breed is given such a low intelligence rating is simply because they are true lap dogs, and therefore, nobody expects them to excel at anything beyond being a cuddly companion.

While I believe that there are exceptions to every generality placed on any breed because much of how their brains and skill level develops is largely a result of how they are raised, my personal experience with this breed has shown that it is a mistake to simply classify this breed as having a low intelligence, because with kind and consistent training, this alert and affectionate little dog is more than capable of easily learning, and in fact, excelling in many categories.

When utilizing the proper training method, with patient and calm energy, the Shih Tzu will enjoy the opportunity to learn new commands and tricks and when given the opportunity will display a surprisingly high level of intelligence.
2. HEALTH and CARE Guide

Common Concerns

While not every Shih Tzu short face will make them susceptible to eye problems, and respiratory problems, because no two heads are exactly alike, generally speaking, most will display some symptoms.

Allergies

One of the most common complaints brought to the veterinarian’s office is dogs with possible allergies. Unlike us humans, who react to allergies with nasal symptoms, when our dog’s are suffering from allergies they will typically present themselves as itchy skin or ear problems.

Environmental Allergies

Allergies are usually first noticed because your fur friend is scratching, itching, biting and chewing at their skin.
Just like us humans, our dogs can develop allergies to dust, chemicals, grass, mold, pollen, car exhaust, cigarette smoke, and flea and tick preparations, as well as allergies to materials, such as wool or cotton, and chemicals found in washing soap or chemicals found in cleaning products you use around your home.

Symptoms are usually seen on the stomach, inside of the legs, and at the tail or paws. Since most allergies are seasonal, our dogs will be more affected in the spring or fall and when these irritants are inhaled by your Shih Tzu, they may also result in coughing, sneezing or watery eyes.

If you think that your Shih Tzu may have come in contact with an environmental irritant, the best thing you can do for them is give them a cleansing bath, with the proper canine shampoo, followed by canine conditioner.

Remember that a Shih Tzu is already very low to the ground, and the longer their hair, the more they resemble a duster who attracts everything it comes into contact with.

**Junk Food Allergies**

Food allergies that are “true” food allergies usually account for only about 10% of allergy problems in our canine friends.

The itching, chewing and chronic ear infections are not actually caused by food allergies, but rather are the result of a suppressed immune system which is caused by eating a low quality diet.

These types of food allergies can oftentimes be completely resolved by changing your Shih Tzu’s diet to a high quality food that is easily digested (see section “Chow Time”).

Proper nutrition is the easiest way to prevent any allergies. Many dog food products contain corn, wheat and soybeans which are
common allergens. Usually it is the gluten in these foods that cause the allergic reaction.

Visit your local pet food store and educate yourself or talk with a knowledgeable representative because there’s no excuse for feeding your dog a junk food diet when there are so many healthy choices that will help your best friend live long and healthy.

**Breathing Problems**

While not every short-faced or brachycephalic dog will develop respiratory problems, most will display common symptoms, such as "reverse sneezing" to some degree or other. A Shih Tzu with severe respiratory problems may require surgery.

Reverse sneezing is a phenomenon of the Shih Tzu breed that can be very startling to the Shih Tzu guardian when they hear this snorting, gagging or honking sound for the first time.

Often it is brought on when a dog becomes overly excited from quickly eating special treats, or when greeting another dog or friend. Usually the dog will stop moving and hang it’s head during a reverse sneezing episode, and although it may be distressing to the dog, it is usually more distressing to the Shih Tzu owner.

There are several methods that can help a dog overcome a reverse sneezing episode, including calming them, rubbing their nose, so that they open their mouth and begin breathing normally, and giving their chest a quick little squeeze on either side to force air out of their lungs. Sometimes, lightly blowing air into their face will also relieve the episode.

In any event, most dogs appear completely normal both before and after episodes of reverse sneezing and will continue to experience them intermittently throughout their lives.
Dogs that have severe respiratory disorders may have increasingly noisy breathing, coughing, gagging, fainting or collapsing episodes from lack of oxygen, and in these cases, over the long term, without surgical intervention, there will be an increased strain on the heart.

Overheating can be a serious problem for dogs suffering from severe respiratory problems because the increased panting causes further swelling and narrowing of the airways, therefore, if your dog has a severe breathing problem it will be advisable not to exercise them in warmer weather.

**NOTE:** short-nosed breeds displaying these types of respiratory problems may be banned from flying in cargo holds of planes on certain airways because these respiratory conditions worsen when flying at high altitudes in cargo holds where temperatures can be unregulated (ie. very hot or very cold). Thankfully, the Shih Tzu is a small enough breed to easily fit inside an airline approved Sherpa bag so that they can fly inside the cabin with their guardians.

**Eye Problems**

The Shih Tzu has a short nose or face and large eyes with shallow eye sockets, which can result in several eye problems, including:

**Infections**

Foreign materials are always floating or flying about in the air and when they enter the eye area, they can cause inflammation and infection.

**Corneal Ulcers**

While all Shih Tzu eyes are not the same, those with more protruding eyes can be at greater risk for corneal ulcers, which is caused by wind blowing against the eyes, or foreign objects
scratching the eye.

**Cataracts**

Many dogs will experience cataracts as they age, and this condition may be more prevalent in the Shih Tzu breed because their eyes generally tend to be more protruded. When cataracts develop, a Shih Tzu will lose vision in that eye and if the condition affects both eyes, it can lead to blindness.

**Entropion**

This is a condition whereby one or both of the Shih Tzu eyelids turns inward, causing the eyelashes to irritate the eyeball. It can be corrected with surgery.

**Epiphoria**

This is also referred to as "wet eye", which is an overflowing of tears or excessive tearing that can occur when a dog's tear ducts do not drain properly, which is generally a result of the Shih Tzu short face. Infections and other eye issues can also cause epiphoria.

**Protective Eyewear**

My Shih Tzu, Boris, has worn protective eyewear his entire life, and as a result, he is now 8 years old and has never suffered from any eye problems.

Doggles™ are protective eyewear for dogs. "They are actually goggles for dogs... modeled after sports goggles and have flexible, snug-fitting frames, which have foam
padding against the face; polycarbonate (shatterproof) and anti-fog lenses; and adjustable elastic head and chin straps to keep the Doggles™ securely on the dog.”

Getting your dog used to wearing this protective eyewear at a young age is a really good idea for any Shih Tzu to help prevent some of the more common eye problems, especially those caused by debris in the air, wind, or glare from the sunshine.

As well, when you get your Shih Tzu used to wearing Doggles™ you will help to prevent your fur friend from getting cataracts from too much exposure to sunlight.

When starting out getting them used to wearing this protective eyewear, put on the Doggles™ and immediately take them for a walk so that their paws will be engaged in walking, rather than trying to pry off the Doggles™. Keep them on for short periods only, until they get used to wearing them for longer periods of time without fussing, and soon, they will accept them without fuss.

**Back Problems**

As a result of the Shih Tzu body generally being slightly longer than they are tall, they can suffer from back and neck problems that may result in a condition called “intervertebral disk disease”. The intervertebral disks function to cushion the spine, and if they bulge or rupture, can cause nerve problems as well as loss of coordination and severe pain. If this problem is not treated, it can result in permanent weakness or paralysis.

**Teeth Problems**

All dogs require teeth care, and dogs with small jaws require special teeth care, and this means the Shih Tzu, too. Without proper daily dental care, your adult Shih Tzu could suffer terribly and die prematurely. This topic will be discussed in detail under Section 7, "Teeth and Nail Care".
Ear Problems

Ear infections (otitis externa) can be common in any breed, but especially in flop eared breeds, such as the Shih Tzu, whose ears hang as opposed to being held erect.

An ear infection can be caused by wet ears that have not been dried properly after a bath or swimming, ear wax buildup, untreated ear mites, buildup of foreign matter such as seeds or pollen, or hair growth inside the ear canal.

First of all, you should be regularly checking your Shih Tzu’s ears so that you will be alerted to any problem before it become serious.

If you have NOT been keeping an eye on your Shih Tzu’s ears, the first sign of an infection may be when you notice your dog constantly scratching an ear, shaking their head or holding their head to one side.

Some dogs will whine when they scratch at their ears, and their balance and coordination may be affected.

Immediately make an appointment to take your Shih Tzu to the veterinarian, who will prescribe medicated ear drops that you will have to apply several times each day until the infection is cured.

Hereditary Concerns

While most of these little dogs, when properly screened and bred by caring and conscientious breeders, are generally quite healthy and will not suffer from many problems, the following is an alphabetical listing of hereditary or genetic conditions that a Shih Tzu “may” suffer from:
**Epilepsy**

Epileptic seizures are sometimes mild, affecting only a part of the dog's body and passing quickly. Other seizures are disruptive and dramatic and can include the dog falling down, twitching and losing consciousness.

Epilepsy is caused by electrical misfiring in a Shih Tzu's brain. The brain's neurons shoot off too many "move" signals, which lead to seizing muscles.

While epilepsy is considered to be hereditary in most cases, it can also be caused by toxins or tumors.

**Hip Dysplasia**

While hip dysplasia is generally considered a congenital problem affecting larger breeds of canines, it can also be found in small breed dogs, such as the Shih Tzu.

Hip dysplasia causes weakness and lameness to the rear quarters or back legs which eventually leads to painful arthritis.

The ball of the hip joint is flat, rather than round and does not fit properly into the socket and can occur as a result of several factors outside of genetics.

For instance, environmental factors, such as too much calcium in the puppy's diet, obesity, high protein and calorie diets, and a lack of or too much exercise can be contributing factors.

X-rays will determine diagnosis and treatment of mild conditions can consist of administering pain relievers, whereas surgery will be an option for more severe cases.
Hypoglycemia

Low blood sugar or hypoglycemia is a common condition in all toy canine breeds, especially when they are puppies and may forget to eat.

Blood sugar levels are most likely to drop early in life, during the ages of birth to 9 weeks and again later in life from 12 years to death.

The condition can also be brought about by stress, as a dog under stress will stop eating, and can affect your dog at any age.

Signs are subtle at first with the puppy becoming more lethargic, not playing, and breathing harder.

Treatment of this condition is simple, however, it is important to act quickly (especially with puppies). While you can purchase a tube of high protein paste, such as Fori-Cal Gell, Nutri-cal or Nutri-stat, the easiest home remedy is Clear Caro Corn Syrup.

You will see improvement within 15 minutes after giving your puppy a teaspoon, and you can also put a little syrup into their drinking water.

Of course, the best way to prevent hypoglycemia is to pay attention and make sure that you observe your puppy eating regular meals. Leaving food out for a puppy all day long is no guarantee that they will remember to eat it when they are hungry.

Hypothyroidism

When the thyroid gland malfunctions and no longer produces a thyroid hormone responsible for proper metabolism, the condition is called “hypothyroidism”.
This condition usually affects middle-aged dogs (of any breed) and is commonly a result of immune system problems, which can be diagnosed through blood testing.

Your dog may appear tired, and physical symptoms can include hair loss, weight gain, or muscle loss.

Hypothyroidism is not considered a threat to quality of life because the disease can be effectively treated with drug therapy. However, if left untreated, it can lead to heart problems.

**Patellar Luxation**

This slipping or floating kneecap condition is a common defect seen in many smaller breeds of dogs weighing less than 22 pounds, such as the Shih Tzu.

It is also possible that the problem can be caused by accidentally falling or jumping from a height.

Usually the condition will present itself between the ages of 4 and 6 months of age and females are 1.5 times more affected than males.

Often you will see a dog with this problem appear to be skipping down the road as they occasionally lift one leg as the kneecap slips out of the patellar groove and the leg locks up. In more severe cases, surgery may be the recommended treatment option to correct this condition.

**Portosystemic Shunt**

This is a life-threatening congenital defect which results in abnormal circulating of the blood, also called “liver shunt”, and is a malformation of the portal vein that transports blood to the liver for cleansing.
If not treated, Portosystemic Shunt (PSS) will lead to seizures, blindness, coma and death. In this condition, some of the dog’s blood bypasses the liver, which means that this blood is not cleansed of harmful toxins before it returns to poison the heart and other vital organs. PSS results in toxic effects on the brain as well as other body organs.

A Shih Tzu suffering from PSS may display a wide variety of symptoms, including small size, poor appetite, weak muscles, learning difficulty, poor coordination, vomiting, diarrhea, and behavioral problems.

Unless PSS can be successfully treated (which is difficult and not always possible), the affected dog will suffer from progressive dementia due to brain damage, that will lead to coma and eventual death.

It is possible to test puppies for PSS using a bile acid stimulation test which can be done at a young age, before a puppy is sold by a breeder.

Treatment of PSS begins with stabilization through medical management to improve the dog’s health, consisting of feeding a low protein diet combined with oral administration of antibiotics and lactulose.

Medical treatment will decrease the amount of bacteria in the intestines which will then minimize the production of toxins.

The next step in treatment will be surgery, which involves surgical narrowing or complete tying off of the abnormal shunt vessel, which can be a very difficult surgery.

Prognosis is good if the dog survives without succumbing to seizure within the first 1-2 days after surgery.

**Stenotic Nares**
This is an inherited defect usually affecting flat-faced or short-nosed brachycephalic breeds, such as the Shih Tzu.

Stenotic Nares is a narrow restricted nostril which reduces the amount of air, thereby causing a strain on breathing which, when left untreated, can lead to an enlargement of the heart.

The condition can cause snoring, snorting, grunting, sneezing and sniffling with a clear nasal discharge, and can be a common occurrence in the Shih Tzu.

Beside the loud breathing noises you can hear, you will notice that the dog cannot play for very long before having to take a break and rest, and their gums are pale. In severe cases, the newborn puppy does not make it past the weaning phase.

Thankfully, many puppies grow out of the problems as they mature, and if they do not, surgery can correct the problem, which involves cutting the cartilage between the two nostrils.

**TIP**: a non-surgical remedy often recommended is to replace the Shih Tzu’s water bowl with a water bottle similar to those used by rabbits and guinea pigs, so that the dog can drink without getting their nose in the water.

**Tracheal Collapse**

Tracheal collapse is a airway obstruction of the dog’s trachea, or “windpipe”, sometimes referred to as “reverse sneezing” because when a Shih Tzu is experiencing one these attacks, it looks like they are inhaling a sneeze.

The trachea is actually a tube of sturdy rings of cartilage through which air is transported in and out of the dog’s lungs. In the case of tracheal collapse, as air is squeezed through the windpipe during regular breathing, sometimes the tracheal rings collapse, which causes a coughing or honking sound.
Usually this coughing or honking is brought on by excitement over visiting a new dog or eating a especially tasty treat. As well, sometimes the symptoms may be provoked by irritants in the environment, such as vehicle exhaust, smoke or dust.

Further, symptoms can be exacerbated when exercising during hot or humid weather, and more so if the dog is overweight.

This genetic condition primarily affects toy breeds of both sexes, and the while the symptoms of collapsing trachea can manifest at any age, on average, signs begin to appear when the dog is six to seven years of age.

Although treatment, usually consisting of cough suppressants and antibiotics, do not cure the condition, a 1994 study indicated that 71% of dogs treated showed a good long-term response.

In mild cases, although the honking or coughing noise can sound quite disturbing to us humans, the session will only last for a few seconds and can be alleviated by gently rubbing the dog’s nose or giving a quick squeeze around the rib cage to help relax the trachea and get the air flowing again.

In severe cases, surgery is recommended, which involves applying prosthetic rings to the outside of the trachea. The success rate of this tricky operation is reported to be in the 75 to 85% range.

**Von Willebrand Disease**

Von Willebrand disease is considered to be a mild to moderate bleeding disorder which results from a reduced production of glycoprotein, which is necessary for normal blood clotting.

Clinical signs typical of the disease include bleeding from the gums, urinary system, nose bleed, or intestinal bleeding, with or without diarrhea. Small hemorrhages may also develop on the gums.
A Shih Tzu affected with this disorder may experience prolonged bleeding at any site of injury or during surgery, therefore, if it is known that your dog suffers from this condition it will be important to ensure they are not placed in situations that could cause injury.

Again, while your Shih Tzu may never suffer from any of the above list of diseases, it is always a good idea to be aware of the types of problems they “could” suffer from.

For instance, every dog is different, and Boris, who is now 8-years-old has only suffered from the occasional reverse sneezing episode.

**Medical Care**

**Choosing a Veterinarian**

Some veterinarian clinics specialize in caring for smaller pets, while some specialize in larger animal care, while still others have a wide ranging area of expertise and will care for all animals, including reptiles.

Always keep in mind that choosing a good veterinary clinic will be very similar to choosing the right health care clinic or doctor for your own personal health because you want to ensure that your puppy receives the quality care they deserve.

Asking other dog owners where they take their fur friends and whether they are happy with the service they receive is always a good first place to start when searching for a veterinary clinic.

If you don't know anyone to ask, visit the local pet store who will be able to provide you with references and local listings of pet care clinics in your area.
Next, check online, because a good pet clinic will have an active website up and running that will list details of all the services they provide along with an overview of all staff members, their education and qualifications.

Once you’ve narrowed your search, it’s time to personally visit the clinics as this will be a good opportunity for you to visually inspect the facility, interact with the staff and meet the veterinarians face to face.

Of course, it’s not just you who needs to feel comfortable with the clinic chosen and those working there. Your puppy needs to feel comfortable, too, and this is where visiting a clinic and interacting with the staff and veterinarians will show you their experience and expertise in handling your puppy.

If your puppy is comfortable with them, then you will be much more likely to trust that they will be providing the best care for your puppy who will need to receive all their puppy vaccinations and eventually be spayed or neutered.

Once you’ve done your research, you may also want to consider engaging a veterinarian clinic that is nearby where you live. As a general rule, most of us like to know that our vet’s office is within a five-mile radius, in case of emergency care requirements.

It’s also a good idea to take your puppy into your chosen clinic several times before they actually need to be there, so that they are not fearful of the new smells and unfamiliar surroundings.

**Health Emergencies**

Always keep your veterinarian’s emergency telephone number where you can quickly locate it, and if there is an emergency clinic in your neighborhood, make sure that you know where it is and the most efficient route for getting there.
**Poison**

It is a good idea to keep the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center number easily accessible.

This service is staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and if you need to call, also have your credit card ready, because a $65. US consultation fee may be applied.

**Poison Emergency: 1 (888) 426-4435**

**Seizures**

If you have never experienced a dog having a seizure, the first thing you need to do is remain calm. If you panic, your dog will also panic because they will pick up on your feelings and emotions of panic which can cause them to become even more frightened.

Stay calm so that you can help your dog safely transition through the seizure episode.

In the midst of a seizure, your Shih Tzu will have no control over their muscles or coordination, so be careful to move them away from any objects or areas that could cause them injury (such as stairs or sharp objects).

It is unlikely that your Shih Tzu will swallow their tongue, and more likely that you could become injured if you attempt to put your hands in their mouth, so keep your hands away from their mouth when they are having a seizure.

Talk to your Shih Tzu in calming, reassuring tones to help quiet them and hopefully shorten the length of the seizure.

If your dog has never experienced a seizure before, was acting normally before the seizure began, it stopped within 3-5 minutes
and your Shih Tzu returned to their normal behavior afterward, this is not an emergency situation.

However, you definitely need to schedule a veterinary appointment as soon as possible to have your dog examined because most seizures are a form of epilepsy.

**How to Recognize a Seizure**

There are actually three stages to a canine seizure.

During the first stage, called the "pre-ictal" phase, your dog may become agitated or seem nervous and restless. They may start to pace and whine, they may try to hide, or they may seek affection. These signs can show themselves a few minutes before the actual seizure, or they can last for a few hours.

The second phase, called the "ictal" phase is the actual seizure, when your dog’s muscles contract and you will notice visible spastic motions that they cannot control. When the seizure happens, most dogs will actually fall over and seem stiff-legged or partially or completely paralyzed. When the seizures is happening, the dog can also lose control of their bowels, and the session can last for a few seconds or a few minutes.

The third stage, called the "post-ictal" stage is when the seizure has ended. When the seizure ends the dog will be feeling confused and disoriented and could be excessively panting or drooling. A dog experiencing a seizure may also show signs of being temporarily blind.

**When It’s an Emergency:** if your dog has been having a seizure for more than 5-10 minutes, this is considered an emergency situation.

Under these conditions, your Shih Tzu’s brain could become permanently damaged and their life is at risk. Emergency veterinary care should be sought immediately.
Snip Snip - Ouch!

While there are varying opinions on what is the best age to spay or neuter your Shih Tzu, one thing that most veterinarians do agree on is that earlier spaying or neutering, between the ages of 4 and 6 months, is a much better choice than waiting.

Spaying or neutering surgeries are carried out under general anesthesia, and as more dogs are being neutered at younger ages, speak with your veterinarian and ask for their recommendations regarding the right age to spay or neuter your Shih Tzu.

What is Neutering?

Neutering is a surgical procedure, carried out by a licensed veterinarian surgeon, for the purpose of rendering a male dog unable to reproduce by getting a female dog pregnant.

In males, the surgery is also referred to as “castration” because the procedure entails the removal of the young dog’s testicles. When the testicles are removed, what is left behind is an empty scrotal sac (which used to contain the puppy’s testicles) and this empty sac will soon shrink in size until it is no longer noticeable.

Most puppies recover very quickly from this procedure and it may be difficult to keep them from running and playing in their normal manner shortly after you bring them home.

Neutering Males

Neutering male Shih Tzu puppies before they are six months of age can help to ensure that they will be less likely to suffer from obesity as they grow older.

Neutering can also mean that a male Shih Tzu will be less likely to have the urge to wander.
Further, waiting until a male Shih Tzu is older than six months before having them neutered could mean that they will experience the effects of raging testosterone that will drive them to escape their yards by any means, in order to search out females to mate with.

Non-neutered males also tend to spray or mark territory far more, both inside and outside the home, and during this time can start to display aggressive tendencies toward other dogs as well as people.

**What is Spaying?**

Sterilization of female puppies, referred to as "spaying" is a surgical procedure carried out by a licensed veterinarian, to prevent the female dog from becoming pregnant, and will also eliminate regular heat cycles.

The sterilization procedure is much more involved for a female puppy (than for a male) as it requires the removal of both ovaries and the uterus by incision into the puppy’s abdominal cavity. The uterus is also removed during this surgery to prevent the possibility of it becoming infected later on in life.

Most female puppies recover from the surgery very quickly, although they may have to wear a cone to prevent them from licking their stitches.

**Spaying Females**

Preferably, female Shih Tzu puppies should be spayed before their very first estrus or heat cycle. Females in heat often appear more agitated and irritable, while sleeping and eating less and some may become extremely aggressive toward other dogs.

Spaying female puppies before their first heat pattern can eliminate these hormonal stressors and reduce the opportunity of
mammary glandular tumors. Early spaying also protects against various other potential concerns, such as uterine infections.

**Effects on Aggression**

Intact (non-neutered) males and females are much more likely to display aggression related to sexual behavior than are neutered dogs.

For instance, fighting, particularly in males, that is directed at other males, is less common after neutering, and the intensity of other types of aggression, such as irritable aggression in females will be totally eliminated by spaying.

While neutering or spaying is not a treatment for aggression, because it can certainly help, this is often the first step toward resolving an aggressive behavior problem.

**Effects on General Temperament**

Many dog guardians often become needlessly worried that a neutered or spayed canine will lose their vigor or joy of life.

Humans need to rest assured that a dog’s personality or energy level will not be modified by neutering or spaying, and in fact, many unfavorable qualities (aggression, desire to roam) resulting from hormonal impact may resolve after surgery.

Your Shih Tzu will certainly not come to be less caring or cheerful, and neither will it resent you because you are not denying your dog any essential encounters. You will, however, be acting as an accountable, informed, and caring Shih Tzu guardian.

Further, while old wive’s tales abound, there is little evidence to support that the nature of a female Shih Tzu will improve after having a litter of puppies.
It is important that you do not place your own psychological needs or concerns onto your Shih Tzu puppy, because there is no gain to be had from permitting sexual activity in either male or female canines.

It is not "abnormal" or "mean" to manage a puppy's reproductive activity by having them sterilized. Rather, when you take into consideration the many benefits of having these procedures carried out, it is much more unkind not to neuter or spay a dog.

**Effects on Escape and Roaming**

A neutered or spayed Shih Tzu is less likely to wander. Sterilized male dogs have the tendency to patrol smaller sized outdoor areas and are less likely to participate in territorial conflicts with other dogs whom they may perceive as opponents.

**NOTE:** a Shih Tzu that has already experienced successful escapes from the yard may continue to wander after they are spayed or neutered.

**Effects on Problem Marking**

An unsterilized dog may urinate or defecate inside your home, the home of a friend, or in other undesirable areas in an attempt to mark or stake territorial claims, relieve anxiety, or advertise their availability for mating.

While neutering or spaying a Shih Tzu puppy after they have already begun to inappropriately eliminate or mark territory to announce their sexual availability to other dogs, will reduce the more powerful urine odor as well as eliminate the hormonal factors, once this habit has begun, the undesirable behavior may continue to persist even after neutering or spaying.

**Possible Weight Gain**
While metabolic changes that occur after spaying or neutering can cause some Shih Tzu puppy’s to gain weight, often the real culprit for any weight gain is the human who feels guilty for subjecting their puppy to any kind of pain and therefore, they attempt to make themselves feel better by feeding more treats or meals to their Shih Tzu companion.

If you are concerned about weight gain after neutering or spaying a Shih Tzu puppy, simply adjust their food and treat consumption, as needed.

It is a very simple process to change your Shih Tzu's food intake according to their physical demands and how they look, and if your Shih Tzu puppy’s daily exercise and level of activity has not changed after they have been spayed or neutered, there will likely be little to no change in food management necessary.

**Sharp Needles and Why**

Puppies are vaccinated by a veterinarian to provide them with protection against four common and serious diseases.

Vaccination against these common set of diseases is referred to as "DAPP", which stands for Distemper, Adenovirus, Parainfluenza and Parvo Virus.

Approximately one week after your Shih Tzu puppy has completed all three sets of primary vaccinations, they will be fully protected from those specific diseases. After this, most veterinarians will recommend a once a year vaccination for the next year or two.

**NOTE:** it has more recently become common practice to vaccinate adults dogs every three years, and if your veterinarian is insisting on a yearly vaccination for your Shih Tzu, you need to
ask them why, because to do otherwise is considered by most professionals to be “over vaccinating”.

**When Is a Puppy Vaccinated?**

The first vaccination needle is normally given to a puppy around six to eight weeks of age, which means that generally it will be the responsibility of the Shih Tzu breeder to ensure that the puppy’s first shots have been received before their new owner takes them home.

Remember to ask your breeder for a copy of all puppy vaccinations or veterinarian reports.

Then it will be the new Shih Tzu puppy’s guardians that will be responsible for ensuring that the next two sets of shots, which are usually given three to four weeks after each other, are given by the new guardian’s veterinarian at the proper intervals.

**DAPP Vaccinations**

DAPP vaccinations include Distemper, Adenovirus, Parainfluenza and Parvo Virus.

**Distemper**

Canine distemper is a contagious and serious viral illness for which there is currently no known cure.

This deadly virus, which is spread either through the air or by direct or indirect contact with a dog that is already infected, or other distemper carrying wildlife, including ferrets, raccoons, foxes, skunks and wolves, is a relative of the measles virus which affects humans.

Canine distemper is sometimes also called “hard pad disease” because some strains of the distemper virus actually cause
thickening of the pads on a dog’s feet, which can also affect the end of a dog’s nose.

In dogs or animals with weak immune systems, death may result two to five weeks after the initial infection.

Early symptoms of distemper include fever, loss of appetite, and mild eye inflammation that may only last a day or two. Symptoms become more serious and noticeable as the disease progresses.

A puppy or dog that survives the distemper virus will usually continue to experience symptoms or signs of the disease throughout their remaining lifespan, including “hard pad disease” as well as “enamel hypoplasia”, which is damage to the enamel of the puppy’s teeth that are not yet formed or that have not yet pushed through the gums. Enamel hypoplasia is caused by the distemper virus killing the cells that manufacture tooth enamel.

**Adenovirus**

Is a virus that causes infectious canine hepatitis, which can range in severity from very mild to very serious, and sometimes can cause death.

Symptoms can include coughing, loss of appetite, increased thirst and urination, tiredness, runny eyes and nose, vomiting, bruising or bleeding under the skin, swelling of the head, neck and trunk, fluid accumulation in the abdomen area, jaundice (yellow tinge to the skin), a bluish clouding of the cornea of the eye (called “hepatitis blue eye”) and seizures.

There is no specific treatment for infectious canine hepatitis, therefore, treatment of this disease is focussed on managing symptoms while the virus runs its course. Hospitalization and intravenous fluid therapy may be required in severe cases.
Parainfluenza Virus

The canine parainfluenza virus, also referred to as “canine influenza virus”, “greyhound disease” or “race flu”, which is easily spread through the air or by coming into contact with respiratory secretions, originally only affected horses.

This disease is believed to have adapted to become contagious to dogs and is easily spread from dog to dog, causing symptoms which may become fatal.

While the more frequent occurrences of this respiratory infection are seen in areas with high dog populations, such as race tracks, boarding kennels and pet stores, this virus is highly contagious to any dog or puppy, at any age.

Symptoms can include a dry, hacking cough, difficulty breathing, wheezing, runny nose and eyes, sneezing, fever, loss of appetite, tiredness, depression and possible pneumonia.

In cases where only a cough exists, tests will be required to determine whether the cause of the cough is the parainfluenza virus or the less serious “kennel cough”.

While many dogs can naturally recover from this virus, they will remain contagious, and for this reason, in order to prevent the spread to other animals, aggressive treatment of the virus, with antibiotics and antiviral drugs will be the general course of action.

In more severe cases, a cough suppressant may be prescribed, as well as intravenous fluids to help prevent secondary bacterial infection.

Parvovirus

Parvovirus is a highly contagious viral illness affecting puppies and dogs. Parvovirus also affects other canine species including foxes, coyotes and wolves.
There are two forms of this virus:

1. the more common intestinal form, and

2. the less common cardiac form, which can cause death in young puppies.

Symptoms of the intestinal form of parvovirus include vomiting, bloody diarrhea, weight loss, and lack of appetite, while the less common cardiac form attacks the heart muscle.

Early vaccination in young puppies has radically reduced the incidence of canine parvovirus infection, which is easily transmitted either by direct contact with an infected dog, or indirectly, by sniffing an infected dog’s feces.

The virus can also be brought into a dog's environment on the bottom of human shoes that may have stepped on infected feces, and there is evidence that this hardy virus can live in ground soil for up to a year.

Recovery from parvovirus requires both aggressive and early treatment. With proper treatment, death rates are relatively low (between 5 and 20%), although chances of survival for puppies are much lower than older dogs, and in all instances, there is no guarantee of survival.

Treatment of parvovirus requires hospitalization where intravenous fluids and nutrients are administered to help combat dehydration. As well, antibiotics will be given to counteract secondary bacterial infections, and as necessary, medications to control nausea and vomiting may also be given.

Without prompt and proper treatment, dogs that have severe parvovirus infections can die within 48 to 72 hours.
More Sharp Pokes?

Depending upon where you and your Shih Tzu live, your veterinarian may suggest additional vaccinations to help combat diseases that may be more common in your area, such as rabies.

Whose Got Worms?

You’re kidding! I do? But I’m clean and my humans keep a tidy house, so how could I have worms, asked the Shih Tzu?

De-worming kills internal parasites that your dog/puppy may have and most everyone does.

No matter how sanitary your conditions, or where you live, your dog or puppy will have internal parasites, because it is not a matter of cleanliness.

It is recommended by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) that puppies be dewormed every 2 weeks until they are 3 months old, and then every month after that, in order to control worms.

Many vets recommend worming dogs for tapeworm and roundworms every 6-12 months.

Micro-Chipping or Micro-Chumping

A micro-chip implant is a tiny integrated circuit, about twice the size of a large grain of rice, enclosed in glass that is placed under the skin of a dog or other animal.

The chip uses passive Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology, also known as a PIT tag (Passive Integrated
Transponder), and is usually implanted (without anesthetic) with a syringe into the scruff of a dog’s neck by a veterinarian or shelter.

These micro-chips have no internal power source, which means that they must be read by a scanner (also called an interrogator) in order to energize the chip so that the identifying number can be read.

Often manufacturers of micro-chips donate scanners to animal shelters and veterinarian clinics and hospitals. When set to the correct frequency, the scanner "interrogates" the microchip by invigorating the capacitor with electromagnetic power which then sends radio signals back to the scanner with the identification number.

While many communities are proposing making micro-chipping of all dogs mandatory (N. Ireland requires all dogs to be micro-chipped), others are not very happy with the idea who think it’s just more big business for little reward.

For instance, while approximately one quarter of European dogs have a microchip implant, the idea lacks popularity in the US, where only 5% of dogs and cats are microchipped.

Even though micro chipping is used by animal shelters, pounds, animal control officers, breeders and veterinarians to help return a higher percentage of lost canines to their owners, some of the resistance to this idea can be explained by problems with the ability of some organizations to correctly read the implant. If the scanner is not tuned to the same frequency as the micro-chip, it will not be read, rendering the process useless.

Pet microchips come with different frequencies, including 125 kHz, 128 kHz and 134.2 kHz.

While approximately 98% of the pet microchips in the US use 125 kHz, those in Europe use 134.2 kHz. In other words, if the facility
reading your dog’s micro-chip does not have an compatible scanner, your dog will not be identified.

What may turn out to be worse than the scanner incompatibility problem, is evidence that microchips might cause cancer. While some believe more research is needed for conclusive proof, others believe that the chance of the microchip causing cancer in a dog is very low when compared to the greatly increased benefits of having your lost dog returned to you.

You will have to weigh information known about micro-chipping, including possible cancer risks, and the odds of losing your dog against whether or not micro-chipping is something you want to have for your Shih Tzu.

Whether or not you choose to have your Shih Tzu micro-chipped, generally the cost ranges between $25 and $50 depending on what your veterinarian charges for this service.

**Licensing**

Most municipalities or cities require that dogs are licensed and this involves going to your local pet store or government agency to purchase a yearly dog tag that your dog will wear on their collar.

The tag will have an identifying number and a contact number for the registering organization, so that if someone finds a lost dog wearing a tag, the owner of the dog can be contacted.

Most dogs tags are only valid for one year, and will need to be renewed annually at the beginning of every New Year, which involves paying a fee which can vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction and often the fee will be less if the dog is spayed or neutered.

While dog licensing fees are usually somewhere between $30 and $50 per year, other locations around the globe may have
different fee structures. For instance, owners of dogs living in Beijing, China must pay a licensing fee of $600, while licensing fees for dogs living in Great Britain was abolished in 1987.

**Insurance**

If you have not done so already, you may wish to take a serious look into the possibility of obtaining medical insurance to help defray any unscheduled medical costs that could arise in later years, or through unforeseen accidents.

In light of all the new treatments and medications and diagnostic tools that are now available for our dogs, that usually come with a very high price tag ($1,000 to $5,000), an increasing number of guardians have decided to add pet insurance to their list of monthly expenses, which can cost anywhere from $2,000 to $6,000 USD over an average lifespan.

The right policy can be an asset to the health care of your Shih Tzu, while significantly reducing the cost you might have to pay as a result of an emergency visit to your veterinarian’s office.

Shop around (and read the fine print) because as with all insurance policies, pet insurance policies will vary greatly between companies and the only way to know for sure exactly what sort of coverage you are buying is to have a copy of that policy in front of you so that you can clearly see what will be covered and what will not be covered.

When you love your dog and worry that you may not have the funds to cover an emergency medical situation that could unexpectedly cost thousands, the right pet insurance policy will provide both peace of mind and better health care for your beloved fur friend.
3. UNFORGETTABLE DAY!

Preparing for Puppy’s Arrival

There is a lot to do before your new Shih Tzu puppy arrives at their new home. You will need to take a trip to your local pet store to buy all that they will need and you will also need to “puppy proof” your home so that they will be safe and not get into situations that could cause them harm.

Puppy Proofing Your Home

Most puppies will be a curious bundle of energy, which means that they will get into everything within their reach.

As a responsible Shih Tzu puppy guardian, you will want to provide a safe environment for them, which means eliminating all
sources of danger, similar to what you would do for a curious toddler.

Your puppy will want to investigate and closely inspect every electrical cord, every closet, every nook and cranny of your home and everything you may have left lying about the floor.

Power cords can be found in just about every room in the home and to a teething puppy, these may look like irresistible, fun, chew toys. Make sure that you tuck all power cords securely out of your puppy’s reach or enclose them inside a chew-proof PVC tube.

**Kitchen**

First of all, your kitchen should always be strictly off limits to your Shih Tzu puppy any time you are preparing food. Calmly send them out of the kitchen any time you are in the kitchen, and they will quickly get the idea that this area is off limits to them.

While your puppy is going through the curious teething stage, you might want to put childproof latches on all kitchen cupboards, to prevent curious investigating, while keeping dangerous foods and cleaning supplies out of their reach.

**Bathroom**

Bathroom cupboards and drawers or the side of a bathtub where you may leave your shaving supplies can hold many dangers for a young and curious Shih Tzu puppy.

Kleenex, cotton swabs, toilet paper, razors, pills, and soap left within your puppy’s reach are an easy target that could result in an emergency visit to your veterinarian’s office.
Family members need to put shampoos, soap, facial products, makeup and accessories out of reach or safely inside a cabinet or drawer.

If your puppy is tall enough to get into the toilet, keep the lid down at all times, or keep the bathroom door closed because a curious puppy could get themselves into the bowl and drown.

**Bedroom**

All puppies have a keen sense of smell, and in fact, their sense of smell is their very first sense to be developed when they are born, which means that given the opportunity, they will quickly search out anything that smells like you.

If you don’t keep your shoes, slippers and clothing safely behind doors, you may find that your Shih Tzu puppy has claimed them for their new chew toys, or if your puppy is not a big chewer, they may just want to sleep on your slippers. Be vigilant about keeping everything in its safe place, including jewelry, hair ties, bills, coins, and other small ingestible items in containers or drawers, and secure any exposed cords or wires.

If you have children, make sure they understand that, especially while your Shih Tzu puppy is going through their teething stage, that they must keep their rooms picked up and leave nothing that could cause a choking problem to the puppy laying about within their reach.

Many puppies and dogs like to crawl under beds or furniture or squeeze themselves behind furniture, so if you have a lot of these types of puppy hiding places, you will want to put up temporary blockades to prevent your puppy from hiding in inappropriate places.

**Living Room**

We humans often spend many hours in our cozy gathering places to watch movies or play games, and often the living areas of our
homes will have many items that are very enticing for a curious and teething Shih Tzu puppy, such as books, magazines, pillows, iPods, TV remotes and more. Put a cozy bed in the living room for your Shih Tzu puppy to snuggle into so that they can be nearby but not underfoot.

You will want to keep your home free of excess clutter and remain vigilant about straightening up and putting things that could be tempting for your puppy out of their sight or reach.

Office

Since most of us spend a great deal of time in our home office, your Shih Tzu puppy will want to be there, too, and they will be curious about all the usual office paraphernalia, including papers, books, magazines, and electrical cords. Give your puppy a bed to sleep in while they are in your office so that can be near you and also comfortable and warm.

Although your puppy might think that office items, such as rubber bands or paper clips are fun to play with, allowing these items to be within your Shih Tzu puppy’s reach could end up being a fatal mistake if your puppy swallows them. As with the rest of the house, pick up strewn office supplies, secure or enclose cords and wires, and keep decorative and dangling items well out of your puppy’s reach.

Plant Hazards

Many plants can be a very tempting target for your Shih Tzu puppy’s teeth, so you will want to keep them well out of your puppy’s reach. If you have floor plants, they will need to be moved to a shelf or counter or placed behind a closed door until your curious fur friend grows out of the habit of putting everything in their mouth. Also keep in mind that many common house plants are poisonous to dogs. There is a section devoted to common poisonous household plants further in this Manual.


Garage and Yard

For guardians that are not paying attention, there are obvious as well as subtle dangers that could seriously harm or even kill your Shih Tzu puppy found in the garage or yard. Some of these might include antifreeze, gasoline, fertilizers, rat and rodent poison, snail and slug poison, weed killer, paint, cleaners and solvents, grass seed, bark mulch and various insecticides.

If you are storing any of these toxic substances in your garage or garden shed, make certain that you keep all such bottles, boxes, or containers inside a locked cabinet, or stored on high shelves that your Shih Tzu puppy will not be able to reach. Even better, choose not to use toxic chemicals anywhere in your home or yard.

Some common garden plants, including bird of paradise, daffodils, foxglove, and lupine, can be poisonous to your puppy and if your puppy eats them, can cause varied reactions, that may range from diarrhea to vomiting or skin rash.

Puppy Hazard Home Inspection

Before you bring your new Shih Tzu puppy home, take a good look around your home, not just from your eye level, but from your puppy’s eye level, which means getting down really low on the floor and crawling around like your puppy will soon be doing.

Your puppy will have a much lower vantage point than you do when standing, therefore, there may be items in your environment that could potentially be harmful to your Shih Tzu puppy that you just don’t see unless you get down on their level and take a really good look.

Remember that your Shih Tzu puppy is a baby with a powerful sense of smell, and while all babies are curious explorers who want to put everything into their mouths, a Shih Tzu baby will be
much more agile than a human baby, and they will also be attracted by different smells that they will want to check out.

Not taking the appropriate measures to puppy proof your home before you bring home your new bundle of fur, could possibly lead to serious troubles or accidents that could easily be avoided.

### Let’s Go Shopping!

Take your Shih Tzu puppy shopping list with you when you go to your local pet store or boutique, otherwise you may forget critical items, which should include:

- **Food** - usually the puppy will remain on whatever food they have been fed at the breeder’s for at least the first couple of weeks, until they are well settled in their new home, so make sure you ask the breeder what brand to buy;

- **Bowls** - make sure they are small enough for a young Shih Tzu puppy to get into so that they can easily eat and drink. Suggest a durable stainless dining set that can later be used as travel bowls;

- **Kennel** - when you buy your puppy’s hard-sided kennel, make sure that you buy the size that will be appropriate for them when they are full grown. It must be large enough so that (when full grown) they can easily stand up and turn around inside it;

- **Martingale collar, 2 Leashes and Harness** - buy these small enough to fit your puppy and buy new ones as they grow
larger. You will be able to keep the same leashes as all you will ever need is a four foot (1.22 meters) leash made out of nylon webbing, with a light weight clip at the end (do not buy a leash that has a heavy clip on the end as it will be difficult for your tiny Shih Tzu puppy to carry around;

- Soft beds (one or two) for them to sleep in when they are not in their kennel - get the beds large enough for when the Shih Tzu puppy will be full grown;

- “Sherpa” or other type of soft-sided travel bag to get them used to traveling inside a carrier bag - get the bag large enough to fit them when they are full grown;

- Shampoo and Conditioner - never use human products on your Shih Tzu puppy because they are the wrong pH balance;

- Finger tooth brush - this is a soft rubber cap that fits over the human’s finger to get the puppy used to having your fingers in their mouth and their teeth regularly brushed;

- regular toothbrush, electric toothbrush;

- doggy toothpaste or bottle of 3% hydrogen peroxide;

- Soft bristle brush and comb - for daily grooming;

- Puppy nail scissors - for trimming their toenails;

- Small blunt nosed grooming scissors - for trimming the hair around their eyes;

- Puppy sized treats;

- Toys (or wait till you can take them to the store so they can pick their own: Boris’ favorite toy is still a soft yellow duck
that he picked himself when he was only 10 weeks old)

- Poop bags
- Pee pads
- Bath towels
- Non-slip mat for the sink or tub

**The First Night**

Before you go to pick up your new Shih Tzu puppy, vacuum your floors and do a last minute check of every room to make sure that everything that could be a puppy hazard is carefully tucked away out of sight and that nothing is left on the floor or low down on shelves where a curious puppy might get into trouble.

Close most of the doors inside your home, so that there is just one or two rooms that the puppy will have access to.

You have already been shopping and have everything you need, so get out a puppy pee pad and have it at the ready when you bring your new fur friend home.

Also have your soft bed(s) in an area where you will be spending most of your time and where it will be easily found by your puppy. If you have already purchased a soft toy, leave it in your puppy’s soft bed, or take the toy with you when you go to pick up your puppy.

**NOTE:** take either your hard-sided kennel or your soft-sided “Sherpa” travel bag with you when going to bring your new Shih Tzu puppy home, and make sure that it is
securely fastened to the seat of your vehicle with the seatbelt.

Even though you will be tempted to hold your new Shih Tzu puppy in your lap, this is a very dangerous place for them to be, in case of an accident.

Instead, place them inside their kennel or bag, which will be lined with soft towels and perhaps even a warm, towel wrapped hot water bottle, and close the door. Sit beside your puppy on the back seat, if you have someone who can drive for you, and if they cry on the way home, remind them that they are not alone with your soft, soothing voice.

Before you bring your new puppy inside your home, take them to the place where you want them to relieve themselves and try to wait it out long enough for them to at least go pee.

Then bring them inside your home and introduce them to the area where their food and water bowls will be kept, in case they are hungry or thirsty.

Let them wander around sniffing and checking out their new surroundings and gently encourage them to follow you wherever you go.

Show them where the puppy pee pad is located and place it near the door where you will exit to take them outside to relieve themselves. Many pee pad are scented to encourage a puppy to pee, and if they do, happily praise them.

Show them where their hard-sided kennel is (in your bedroom) and put them inside with the door open while you sit on the floor in front and quietly encourage them to relax inside their kennel.

Depending on the time of day when you bring your new puppy home for the first time, practice this kennel exercise several times throughout the day, and if they will take a little treat each
time you encourage them to go inside their kennel, this will help the further encourage the behavior of wanting to go inside.

After they have had their evening meal, take them outside approximately 20 minutes later to relieve themselves, and when they do, make sure you are very enthusiastic with your praise and perhaps even give a little treat.

So far your puppy has only been allowed in several rooms of your home, as you have kept the other doors closed, so keep it this way for the first few days.

Before it’s time for bed, again take your puppy outside for a very short walk to the same place where they last relieved themselves and make sure that they go pee before bringing them back inside.

Before bed, prepare your Shih Tzu puppy’s hot water bottle and wrap it in a towel so that it will not be too hot for them, and place it inside their hard-sided kennel (in your bedroom).

Next make sure the kennel is warm and there are plenty of soft towels to make it comfortable. Then invite them to go inside their kennel and if they seem interested, perhaps give them a soft toy to have inside with them.

Let them walk into the kennel under their own steam and when they do, give them a little treat (if they are interested) and encourage them to snuggle down to sleep while you are sitting on the floor in front of the kennel.

Once they have settled down inside their kennel, close the door, turn the light off (if they are not already) and go to your bed. It may help your puppy to sleep during their first night home, if you can play quiet, soothing music in the background. If they start to cry or whine, do not let them out, simply reassure them with your calm voice that they are not alone until they fall asleep.
The First Week

During the first week, you and your new Shih Tzu puppy will be getting settled into your new routine which will involve you getting used to your puppy’s needs as they get used to your usual schedule.

Try to be as consistent as possible with your waking and sleeping routine, getting up and going to bed at the same time each day, so that it will be easier for your puppy to get into the flow of their new life.

First thing in the morning, you will quickly get dressed and then open your puppy’s kennel door, put on their harness, collar and leash arrangement and take them immediately outside to relieve themselves at the place where they last went pee.

At this time, if you are teaching them to ring a doorbell to go outside, let them ring the bell before you go out the door with them, whether you are carrying them, or whether they are walking out the door on their own.

**NOTE**: during the first week, you may want to carry your puppy outside first thing in the morning as they may not be able to hold it for very long once waking up.

When you bring them back inside, you can let them follow you so they get used to their new leash arrangement. Be very careful not to drag them if they stop or pull back on the leash. If they refuse to walk on the leash, just hold the tension toward you (without pulling) while encouraging them to walk toward you, until they start to move forward again.
Now it will be time for their first feed of the day, and after they have finished eating, keep an eye on the clock, because you may need to take them out to relieve themselves in about 20 minutes.

When your puppy is not eating or napping, they will be wanting to explore and have little play sessions with you and these times will help to bond with your puppy more and more each day.

As their new guardian, it will be your responsibility to keep a close eye on them throughout the day, so that you can notice when they need to relieve themselves and either take them to their pee pad or take them outside.

You will also need to make sure that they are eating and drinking enough throughout the day, so set regular feeding times at least three times a day.

Also set specific times in the day when you will take your puppy out for a little walk on leash and harness, so that they are not only going outside when they need to relieve themselves, but they are also learning to explore their new neighborhood. When they are very young, you will not want to walk for very long as they will get tired easily, so keep your walks to no more than 15 or 20 minutes during your first week.

Common Human Mistakes

Sharing Your Bed

Letting your puppy or dog sleep in your bed is a common mistake many Shih Tzu owner make. Yes, it is heartbreaking listening to a tiny puppy cry in their lonely kennel the first night you bring them home, however, if you do not insist that they sleep in your own kennel right from the first night home, you may be setting yourself up for behavioral problems later on.
Put your Shih Tzu puppy’s kennel in your bedroom so they will not be alone and make the inside of their kennel a warm and inviting place by placing lots of towels or warm blankets inside. Until they get used to sleeping by themselves, without the warmth of their siblings and the mother dog, you may want to wrap a hot water bottle inside a towel to give them something warm to snuggle up to.

**NOTE:** if your puppy wakes up crying early in the morning, they may be lonely, or they may need to go out to relieve themselves. Calm their fears and let them know you are nearby with your soft voice and take them outside to go pee. At this time, it would be a good idea to reheat their hot water bottle so they have a warm kennel to return to for the remainder of the early morning.

If your puppy displays fear or growls at an object or person, never pick them up, because this will be rewarding them for unbalanced behavior. Instead, your puppy needs to be gently corrected by you, with firm and calm energy so that they learn not to react with fear or aggression.

**Being a Dog Transport**

Many people carry their Shih Tzu puppy or adult dog around, rather than allowing them to walk on their own. This can create behavioral problems because a dog that is carried all the time is in the “top dog” position of power, much higher than any other dog or even some adults.

As well, many Shih Tzu guardians will pick up their dog when they see a larger dog approaching. Doing this can create behavioral issues whereby your dog may start to fear or become aggressive toward other dogs.

If you are worried about another dog approaching, simply put your Shih Tzu behind you while you address the approaching dog.
Free Feeding

Many guardians of small breed dogs allow their adult dogs to eat food any time they want, by leaving food out 24/7.

This can be a serious mistake, as your Shih Tzu needs to know that you are absolutely in control of their food. If they do not associate the food with you, they may become picky eaters or think that they are the boss, which can lead to other behavioral issues later in life.

Treating Them Like Fur Children

Do not get into the bad habit of treating your Shih Tzu like a small fur human, because even though they will try their best to please you, not honoring them for the amazing dog they are will only cause them confusion that could lead to behavioral problems.

A well balanced Shih Tzu thrives on rules and boundaries, and when they understand that there is no question you are their leader and they are your follower, they will live a contented, happy and stress-free life.

Preventing Injuries

No Jumping from Heights

Never permit your young Shih Tzu puppy jump from a chair, couch, bed or out of your arms and onto the floor as they could easily hurt themselves and even break their legs or cause a joint injury when their bones are not yet well developed and strong enough to withstand the force of jumping from such heights.

A young puppy can also smash their head into the floor when jumping from a high place, which could damage their jaw or teeth.
No Big Dog Play

Do not allow your young Shih Tzu puppy to play with dogs or puppies who are much larger and heavier than they are, because the larger dog or puppy could accidentally hurt your Shih Tzu puppy.

Beware of Traffic

Always keep your Shih Tzu puppy under your complete control when walking them outside because they may run into traffic.

No Improper Toys

Do not give your young Shih Tzu puppy really small toys that they could choke on or swallow and never give them a toy that could easily come apart and cause a choking problem.

No Eating Cigarette Butts

When you are out walking with your young Shih Tzu puppy, they will naturally want to put everything they come across into their mouth, and this often means cigarette butts or other pieces of toxic garbage. It is up to you, as their conscientious guardian, to be watchful and never allow them to put these things into their mouth.

Never get angry with them for doing this because they are only trying to learn what is edible and what is not. If they do, for instance, get a cigarette butt into their mouth, immediately get your fingers in there and remove it before they get the chance to swallow it because cigarette tobacco is highly toxic, can make a young puppy very sick, or even kill them.

No Eating Human Foods
Be very careful when preparing food in your kitchen and do not allow your puppy to be scouring the floor for bits and pieces you may have dropped, because many human foods are toxic to dogs and only a small piece of some of these toxic foods can seriously harm a young puppy. There is an entire section about common foods that are toxic to dogs later in this Manual.

**TIP:** when your Shih Tzu puppy is very young, between 8 and 24 weeks of age, keep your puppy in a harness (as well as a leash and collar), and have another leash attached to the harness, so that when you see your puppy is about to put something inedible into their mouth, you can lift up on the leash attached to the harness so that they cannot get the object of curiosity into their mouth.

**Michelin Snow Dog**

It is especially important to be aware of what happens to a Shih Tzu when they are out walking or playing in the snow.

Even a very light dusting of snow can be hazardous for your Shih Tzu because their soft hair grows between their toes which will collect snow balls between the pads of their feet that will make walking very difficult and painful for them. Once little balls of snow and ice collect in the pads of their feet, the sensation they will experience will not be unlike walking with hard pebbles in your shoes.

Eventually, your Shih Tzu will just stop moving because they will have so much snow stuck to their hair that they will look like the Michelin dog.

If your Shih Tzu has longer hair or gets snow onto their legs or underbelly it will quickly clump up and form snowballs and your dog will no longer be able to walk properly, which can harm their joints.
DO NOT simply attempt to pull the snowballs off of their legs or feet because this will cause them much pain.

The only safe and painless way to remove snow that is stuck to your Shih Tzu’s coat or feet will be for you to carry them home and place them in a warm tub of water so that the snowballs can melt away.

**Puppy Shih Tzu Care**

**Teething and Tooth Care**

Puppy teething is a necessary part of growing up that every puppy and its owner must go through.

It’s very important that you do not scold your puppy for chewing the wrong items during this time because they are not doing this to ruin your day, but rather they are chewing to relieve their pain.

Just like human babies, teething time for your puppy can be a miserable experience for them and what seems to you as an uncontrollable episode of chewing, is their attempt to find some relief.

At teething time you need to give your puppy extra patience, love and affection because they will not understand what is happening to them and why they are experiencing pain and they will look to you for guidance and to help them find ways to stop the pain.

Your understanding, unconditional love and knowing how to help your puppy during this difficult period in their life will make all the difference in how both of you survives teething time.
At around two weeks of age, a puppy begins to get their baby teeth and usually by the time they are 12 weeks old they will have all of those little shark teeth.

Almost as soon as the last puppy tooth appears, they will start to lose them when they are pushed out by the incoming permanent adult teeth. During this time your puppy will be experiencing painful gum swelling, redness and irritation that will be accompanied by an uncontrollable urge to chew.

Your puppy will not understand the difference between chewing on a toy or your favorite leather shoes, so unless you want to run the risk of them alleviating their pain by chewing up your valuables, you need to prepare yourself and take steps to ensure this phase goes as smoothly as possible for both puppy and you.

First of all, keep items you do not wish to be chewed out of their reach, and then provide your puppy with safe items they are allowed to chew. The puppy’s new teeth are putting pressure on their gums which causes pain and itching, therefore, chewing is their natural reaction to this uncomfortable feeling.

If you do not provide a chew toy, or another safe alternative, your puppy will look for something else to chew, such as furniture, the remote, the cat, and other items you may value, including your toes and fingers.

Offer your puppy only one or two chew toys, and present them to your puppy before he or she starts chewing on something else. If you supply too many chew toys, your puppy may be too confused to not distinguish the chair leg from the many other items that are within easy reach and seem just as chewable to them.

Other than store bought chew toys and stuffed animals, there are alternatives you may wish to give to your Shih Tzu puppy to help alleviate their teething pain.
Alleviating Teething Pain

**Ice cubes** will provide soothing relief for swollen and irritated gums while giving your puppy something solid to sink their teeth into. For smaller breeds, like the Shih Tzu, break up the ice cubes into smaller pieces or give them crushed ice.

**Baby carrots**, or small carrots will give your puppy something to chew on that tastes good and is actually edible. You can also put the carrots in the freezer.

**Frozen rope toys** will help to alleviate the itching and pain associated with a puppy’s teething irritation because, like the ice cubes, the cold rope will help to numb their aching gums while giving them something solid to chew. Soak the rope toy in water and place it in the freezer. This also teaches your Shih Tzu puppy that this “toy” makes the pain go away and once they have experienced this relief, they will look for the rope toy instead of the corner of your table.

**Frozen wash cloths or tea towels** make a soothing chew for your puppy. Freeze a clean tea towel after soaking it in water and wringing it out. Twist the damp cloth into a tight, rope-like shape or tie a few knots in the middle and let it freeze that way.

When your puppy shows signs of needing to chew, give them the frozen cloth to help chill and temporarily numb their gum pain. When the cloth or towel warms and softens, you can rinse it out and refreeze it.

Of course, you will want to closely monitor this chewing, and if you see that your Shih Tzu puppy is tearing the cloth or towel apart, you don’t want your puppy swallowing pieces of cloth or towel, frozen or otherwise, so immediately take it away.

**Gum massage**: when your puppy is experiencing teething pain, it may help them feel better if you take the time to massage their gums. Have your puppy sit with you and use one hand to support
their head while you gently rub their gums with your finger. This is also a good time to get your puppy used to the teeth brushing routine with a soft rubber finger cap brush.

**Retained Primary Teeth:** Sometimes puppies (especially smaller breeds like the Shih Tzu) do not naturally lose their puppy or milk teeth without intervention from a licensed veterinarian.

Keep a close watch on your puppy’s teeth around the age of six or seven months to make certain that the Shih Tzu baby teeth have fallen out and that the adult teeth have space to grown in. If your puppy has not naturally lost their baby teeth, they will need to be pulled, in order to allow room for the adult teeth to grow in, and a good time to have this done is when they go in to be neutered or spayed.

All canine breeds will have two sets of teeth in their life. The first set of 28 teeth start to grow in at around age 3 to 8 weeks and are referred to as "milk teeth", "baby teeth" or those razor sharp "baby fangs". The puppies will start to lose sharp milk teeth at around 4 to 8 months of age.

The second, or permanent set are the 42 adult teeth.

Puppies with a small jaw may have problems if their baby teeth do not fall out as the permanent or adult teeth grow in because the teeth become overcrowded which can cause food and plaque to build up, eventually causing bacteria to grow on the surface of the teeth, which will lead to dental disease.

If the Shih Tzu puppy tooth does not yield to the incoming tooth, it should be surgically removed because it can cause a misaligned bite, and sometimes the new teeth are forced to grow into an abnormal position and further cause a bad bite.

A puppy is usually spayed or neutered at the age of six months or earlier, therefore, if the puppy has baby teeth that haven’t fallen
out, they can be removed at this time while the puppy is already under anesthetic.

The best prevention for dental disease is to feed hard food and natural bones to exercise the teeth and break up plaque, and to get your Shih Tzu puppy used to regular, daily teeth brushing with a soft finger brush, or nylon brush early in their life.

My favorite brush for puppies and dogs is an electric brush which provides a superior cleaning while it does all the work for you because all you have to do is hold the brush against the teeth. As well, with an electric brush, you are not tempted to push too hard and cause the gums to bleed.

The best time to get your puppy used to the sound and vibration of an electric toothbrush is when they are very young. You will be very glad you took the time to do this, because when your puppy grows in their adult teeth they will already be accepting of this daily brushing ritual and you will be helping them to have a healthy mouth for their entire lifetime.

**Grooming Routine**

A Shih Tzu will require grooming their entire life, therefore, establishing a grooming routine with your puppy very early on in their life will help to assure that they accept the process without fuss once they are full grown.

Every puppy (& dog), should be brushed at least every couple of days.

A Shih Tzu puppy has hair, that is constantly growing, and if you don’t have the time or the inclination to be always brushing and combing your puppy’s long hair, they will become an untidy, matted mess. If time is an issue for you, when your puppy is full grown, it would be best for their health to commit to frequent clipping at the groomers, or learning how to do this yourself,
every six to eight weeks, in order to keep their coat short and easily manageable.

A puppy's coat will usually be very different from the look and feel of their adult coat. Puppy coats are softer, fluffier, and shorter, and even though they may not require much grooming when they are very young, you will definitely want to get them used to being groomed, and will want to establish a grooming routine soon after you bring them home.

Your first grooming session will probably take place while your puppy is sitting in your lap or when you’re playing on the floor. To make sure you don’t spook your puppy or make grooming something scary for them, limit your grooming to lightly brushing or combing for just a few minutes.

**TIP:** getting a young puppy used to the buzzing sensation of an electric toothbrush will also help them to become used to the buzzing sensation and noise of an electric clipper when it comes time for grooming sessions.

Spend a few minutes every day gently brushing and/or combing your puppy and touching their body all over. Before bedtime each night, soak a clean cloth in warm water, wring it out and give your puppy a quick rub down all over their body and even between their toes to remove surface dirt from the day, and then brush their teeth.

Also make sure that you spend the time to get your puppy used to having their feet touched and their nails regularly trimmed because if you don’t do this early on in their young life, it will be very traumatic for them and you as they are older and must have their nails trimmed. When your puppy is very young, the best toenail clipper will be a small pair of scissors specially designed to clipping small canine nails. When a Shih Tzu is full grown, you can graduate to a plier style toenail clipper.
Once you’ve established a regular grooming routine with your puppy, if they are going to require regular clipping, start placing them on a table or countertop for their daily grooming so that they become used to being elevated when it’s time to begin a full grooming session that involves clipping their hair.

Whether it’s just a bath, a nail clipping or a full grooming session, making sure that your Shih Tzu puppy gets used to all the grooming routines they will need to stay clean and healthy early on in their young life, will ensure that when grooming is required, that your dog will accept the procedures necessary without fuss or trauma.

Further information on grooming can be found in Section 6 of this book under “Shih Tzu Grooming Guide”.

**Play Time**

Every well balanced and happy Shih Tzu puppy needs time to play with you and their toys every day. This is a great way to enjoy special bonding time with your puppy while you also help them to stretch and run and grow into their new adult sized body.

Take your Shih Tzu puppy to your local pet store soon after you bring them home so that they can choose a toy that they really like. Generally speaking, most Shih Tzu puppies will prefer lighter weight, soft toys to play with, although they will also enjoy chasing a ball, even though they do not have the retrieving gene.

Some puppies will absolutely go crazy for a laser light game and will happily chase it all over the floor. Do not get them overly tired with this game and be careful not to aim the laser light into their eyes.
Puppy Social Club

You cannot begin too early when getting your Shih Tzu puppy used to socializing with other dogs, other animals, other people, unknown locations or unfamiliar situations.

This means taking your new Shih Tzu puppy absolutely everywhere with you so that they can be introduced to a multitude of different sights, sounds, smells and activities.

While being careful not to overtire them, and still keeping them safe from other dogs (before they have had all their puppy vaccinations) and out of harmful situations, you will want to go out of your way to introduce your Shih Tzu puppy to all manner of situations so that when they become an adult they will not be fearful or nervous no matter where you may travel with them.

Most of an adult dog’s habits and behavioral traits are formed between the ages of birth to one year of age. This is why it is very important to introduce your puppy to all types of locations, sights, sounds and smells when they are very young.

Your puppy will learn, by watching how you react in every situation, how they must also react.

If your puppy displays fear or growls at an object or person, never pick them up, because this will be rewarding them for unbalanced behavior. Instead, your puppy needs to be gently corrected by you, with firm and calm energy so that they learn not to react with fear or aggression.
With Other Dogs

Once your puppy has had all of their vaccinations, you can take them out to dog parks and places where many dogs are found.

Before allowing them to interact with other dogs or puppies, take them for a disciplined walk on leash so that they will be a little tired and less likely to immediately pounce on all other dogs.

Keep your puppy on leash and close beside you, because most puppies are a bundle of exuberant energy, and you need to teach them how far they can go before getting themselves into trouble with adult dogs who may not appreciate their playfulness.

Make sure you understand your own puppy’s traits, and always ask a stranger if their dog is OK with puppies before allowing your puppy to play. Keep a close watch on your puppy to make sure they are not being overwhelmed by too many other dogs, because it is your job to protect your puppy.

If your puppy shows any signs of aggression or domination toward another puppy, dog or person, you must immediately discipline them, otherwise you will be allowing them to get into situations that could become serious as they grow in age and size. No matter the age or size of your puppy, allowing them to display aggression or domination over another dog or person is NOT a laughing matter.

With Other Humans

Take your puppy everywhere with you and introduce them to many different people of all ages, sizes and ethnicities. Most people will automatically be drawn to you when they see you have a puppy because few of us humans can resist a cute puppy.

Let everyone come to you and interact with your puppy and if they ask to hold your puppy, this is also a good way to socialize your puppy and show them that humans are friendly.
Do not let others play roughly with your puppy or squeal at them in a high pitched voices because this can be very frightening for a young puppy. As well, you do not want to teach your puppy that humans are a source of excitement.

If your puppy becomes fearful or plays too roughly with humans, trying to nip at their hands, immediately discipline your puppy, even though the humans will likely tell you that it’s OK.

Be especially careful when introducing your puppy to young children who may inadvertently hurt your puppy, because you don’t want your puppy to become fearful of children as this could lead to aggression later on in life. Explain to children that the puppy is very young and that they must be calm and gentle when playing or interacting in any way.

**With the Environment**

Many of us humans make the mistake of not taking the time to properly introduce our puppies to multiple types of environments.

When you don’t take your puppy into many different types of environments, you will be setting them up for possible trauma later on in their life.

For example, even if you know you will never live near the water or take a walk along the water’s edge for most of your life, you need to make the effort to introduce your puppy to water anyway. Otherwise, should the time come when you may be near a lake or the ocean, your puppy that has grown into a dog, will be fearful.

Even if you are not the type of person who likes crowds or noisy streets, you need to frequent these areas while your puppy is growing up, otherwise you will teach them to be nervous around crowds or noisy streets.

Even if you’re not the outdoorsy type, who would likely never go hiking in the woods, you still need to socialize your puppy to these types of areas so that they will be well rounded and not
worried should they ever have the opportunity to walk in a quiet forest or deserted park.

When you have a puppy, you need to visit all sorts of areas you might not regularly frequent, even busy, loud construction sites because they need to see all sorts of sights, sounds and situations so that they will not become fearful should they need to be with you in any of these areas.

Take your puppy to the airport and let them watch planes landing and taking off, take your puppy to a local park and watch a baseball game, or take them to the local zoo and let them see horses, pigs and ducks.

Take your new puppy everywhere you can think of and you will be teaching them to be a calm and well balanced member of your family wherever you may be.

**Living With a Cat**

Most Shih Tzu have no difficulty whatsoever with sharing their home with a feline friend, and it will usually be the cat who makes more of a fuss about it, so be careful that your cat does not attack your new Shih Tzu puppy.

Get them slowly acquainted and until your new puppy gets the lay of the land figured out, and your cat decides to be at least semi-friendly, only let them be in the same room together when you are there to supervise.

**If You Already Have a Dog**

If you are bringing a new Shih Tzu puppy into a home that already has a dog, before bringing the new puppy inside, take the older dog outside where they can meet each other on neutral ground.

Always be very careful when introducing a new puppy to a full grown dog and do not allow close contact until the puppy has had all their vaccinations.
If the older dog is much larger than the puppy or adult Shih Tzu, you will have to make sure that when they are playing together that the larger dog does not accidentally hurt the puppy.

Be careful not to cause jealousy between the new puppy and the older dog by giving them each equal time and attention.

**Chow Time!**

What sort of food to feed to your dog is always a hotly debated topic.

However, there is absolutely no doubt that there are many brands of commercially made food that humans have been feeding to their dogs that have little nutritional value.

As well, so many dog foods contain grains that no dog was designed to eat.

**What Mother Nature Intended**

The canine is considered a carnivore, which means that they were designed to eat mostly meat.

**The Carnivore’s Teeth**

Take a look at your dog's 42 permanent teeth. None of these teeth are grinding molars, which means they simply are not equipped to eat all those grains found in commercially made dog food, because they do not have the right teeth to grind them.

Look again at your fur friend’s teeth and you will notice that they are well equipped to eat meat because their teeth are all pointy, ripping canines designed for ripping into meat.
Unlike humans and livestock, who are equipped with wide, flat molars for grinding grains, vegetables and other plant-based materials, canine teeth are all pointed because they are designed to rip, shred and tear into animal meat and bone.

**The Carnivore’s Jaw**

Another obvious consideration when choosing an appropriate food source for our fur friends, is the fact that every dog, including the small Shih Tzu, is born equipped with powerful jaws and neck muscles for the specific purpose of being able to pull down and tear apart their hunted prey.

It makes no difference whether the “prey” is an antelope or a rabbit, because they are all designed to do the same type of work.

The structure of the jaw of every canine is such that it opens widely to hold large pieces of meat and bone, while the mechanics of a dog’s jaw permits only vertical (up and down) movement that is designed for crushing.

**The Carnivore’s Digestive Tract**

A dog’s digestive tract is quite different from a human’s, in that it is short and simple and designed to move their natural choice of food (hide, meat and bone) quickly through their systems.

On the other hand, vegetables and plant matter require more time to break down in the gastrointestinal tract, which in turn, requires a much more complex digestive system than the canine body is equipped with.

A dog’s digestive system is simply unable to break down vegetable matter, which is why whole vegetables look pretty much the same going into your dog as they do coming out the other end.
Over many years of domestication, our dogs have become used to eating a highly processed, kibble-based diet consisting of a high percentage of grains and vegetables and a low amount of meat.

However, given the choice, most of our canine companions would never choose to eat plants or vegetables and fruits over meat, and to encourage them to continue to eat this sort of diet, we usually have to flavor the food with meat or meat by-products.

However, as their loving guardians, we need to ask ourselves how much healthier and longer lived might they be if, instead largely ignoring nature’s design for our beloved dog, we chose to feed them whole, unprocessed, species-appropriate food?

For instance, many dogs develop skin problems, dull coats and other health issues, including allergies, due to the grains they are being fed in their dog food.

As far as the health of your Shih Tzu is concerned, it is best to feed them a wheat-free, grain-free diet.

Better quality dog food, usually means more meat, which will cost more, however, it will mean a better quality of life for your favorite fur friend.

As well, a better quality dog food means that your dog can eat less of it because their body will actually absorb more of the nutrients they are eating. Another upside to this, is that your dog will produce less waste.

Also keep in mind that feeding a poor diet to your Shih Tzu could result in many costly visits to your veterinarian’s office if they develop issues, such as itching, allergies, excessive shedding, dull coat or body odor, which can all be the result of poor quality food.

Always thoroughly read dog food labels and make certain that the first ingredient is actual meat (not byproducts or meal) and if you
are uncertain about the best ingredients for your particular dog, ask an expert.

Also keep in mind that it will be doubtful to find a good quality dog food at a grocery store, which means that you will need to buy your dog’s food at your local pet store where the staff should be knowledgeable about the right food for your dog and their level of activity.

**The Raw or BARF Diet**

Many dog lovers are quick to agree that their dog does best on a raw or Biologically Appropriate Raw Food (BARF) diet.

Although feeding a raw food diet to your adult Shih Tzu may still be a little controversial, with many citing the risks of bacteria lurking in raw foods, the potential benefits of feeding a raw dog food diet are many.

Benefits include healthy, shiny coats, decreased shedding, fewer allergy problems, healthier skin, cleaner teeth, fresher breath, higher energy levels, improved digestion, smaller stools, strengthened immune system, increased mobility in arthritic pets, and a general increase or improvement in overall health.

A raw diet is a direct evolution of what dogs ate before they became our pets and we turned toward commercially prepared, easy to serve dry dog food that required no special storage or preparation and was largely garbage food we humans didn’t know what to do with.

The BARF diet is all about feeding dogs correctly and returning them to their evolutionary way of eating.

A biologically appropriate diet for a dog is one consisting of raw whole foods which are similar to the foods eaten by the dog’s wild ancestors.
The raw food must contain such things as muscle meat, bone, fat, organ meats, vegetable and fruit materials combined in precisely the correct balance, just as Mother Nature intended.

Every dog is different, and whether you choose to go the raw route when feeding your dog or land somewhere in the middle, keep in mind that, just as too much wheat in our human diet is having detrimental effects on our health, the same can be very true for our best fur friends who are also suffering from many of the same life threatening diseases (diabetes, heart disease, cancer) that are rampant in our society as a direct result of our processed and packaged diets.

**De-Hydrated Diets**

There are also some really superior dog foods coming to the forefront of the dog food industry that are just as healthy as the totally raw diet.

This type of diet may be perfect for those who worry about the possibility of bacterial infection when feeding a totally raw diet, as many of these de-hydrated diets cook the meat or fish before de-hydrating.

A de-hydrated diet is easy to prepare for your dog because all you have to do is add warm water and many dogs prefer a warm meal.
Boris is healthy and thriving on a combination of a breakfast meal of grain-free dry food (NOW FRESH™ from Petcurean), a midday Dentastix™ snack and a warm evening meal of NRG dehydrated raw food.

**Morning Meal**

Boris’ morning meal is smaller than his evening meal (1/4 cup) and the NOW FRESH™ Small Breed recipe is a small, hard, clover-shaped crunchy food that helps to keep his teeth clean. I would suggest that you find the same or a similar healthy recipe for your Shih Tzu because...

"NOW FRESH™ Adult dog food recipe is made with 100% FRESH turkey, salmon, duck and 100% fresh Omega 3 & 6 oils from coconuts and canola. NOW FRESH™ also features zero grains, gluten, wheat, beef, corn or soy. Zero rendered meats, by-products or artificial preservatives."

**Evening Meal**

Boris eagerly devours his evening meal of 1/2 cup of NRG (from NRG Pet Products), which is an all natural, dehydrated RAW food
diet that is easy to serve. All you do is add warm water, wait five minutes and serve your Shih Tzu a warm meal. NRG is great for your dog because it contains high quality ingredients including...

“Free Range muscle meat (available in free range chicken, buffalo, beef and wild caught pacific salmon), squash, carrots, pumpkin, eggs, liver, grapefruit, wheat germ, broccoli, cranberries, papaya, garlic, goat milk yogurt, flax seed, salmon fillet, apples, cider vinegar, limes, kelp, blueberries, eggshell, coconut oil.”

Simply Healthy Daily Shih Tzu Meal Plan

How much you need to feed your particular adult Shih Tzu will vary greatly, even from the feeding instructions on the package, because every dog has a different metabolism, and their own natural energy level, plus how active they are throughout the day will be a large factor in how hungry they are at mealtimes.

The best way to determine how much to feed your adult dog is by observing your dog and feeling their ribs with the flat of your hand. If you cannot feel any ribs, you are feeding too much.

If your dog tends to be a little overweight, start on the lower end of the feeding directions, and likewise, if you have a dog who is a little underweight, start feeding a little more.
As well, your Shih Tzu will “tell” you whether or not they prefer one or two meals a day, because if they simply show no interest in a morning meal, they are likely a once a day eater.

However, with most small breed adult dogs, it is advisable to feed at least two smaller portions each day, and perhaps two to four treats throughout the day, so that they do not suffer from low blood sugar.

**Healthy Treats**

Many Shih Tzu can be picky about what sorts of treats they will actually eat.

Big Bits, Healthy Hip and Joint, by Waggers are ideal treats that your Shih Tzu will love. Plus, they are easy to break apart if you wish to use them in smaller portions for training. This is a healthy treat enhanced with a digestive enzyme that also protects joints while supporting brain development and visual performance.

**Training Treats**

When training a Shih Tzu, you need to find a treat that is small, highly scented and usually semi moist, as most Shih Tzu prefer these types of treats.

The Mini Naturals from Zuke’s are the perfect training treat for your Shih Tzu who will be very excited and eager to perform every time you bring out the bag.
Dental Treats

While there are other similar dental treat brands in the marketplace, the Dentastix™ brand, made by Pedigree do a very efficient job of helping to keep plaque build-up to a minimum while exercising the Shih Tzu jaw at a reasonable price.

As the packaging states, this product is “clinically proven to reduce up to 80% of tartar buildup—a contributor to gum disease—when used as part of a daily oral care routine.”

While there are other dental care products that take advantage of this unique x-shaped design, which is what makes this type of dental treat superior to others, always read the label and make sure the ingredients are not harmful before you feed them to your Shih Tzu.

Whether you buy the Dentastix™ brand or a similar one, the correct size to purchase for a Shih Tzu will be the “Small” size, and I suggest feeding one of these every day as a lunch snack for your Shih Tzu.

Picky Eaters

A dog who becomes a picky eater is often the result of improper training, free feeding, no rules and boundaries, inconsistent scheduling, and feeding too many treats or human food.

For instance, many people get into the habit of feeding their small Shih Tzu like a cat, by leaving food out for them all day long (called “free feeding”). This is NOT a good idea, because dogs are not cats and they absolutely need proper feeding schedules that you are in charge of. It is NOT natural for a dog to have access to
food all day long and by allowing this, you can set yourself up for many behavioral issues somewhere down the road.

As well, any Shih Tzu who receives many treats throughout the day, or is constantly fed human food (strictly limit this) will be much less interested in eating their regularly scheduled meals, plus, if they do not lead a particularly active lifestyle, they may be getting too heavy.

**TIP**: add a 1/8 teaspoon of good quality sunflower or olive oil to your Shih Tzu’s morning dry food dinner, and mix it in thoroughly with your fingers, so the oil gets all over the dry kibble bits.

Then sprinkle 1/4 teaspoon of finely grated or powdered parmesan cheese over the kibble. Adding the parmesan cheese adds next to no calories and will make most picky eaters gobble down their food, while helping to give your Shih Tzu healthy skin and a shiny coat.

**The Perfect Bowl**

Following is a brief description of the different categories and types of dog bowls that would be appropriate choices for every Shih Tzu’s particular needs.

This wooden dining table with stainless bowls is the perfect watering/feeding combination, as it is both elegant, easy to clean and the perfect height for a Shih Tzu.

**Automatic Watering Bowls**: are standard dog bowls (often made out of plastic) that are attached to a reservoir container.
which is designed to keep water constantly available to your dog as long as there is water remaining in the storage compartment.

**Ceramic/Stoneware Bowls:** for those who like options in personality, color and shape.

**Elevated Bowls:** are a tidy and classy choice that will make your dog’s dinner time a more comfortable experience while getting the bowls off the floor.

**No Skid Bowls:** for dogs who push their bowls across the floor when eating. A non-skid dog bowl will help keep the feed bowl where you put it.

**No Tip Bowls:** to prevent the messy type of doggy eater who likes to play with their dishes and flip over their dinner or water bowls.

**Stainless Steel Bowls:** are as indestructible as a bowl can be, plus they are sanitary and easy to clean and water stays cooler for a longer period of time in a stainless bowl.

**Wooden Bowls:** are beautiful pieces of furniture unto themselves that can enhance your home decor.

**Travel Bowls:** convenient, practical and handy additions for any travel pack. A space saving, collapsible dog bowl, made out of hygienic, renewable bamboo is the perfect choice for all travel bowl needs.

Learn more about all the many dog bowl choices available at DogBowlForYourDog.com, which is a comprehensive, one-stop website dedicated to explaining the ins and outs of every food bowl imaginable and helping you find the perfect bowl for all your Shih Tzu’s needs.
The Well Dressed Shih Tzu

The well dressed Shih Tzu will require a variety of doggy wear to keep them warm, dry, comfortable and visible.

Different Duds for Different Climates

Keep in mind that the Shih Tzu body is a little bit longer than the average dog, which means you may have to buy their clothing a little larger to ensure the right length.

In order to make sure that you are buying the correct size for your dog, take them shopping with you. Buy your dog’s clothing so that it is long enough to reach all the way down their back to the tail (see Boris below).

Cold Climate Wear

This is Boris wearing his snow coat, which is fleece on the inside and water repellant on the outside with a reflective stripe.

If you and your Shih Tzu live in a cold climate where you experience chilly winds, snow and ice, you will definitely need to take your fur friend shopping for the right outerwear to help keep them warm and dry.

You will need to buy a coat that is water proof or water resistant on the outside, that has either fleece, feathers, or some sort of warm insulating material on the inside.

Warm, Sunny Climates
If you have your Shih Tzu clipped very short during warm weather, they may need a light cotton covering to protect them from sunburn or irritating bugs, and if the sun is shining, they will definitely need to be wearing their protective eyewear, and perhaps even a hat.

**Wet Climates**

If you live in a wet climate that is not particularly cold, your Shih Tzu will appreciate being protected from the rain when wearing appropriate, light weight, rain gear that will help to keep them dry when out walking.

**Nighttime Visibility**

It is especially important to make sure that your Shih Tzu is wearing some sort of reflective clothing if you are often out walking where it is dark.

Many light coats and jackets have reflective stripes that glow brightly when the lights from approaching vehicles shine on them, and there are also many blinking, attachments, collars and leashes available to help keep your Shih Tzu safe at night.

Also, if the weather is warm, you can dress them in a airy, reflective, orange vest to help them be seen at night or to help you find them during the day when they are out in longer grass.
**Water Safety**

There are many pet stores and recreation type stores that sell life jackets for canines, so if you are boating with your Shih Tzu, you will want to take them shopping for a life jacket to keep them safe while enjoying water sports.

**Daily Exercise**

While it doesn’t really matter what type of exercise you are involved in with your Shih Tzu, what does matter is that you take them with you and that you have a more or less regular exercising schedule, because your energetic Shih Tzu will be eager to get out there and exercise with you every day.

Of course, the regular, on-leash walks are very important and you will need to walk your Shih Tzu at least two or three times every day so that they can properly relieve themselves. They will also appreciate some off-leash time where they can run free and really get stretched out.

Then every evening before bedtime, you will want to take your Shih Tzu out for a short constitutional before you give them a little personal attention (a quick brush or damp wash to remove the grime of the day) and brush their teeth before bed.
Walks

While you will want to take your puppy outside many times during the day to relieve themselves, while they are in their critical growing phase (between 8 weeks and 1 year), you will not want to walk them for long periods over hard or hot surfaces.

Two or three ten or fifteen minute walks during their first three months will be sufficient, and then as they mature, you can slowly increase the length of their walk time, because once they have attained adult age, these sturdy little dogs will love to walk anywhere with you.

Playtime

Allowing your new Shih Tzu puppy to have lots short play sessions will help them to bond with you while you both enjoy this close time together.

While they are still very small, all playtime will usually involve the both of you being on the floor, while you teach your puppy to chase toys or teeth on appropriate items.

The Shih Tzu puppy will enjoy chasing both soft toys and hard rubber toys, and the best way to find out which ones they prefer is to take them to your local pet store and present them with a variety of choices, then let them choose which one they like best.

For instance, Boris picked out his first toy at the pet store, when he was only 10 weeks old, and now that he is 8-years-old, this yellow duck is still his favorite toy.

Always be careful not to buy toys that are large and heavy as a large bouncing object could accidentally injure or frighten your puppy. Also, never choose
toys that are too small or too flimsy because small pieces breaking off could get stuck in their throat and choke them.

**Sleep Time**

Often when we have a new puppy in our life, especially if we also have young children in our family, we play too long and too hard with our new Shih Tzu puppy.

Be very aware and careful that you do not allow extremely long or too rough play sessions with either yourself or your children because it is so very important that your new Shih Tzu puppy is allowed to have regular nap breaks to re-charge themselves.

For instance, if your puppy is quietly sleeping, do NOT disturb them and do not permit your children to disturb them.

Early in their young life they need to sleep much more because their bodies are going through an amazing growth spurt.

Keep their play and walk times short so that you do not exhaust them when they are very young and so that they receive the amount of rest they need to help grow strong adult bodies.
The Adolescent Phase

“Adolescence” is defined as being "youthful, exuberant, immature and unsettled," which can certainly be a fairly accurate description of most puppies between the ages of 6 and 12 months.

Therefore, do not assume that your work is anywhere near completed just because your Shih Tzu puppy is now six months old, you have taught them to “Sit” on command and they are long ago house trained.

In actuality, the real work is just about to begin and you and your adolescent Shih Tzu puppy could be in for a challenge that can literally break some relationships.

Generally speaking, in the canine world, the bridging period between 6 and 12 months of age qualifies as adolescence.

This bridging time in a puppy’s life, between puppy and adult dog is a transition time that can seriously try the patience of the most level headed human, therefore, whether you and your Shih Tzu puppy sail through this time period with no troubles, or the story is quite the opposite, you will want to prepare yourself for the possibility of a crazy phase in your puppy’s life.

Forewarned is Forearmed

The adolescent phase in a young puppy’s life is the time when a little understanding and being prepared will mean that you and your puppy will have a much easier time of it.

Not all adolescent puppies go through a noticeably manic period, because just like us humans, every dog has their own personality, level of intelligence and breed-specific traits, which
means that adolescence will manifest itself differently for every puppy.

As well, how you have trained your Shih Tzu puppy up until this stage, and how much time you devote to their daily wellbeing will have a huge impact on whether or not they display any more noticeable changes in their behavior.

However, most dogs do commonly exhibit at least some of the usual adolescent behaviors, including reverting to previous puppy behaviors, such as destructive chewing, selective hearing, where you know they heard you, but they ignore your commands, jumping on everyone, barking at everything that moves, or even lapses in previously learned potty training.

Once you’ve recognized some of these adolescent signs, there are many things you can do to make this transition period easier on everyone concerned.

The first step to help keep raging hormones at bay is to spay or neuter your Shih Tzu puppy just prior to the onset of adolescence, around five or six months of age.

While spaying or neutering will not eliminate the adolescent phase, it will certainly help a great deal because it will spare your puppy the added strain of both the physical and emotional changes that occur during sexual maturity.

As well, some female puppies will become extremely aggressive toward other dogs during a heat, while intact males may pick fights with other males and look for way to escape and roam the neighborhood.

After spaying or neutering, you will want to become more active with your puppy, both mentally and physically by providing them with more disciplined exercise and introducing them to different situations and locations.
This can be accomplished by enrolling your adolescent puppy in a more advanced training class which will help them to continue their socialization skills while developing their brain.

Even though it may be more difficult to train during this period, having the assistance of a dog whisperer or professional trainer and the ongoing socialization amongst other dogs of a similar age can be invaluable, as this is the time when many young dogs begin to show sign of antisocial behavior with other dogs as well as other humans.

When your dog is provided with enough daily exercise and ongoing socialization that provides interest and expands their mind, they will transition through the adolescent stage of their life much more seamlessly.

**Releasing Energy**

The adolescent period in a puppy’s life is a time of boundless energy and you will need to find ways to safely increase their daily exercise to allow them to release this energy every day.

Since most humans cannot walk nearly fast enough to accommodate the needs of an energetic puppy, you will need to first walk them beside you on leash, and then find a safe place where they can run, either playing fetch or chasing and running in an enclosed area with other dogs where you can always supervise.

You will need to provide this sort of outlet for your adolescent Shih Tzu puppy at least three times every day.

**The Unruly Adolescent**

If you have a Shih Tzu puppy that is especially unruly during their adolescent phase, you will need to simply limit their opportunities for making mistakes.
For instance, the puppy who is constantly engaging in unwanted behaviors will need to be closely supervised so that you can always redirect their energies into positive activities.

It does no good to yell at your puppy for unwanted behavior, and in fact, yelling will only desensitize your Shih Tzu from listening to any of your commands. Further, although you may eventually get the results you want, if you yell loud enough, your puppy will then be reacting out of fear, rather than respect, and this is not the type of relationship you want to have.

Calm and assertive is the ONLY emotion that works well to help your Shih Tzu puppy understand what is required of them. All other humans emotions are “read” by puppies and dogs as being unstable, and they will not respect you for them.

An extremely rambunctious puppy will need to have its free run privileges revoked or seriously curtailed so that they are confined to areas where you can easily supervise them. Make sure they are within eyesight at all times, so that if they do find an opportunity to make a mistake, you can quickly show them what is permitted and what is not.

**TIP:** put your puppy on a longer leash and tie the leash to your waist so that they are always with you and they learn to follow wherever you go.

This is also a time when you might have to insist that your puppy sleeps in their crate with the door closed whenever you cannot supervise or when it’s bedtime.

As well, keeping on top of house training is also a good idea during the adolescent period of your puppy’s life. This means actually taking the time to be involved in the process by leashing up your puppy and physically taking them outside whenever they need to relieve themselves.

This sort of a bathroom routine is also a disciplined exercise that will help to reinforce in your puppy’s mind, who is the boss.
Rewarding Unwanted Behavior

Many people make the mistake of unknowingly rewarding unwanted behaviors, therefore, it is very important to recognize that any attention paid to an out of control, adolescent puppy, even negative attention, is likely going to be very exciting and rewarding for your puppy.

For instance, chasing after them when they grab something they are not supposed to have, picking them up when they are barking, pushing them off when they jump on you or other people, or yelling when they refuse to come when called, are all forms of attention that are rewarding for most puppies (or dogs).

It’s up to you to provide structure for your puppy and this will include finding ways to allow your puppy to vent their energy without being destructive or harmful to others.

**TIP:** when your puppy does something you like, don’t forget to praise and/or give a treat for wanted behavior.

Any activity that creates an overly excited puppy should be immediately curtailed, such as rough games of tug-o-war or screaming chases with your children through your living room so that your puppy learns to control their energy and play quietly and appropriately without jumping on anyone or engaging in mouthy behavior.

Further, if your adolescent puppy displays excited energy simply from being petted by yourself, your family members or any visitors, you will need to teach yourself, your family and your friends to ignore your puppy until they calm down.

If you continue to engage with an overly excited puppy, you are rewarding them for out of control behavior. Worse, they will soon learn that humans are a source of excitement and you will then have to work very hard to reverse this behavior.

Children are often a source of excitement that can get an adolescent puppy extremely wound up. Do not allow your children to engage with an adolescent puppy unless you are there to
supervise and teach the children appropriate and calm ways to interact with your Shih Tzu puppy.

Teaching children that your puppy needs structured walks and showing them the proper way to play fetch, search, hide and seek, or learn simple tricks or obedience will help develop the minds of the children as well as the adolescent puppy while teaching positive interaction skills for everyone.

**Sitting is Always Good**

When your puppy is going through what could be a belligerent and testing period of adolescence, this is an especially good time to revisit the simple “Sit” command.

Ask your puppy to sit at every opportunity, and there are many.

When it’s time to go out for a walk, ask your Shih Tzu to sit while you put on their leash, ask them to sit and calmly wait while you put on your shoes or jacket.

After you are at the doorway, ask them to sit again while you open the door. After you are on the other side of the door, ask your Shih Tzu to sit while you lock the door.

If there are stairs or landings involved, ask them to sit at the top and also at the bottom. Every time you arrive at street intersection or crosswalk, ask them to sit again, and do this in reverse when coming back home.

Also, every time you stop during your walk to speak to someone or admire the sunset, ask your Shih Tzu puppy to sit.

Every time time you ask your young dog to sit for you, they are learning that you are the boss and that they must respect you as their leader. Also, a sitting puppy is much more calm than one standing at the alert, ready to bolt.

Once your Shih Tzu puppy is reliably sitting for you at least 50% of the time with voice command, also include the hand signal for
“Sit”, so that they will hear the word and see the hand signal at the same time.

When you teach your dog to watch you for hand signals, they will always be much more focused and under control.

Once your dog is sitting reliable for you, remove the verbal “Sit” and replace it with the hand signal. It’s important to begin teaching hand signals during the adolescent stage of your Shih Tzu puppy’s life, because this will also help them to communicate in a way that is more natural to them — by watching you and feeling your energy, rather than always having to hear you speak a command.

Although you can choose to use any sort of hand signal for the “Sit” command, the universal hand signal for the “Sit” command is holding your right arm (palm open facing upward) parallel to the floor, and then raising your arm, while bent at the elbow toward your shoulder.

As well, the action of sitting helps to calm the mind of an excited Shih Tzu puppy (or dog), which makes teaching your puppy the “Sit” command a very important part of their daily interactions with your family members as well as people you may meet when out on a walk.

When you ask your puppy to "Sit" before you pet them, before you go out the door or come back in the door, before you give them their food bowl or a toy, you are helping to quiet their mind, while making it more difficult for them to jump, lunge or bolt out a door.

When used properly, the “Sit” command will be an invaluable training tool for you and your adolescent puppy.

**Never Give Up**

Sadly, too many of us humans simply give up on our young dogs when they change from being the cute, cuddly and mostly obedient little puppy they once were, and become all kinds of
trouble you never bargained for, when they grow into their adolescent stage.

It’s often during this adolescent stage that many of our fur friends find themselves experiencing life behind lonely bars as their humans who promised to love and protect them, abandon their once loved fur friends at the local pound or SPCA.

Take heart, humans, because you can live through puppy adolescence and come out the other side relatively unscathed and a much more knowledgeable and patient person.

After all, you’ve been successful with potty training your young Shih Tzu puppy and with teaching them to sleep in their own kennel at night. You’ve lived through the teething troubles and the hand nipping and you no longer have to get up at 3:00 a.m. to let your puppy out to relieve themselves.

You’ve also taught them their first few basic commands, and socialized them with many other dogs, people and places, so you should feel proud of your accomplishments and the leaps and bounds you and your puppy have accomplished over the last several months.

**Love and Protect**

This is the time when you need to revisit your commitment to loving and protecting your puppy, no matter what.

Even though you may be having second thoughts, now is not the time to give up on them and yourself just because it may seem like someone switched your dog when you weren’t looking.

When you remain consistent, persistent and loving, you will eventually be able to enjoy the happy rewards of all your puppy raising diligence.

Yes, it certainly can be quite a shock when what used to be your well behaved little darling who never chewed anything they weren’t supposed to suddenly takes it into their head to rip the
stuffing out of your $3,000. couch or eat all the seat belts in your vehicle during the short 15 minutes you were shopping.

Even more disconcerting might be when your previously obedient Shih Tzu puppy who always listened to your directions suddenly appears to have gone deaf and can’t remember their name when you direct them to go inside your house, and instead they take off running after a cat three blocks away.

And then, what happened to that quiet little puppy who never appeared to have a mean bone in their body who now spends most of their time at the window barking and growling at everything and everyone passing by.

Welcome to the world of canine adolescence where it appears that your puppy has turned into some sort of monster and all your previous hard work was for naught.

Of course, this dramatic switch from being the world’s best puppy into the monster you can no longer control is not true for all puppies, as every puppy is unique.

However, as the responsible guardian of your Shih Tzu puppy, you want to be aware that the adolescent phase “could” be a trying time, and if it is, that you know what to expect and what to do about it.

The adolescent phase may be very subtle for your puppy or on the other hand, it may be so dramatic that you’re starting to feel guilty every time you drive past the local SPCA because thoughts of rehoming are running through your head.

If you are at the stage with your puppy that you are having great difficulties and wondering if you made the right decision to share your home with a dog, rest assured that puppy adolescence is a normal phase of their development, which can be managed, and which will definitely pass.
As well, if you are finding yourself totally overwhelmed, there are many professionals who can provide valuable assistance to help you through this time of your puppy’s development.

For most puppies, adolescence will begin between the ages of six and seven months and this is also the time that you need to be making an appointment at your veterinarian’s office to have your puppy spayed or neutered, if you have not already done so.

Although neutering or spaying will not prevent adolescent behavior entirely, it can certainly reduce the intensity of it, as during this period there are hormonal changes occurring that will affect your Shih Tzu puppy’s behavior.

Although it’s usually hormones that are the major cause of behavioral changes in your adolescent puppy, there are also physical changes happening at the same time.

For instance, your puppy will be going through physical growth spurts which might be causing them some pain, as well as changes related to growth in their brain while your puppy’s cerebral cortex becomes more involved in thinking for itself, albeit not usually yet capable of making the right choices and appearing to be quite erratic.

During the early adolescent period of brain development in your Shih Tzu puppy, the signals sometimes get mixed up and rerouted, which can result in the perplexing responses you might notice, when for instance, you ask your puppy to sit and they stare dumbly at you, even though they learned this command months ago. Don’t worry because your previous training will return.
Safe Travels or Dead Dogs

According to a 2011 American Automobile Association study, 84% of people do nothing to restrain their dogs, and thereby leave them at serious risk of being injured or killed in an automobile accident.

The safest travel arrangement for any puppy (or dog) is to secure them inside a travel bag (Sherpa) or kennel, followed by finding a safety restraint that is crash and strength tested and certified to be safe for your dog.

Kennels

When containing your best friend inside a kennel, crate or travel bag, you absolutely must be certain that the kennel or bag is very securely attached with the seatbelt system or even better, with special tie downs that are bolted to the floor of the vehicle.

A small or medium sized dog kennel or crate, that will be the correct size for a Shih Tzu, will easily fit on the back seat of most vehicles and can be secured with the vehicle’s seatbelt.

As well, dogs riding inside a securely tied down kennel, crate or travel bag inside your vehicle have the best protection in the case of a rollover vehicle accident.

Sherpa for Small Dogs

A Shih Tzu puppy will remain small when fully grown, which means that training them early
on to travel about in a Sherpa bag will be invaluable in many different situations.

For all small sized dogs, once they are used to Sherpa travel, it will be very easy for them to travel with you wherever you go, including public transport, boats, planes and vehicles, and the best way to start them getting used to this idea is as soon as you bring your new Shih Tzu puppy home.

The Sherpa is a soft-sided dog carrier with zippered pockets for carrying important papers, treats, baggies, etc., that has mesh sides for superior ventilation. The bag has handles as well as a shoulder strap and some even have wheels, so your puppy or small dog will be able to safely travel anywhere in style and comfort.

A small dog can be “carry on baggage” if the carrier fits the airline regulations, which state that a pet carrier must be able to fit under the seat in front of you. Most Sherpa carriers are airline approved and under seat dimensions are generally as follows:

Window Seat: 19"L x 14"W x 8.25"H  
Middle Seat: 19"L x 19"W x 8.25"H  
Aisle Seat: 19"L x 14"W x 8.25"H

For in-cabin travel by plane, your dog must be able to stand up and turn around comfortably in the bag. Airlines also require an absorbent liner in the bag, which could be a pee pad, an old towel, a favorite blanket, or a soft, cozy, faux lambskin liner.

The Sherpa Bag is officially approved on many airlines, and when you make your flight reservations, don't forget to reserve for your puppy as well because there is generally a small charge for in-cabin travel.

The Sherpa is also a convenient and safe way for your Shih Tzu to travel with you inside your vehicle as the bag can easily be secured with the vehicle’s seatbelt system.
There is another travel bag restraint system, called “Sleepypod®” that is designed for pets up to 15 pounds (which would accommodate most Shih Tzu) that goes the extra mile for safety and actually puts its own products through the child safety seat test. All four models of the Sleepypod® have passed the 30 mph crash test.

**Safety Harnesses**

If you’ve been resting easy, thinking that you’ve been doing the responsible thing and keeping your dog safe when traveling with you in your vehicle, because you’ve got them buckled into their safety harness, you may have to think again, or at the very least, carry out a little research of your own to ensure that the product you bought to keep your Shih Tzu safe while traveling with you in your vehicle, is actually going to do the job.

Statistics collected by the Center for Pet Safety (CPS) has shown that almost every popular restraint tested with dog dummies, traveling at a sedate 30 mph, not only failed, but also indicated that serious injuries or deaths to man’s best friend were highly likely.

Many restraints tested allowed dogs to easily become flying projectiles during vehicle accidents because the harnesses were simply not strong enough to keep them in their seats, and in many cases the restraints could actually choke the dog during a crash.

For example, when involved in an accident while traveling at only 30 miles per hour, a small, ten pound, unrestrained dog will be
subjected to approximately 300 pounds of pressure, which is certainly enough to seriously injure or kill a small Shih Tzu.

When the MGA Research Corporation carried out a pilot study for The Center for Pet Safety (CPS), in which they tested 12 major brands of pet harnesses, there was a 100% failure rate because none of the devices passed the safety tests employed by the Corporation.

The tests were carried out using the average weights of the ten most popular breeds of dogs according to the American Kennel Club, including the Labrador Retriever, the German Shepherd, the Golden Retriever, the Beagle, the Bulldog, the Yorkshire Terrier, the Boxer, the Poodle, the Rottweiler and the Dachshund.

With statistics clearly indicating a marked increase in the number of people or couples opting to share their lives with a dog, rather than a child (pets are being chosen 4 to 1 over children) and so many people considering their dogs to be full fledged family members, it seems that the lack of regulations and certified safety devices for our dogs has created a society of irresponsible canine guardians.

No responsible parent would ever permit their child to ride in their vehicle without being safely buckled in, yet so many dog lovers allow their fur friends to roam about freely inside their vehicles.

For instance, do you allow your dog to ride on the front seat of your vehicle or sit on your lap when the vehicle is moving? Guess what? When you are involved in an accident, the air bag will deploy at an alarming speed of 300 mph. If your dog is anywhere near one when it deploys, chances are that the force of the bag striking your dog could instantly kill them.
Top Seven Crash Tested Harnesses

Sleepypod® Clickit is #1

An October 2013 study by the Center for Pet Safety (CPS) identified the Sleepypod® Clickit Utility Harness as the top rated restraint for dogs traveling in cars.

According to testing, the Sleepypod® Clickit innovative three-point connection system effectively prevents the launch and rotation of the dog, which improves human occupant safety while providing the canine passenger the best possible chance of survival should an accident occur.

The CPS has now released their findings regarding pet harnesses that make test claims either on their packaging or website, and while many harnesses did not meet minimum standards, CPS has ranked the top 7 harnesses in the following order:

1) Clickit™ Utility (Sleepypod of Pasadena, California)

2) AllSafe (Klein Metal of Germany)

3) Ruff Rider Roadie (Covercraft Industries of Pauls Valley, Oklahoma)

4) Canine Friendly (RC Pet Products of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada)

5) Dog Auto (Bergan LLC of Monkey Island, Oklahoma)

6) Tru-Fit Enhanced Strength (Kurgo Products of Salisbury, Massachusetts)

7) PetBuckle (IMMI of Westfield, Indiana)
We call them our best friends — would you let your best friend travel in your vehicle without being safe?

It’s time all canine guardians take an extra minute to either contain or buckle up their fur friends so they can arrive safely.

Do your research and either transport your dog inside a safety-approved kennel or bag, or find a safety harness that is strength tested and certified to be able to keep your Shih Tzu safe in the event of an accident.
Poisonous Foods and Products

This section is broken down into several categories, first listing all the common foods that are highly dangerous that could lead to death, following by foods that are less toxic but still harmful to dogs and puppies. Next are commonly toxic household plants and other products found in and around the home that if eaten by your puppy or dog can harm or even kill.

Highly Dangerous Foods

Chocolate: you’ve probably heard this before, but chocolate is a definite no no for your pup. And it’s not just about caffeine, which is enough to harm your dog by itself, but theobromine and theophylline, which can be toxic, cause panting, vomiting, and diarrhea, and damage your dog’s heart and nervous systems.

Coffee: much the same applies here as it does to chocolate. This is essentially poison for your dog.

Corn on the cob: this is a sure way to get your dog’s intestine blocked. The corn is digested, but the cob gets lodged in the small intestine, and if it’s not removed surgically, can prove fatal to your dog. Additionally, too much corn kernels can upset the digestive tract as well so be cautious to not feed too much.

Salmon and trout: raw salmon can be fatal to dogs if the fish is infected with a certain parasite, Nanophyetus salmincola. The parasite itself isn’t dangerous to dogs, but is often infected with a bacteria called Neorickettsia helminthoeca, which in many cases is fatal to dogs if not treated properly. If diagnosis occurs early on, the dog has a great chance of recovering. Cooked salmon is fine as it kills the parasite.

Grapes and raisins: grapes contain a toxin that can cause severe liver damage and kidney failure. Dogs can die from eating
only a handful of grapes so do not feed your puppy or dog this highly toxic food.

**Macadamia nuts**: contain a toxin that can inhibit locomotory activities, resulting in weakness, panting, swollen limbs, and tremors as well as possible damage to your dog’s digestive, nervous, and muscle systems.

**Onions and chives**: every form (dry, raw, cooked, powdered, within other foods), are some of the absolute worst foods you could possibly give your dog. This is poison to a puppy or dog as they both contain disulfides and sulfoxides (thiosulphate), which can cause anemia and damage to red blood cells.

**Persimmons, peaches, and plums**: persimmon seeds and peach and plum pits can cause intestinal obstruction and enteritis.

**Tobacco**: is a major toxic hazard for dogs. The effects nicotine has on dogs are far worse than on humans. Nicotine can damage your dog’s digestive and nervous systems, by increasing their heart rate, and causing them to pass out, which can result in death.

**Xylitol**: is an artificial sweetener alcohol often found in gum, candies, baked goods, and other sugar-substituted items. Xylitol is extremely toxic to dogs and even small amounts can cause low blood sugar, seizures, liver failure, and death.

**Yeast (on its own or in dough)**: yeast causes bread to rise, and it will also expand and rise within your dog’s warm stomach. While mild cases will cause gas, farting, and discomfort, too much of it could cause their stomach to twist, causing life-threatening bloat, or rupture of their stomach and intestines.
Less Dangerous Foods
Following is an alphabetized list of foods that are unsafe for canine consumption, many of which are toxic for dogs and can be life-threatening.

**Alcohol** – I’m sure you’ve heard of the birthday parties where the dog accidentally gets into some of the spilled keg beer, and then gets all silly to the amusement of the crowd.

While some may think it’s funny to watch a dog staggering around drunk, it’s not funny to your dog, and you should not be a dog guardian.

Alcohol can cause not only intoxication, lack of coordination, poor breathing, and abnormal acidity, but potentially even coma and/or death.

**Apple Seeds** - Apple seeds are toxic to a dog as they contain a natural chemical that releases cyanide when digested. So, be sure to core and seed apples before you feed them to your dog.

**Avocado** – Avocados contain Persin, which can cause diarrhea, vomiting, and heart congestion.

**Cooked Bones** - When it comes to bones, there is danger that cooked bones can easily splinter when chewed by your dog. Raw (uncooked) bones, however, are appropriate and good for both your dog’s nutritional health and teeth.

**Candy and chewing gum** - Not only does candy contain sugar, but it often contains Xylitol, which can lead to the over-release of insulin, kidney failure, and worse - death.

**Cat food** – Many dogs are very attracted to the strong smell of cat food. Keep cat food away from your dog because it contains proteins and fats that are targeted for the diet of a cat, not a dog.

The protein and fat levels in cat food are too high for your dog, and therefore, not healthy. Dogs gaining access to cat food often suffer from hair loss because of the very high protein count.
Citrus oil extracts – Can cause vomiting.

Fat trimmings – Can cause pancreatitis.

Hops - An ingredient in beer that can be toxic to your dog. The consumption of hops by your dog can cause panting, an increased heart rate, fever, seizures, and even death.

Human vitamins - Some human vitamins are okay to use, but the key is comparing the ingredients (all of them – active and inactive) to the vitamins your vet subscribes for your dog (often you can get the human equivalent for much less money). Make sure there’s no iron – iron can damage the digestive system lining, and prove poisonous for the liver and kidneys.

Liver – In small amounts, liver is great but avoid feeding too much liver to your dog. Liver contains quite a bit of Vitamin A, which can adversely affect your pup’s muscles and bones.

Milk and dairy products – While small doses aren’t going to kill your dog, you could get some smelly farts and some nasty cases of diarrhea. Why? Dogs are lactose intolerant (as are an increasing number of humans today), and don’t have enough of the lactase enzyme to properly digest dairy foods. If you really need to give them dairy, look into lactose-free dairy products.

Mushrooms - Just as the wrong mushroom can be fatal to humans, the same applies to dogs. Don’t mess with them.

Rhubarb, and tomato leaves – These contain oxalates, which can adversely affect the digestive, nervous, and urinary systems.

Raw fish – Another vitamin B (Thiamine) deficiency can result from the regular consumption of raw fish. Loss of appetite will be common, followed by seizures, and in rare instances, death.

Salt – Just like salt isn’t the healthiest thing for humans, it’s even less healthy for dogs. Too much of it can lead to an imbalance in electrolyte levels, dehydration and potentially diarrhea.
**String** - While not a food itself, foods can often contain or be similar to string (ie. meat you’ve wrapped for the oven). If your dog were to eat a string, it could get stuck in their digestive tract and cause complications.

**Sugar** - This applies to any food containing sugar. Make sure you check the ingredient label for human foods – corn syrup (which is a less expensive form of sugar or glucose) is found in just about everything these days. Too much sugar for your pup can lead to dental issues, obesity, and even diabetes.

Also, keep **marijuana and tobacco products** FAR away from your dog - they could die.

**Poisonous House Plants**

Many common house plants are poisonous to our canine companions, and while many dogs will simply ignore house plants, some will attempt to eat anything, especially puppies who want to taste everything in their new world.

More than 700 plant species contain toxins that may harm or be fatal to puppies or dogs depending on the size of the puppy or dog and how much they may eat.

It will be especially important to be aware of the more common household plants when you are sharing your home with a new puppy.

Following is a short list of the more common household plants, what they look like, the different names they are known by, and what symptoms would be apparent if your puppy or dog decides to eat them.
**Aloe Plant:** *(aka medicine plant or Barbados aloe)*, is a very common succulent that may cause vomiting and/or reddish urine.

**Asparagus Fern:** *(aka emerald feather, emerald fern, sprengeri fern, plumosa fern, lace fern)* cause vomiting, diarrhea and/or abdominal pain or (skin inflammation) from repeated exposure.

**Corn Plant:** *(aka cornstalk plant, dracaena, dragon tree, ribbon plant)* causes vomiting (with or without blood), loss of appetite, depression and/or increased salivation.

**Cyclamen:** *(aka Sowbread)* can cause increased salivation, vomiting and diarrhea. If a dog eats a large amount of the plant’s tubers, usually found below the soil at the root, heart rhythm abnormalities, seizures and even death can occur.
**Dieffenbachia**  
*(aka dumb cane, tropic snow, exotica)* causes oral irritation, especially on the tongue and lips. This irritation can lead to increased salivation, difficulty swallowing and vomiting.

**Elephant Ear**  
*(aka caladium, taro, pai, ape, cape, via, via sori, malanga)* causes oral irritation, increased salivation, difficulty swallowing and vomiting.

**Heartleaf Philodendron**  
*(aka horsehead philodendron, cordatum, fiddle leaf, panda plant, split-leaf philodendron, fruit salad plant, red emerald, red princess, saddle leaf)*, contains a chemical irritating to the mouth, tongue and lips and may cause increased salivation, vomiting and difficulty swallowing.
**Jade:** (aka baby jade, dwarf rubber plant, jade tree, Chinese rubber plant, Japanese rubber plant, friendship tree) can cause depression, loss of coordination and, although more rare, slow heart rate.

**Lilies:** some plants of the lily family are toxic to dogs. The peace lily (aka Mauna Loa) is toxic to both dogs and cats. Ingestion of the peace lily or calla lily can cause irritation of the tongue and lips, increased salivation, difficulty swallowing and vomiting.
Satin Pothos: (aka silk pothos), may cause irritation to the mouth, lips and tongue, while the dog may also experience increased salivation, vomiting and/or difficulty swallowing.

Please note that the plants noted above are only a few of the more common household plants, and that there are more than 700 plants containing toxic substances that may harmful or fatal to puppies or dogs when eaten.

Education is the key to preventing harmful or fatal side effects, therefore, every Shih Tzu guardian will want to take the time to educate themselves before bringing plants into the home or yard that could be toxic to their canine companions.

Please note that there are also many outdoor plants that can be toxic or poisonous to your Shih Tzu, therefore, always check what plants are growing in your garden and if any may be harmful, remove them or make certain that your Shih Tzu puppy or adult dog cannot eat them.

Cornell University, Department of Animal Science lists many different categories of poisonous plants affecting dogs, including house plants, flower garden plants, vegetable garden plants, plants found in swamps or moist areas, plants found in fields, trees and shrubs, plants found in wooded areas, and ornamental plants.
Why Does My Dog Eat Grass?

Many puppies and adult dogs will eat grass, just because. Perhaps they are bored, hungry or need a little fiber in their diet. Remember that canines are natural scavengers always on the hunt for something they can eat, and so long as the grass is healthy and has not been sprayed with toxic chemicals, this should not be a concern.

Animal Poison Control Centre

The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center is staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and is a valuable resource for learning about what plants are toxic and possibly poisonous to your dog.

Poison Emergency? Call: 1 (888) 426-4435

When calling the Poison Emergency number, a $65. US (£39.42) consultation fee may be applied to your credit card.

Toxic Household Products

Many common household products can be dangerous or even fatal to dogs, which is why every conscientious dog guardian will want to make sure that toxic chemicals and household cleaners and products, as well as prescription drugs are kept well out of reach of their canine companions.

A dog will eat pretty much anything it finds on the floor or easily within reach, and this goes double for curious puppies, and all conscientious pet guardians should be aware that any item found in or around your home can pose a possible risk for your puppy or dog.

The best way to prevent problems is to first read the labels and learn about the safety of products before you decide to use them in your home.
In 2012, the Animal Poison Control Center (ASPCA) responded to more than 180,000 cases, the majority of which involved pets who had eaten human prescriptions that were left within reach. Even non-prescription medications, such as Ibuprofen, can be a problem for your dog because many brands have a sweet coating, which (like sweet anti-freeze) is very attractive to dogs.

Make sure to use as many pet-safe products as possible in your home, while keeping dangerous and toxic and prescription items safely locked behind closed doors.

Keep your dog away from areas where cleaners, fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides have been recently sprayed and be a conscientious guardian by making the choice to use only products that are safe around pets.

The following is an alphabetical list of the more common pet poisons easily found in most homes and what can happen if your dog or puppy eats them.

This is by no means an all-inclusive list, therefore, for further information on those listed, as well as many other products that are toxic to pets, please go to the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center website (aspca.org).

**Batteries and Battery Acid** are obviously very dangerous and toxic to dogs, eating away at skin, leading to ulcers in the mouth, esophagus and stomach and gastrointestinal tract. *Toxicity Ranking:* moderate to severe.

**Detergents and fabric softener sheets** can cause ulcers in the mouth, esophagus and stomach in dogs. *Toxicity Ranking:* mild to moderate.

**Drain Cleaner** is caustic to skin, mucous membranes and gastrointestinal tract; fumes are potentially harmful and toxic. *Toxicity Ranking:* moderate to severe.
Ethylene glycol is found in antifreeze, windshield de-icing agents and motor oils. Dogs are attracted to its sweet taste, but as little as a tablespoon can cause kidney failure. Recently, antifreeze and engine coolant manufacturers have agreed to voluntarily add bittering agents to reduce the products' appeal to pets and children. *Toxicity Ranking:* severe to fatal.

Fertilizers can contain poisonous amounts of nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, iron, zinc, herbicides and pesticides. Keep dogs away from treated lawns until they are dry or better yet, use pet safe fertilizers. *Toxicity Ranking:* mild to moderate.

Glue can expand greatly once ingested and require surgical removal costing anywhere from $700. to $3,300. Just one ounce of Gorilla Glue® may expand to the size of a basketball and then harden, getting stuck in the stomach or intestines. *Toxicity Ranking:* severe to fatal.

Household cleaners, such as bleach, drain cleaners, ammonia and toilet bowl cleaners, can cause gastrointestinal ulcers and other problems in dogs. *Toxicity Ranking:* varies.

Insecticides commonly found in flea and tick products can cause problems for sensitive puppies and dogs, especially if not used according to labels. Products intended for treating the yard or house should not be used on pets. *Toxicity Ranking:* mild to severe.

Kerosene, gasoline and tiki torch fluids: can cause drooling, drunken walking and difficulty breathing. If these products contain antifreeze, they are even more problematic. *Toxicity Ranking:* moderate to severe (potentially life threatening).

Mothballs: especially if they contain naphthalene, can be toxic to dogs, resulting in vomiting, diarrhea, increased drinking and urination, followed by seizures. *Toxicity Ranking:* moderate to severe (potentially life threatening).
**Motor Oil:** you may have heard of motor oil being used as a "home remedy" for mange, which is not only untrue, it can be life-threatening to your dog. Never put motor oil on your dog because it is harmful to the skin as well as dangerous if ingested. It can easily kill a dog. *Toxicity Ranking: severe* (potentially life threatening).

**Nonprescription medications**, such as Ibuprofen, can lead to severe ulcers and anemia, as well as liver and kidney failure. *Toxicity Ranking: moderate to severe* (potentially life threatening). **Acetaminophen** is found in Tylenol and other medications and can cause liver damage in dogs. Possibly fatal. *Toxicity Ranking: moderate to severe.*

**Prescription medications**, such as antidepressants and ADHD and cardiac drugs, are commonly ingested by pets when pills are dropped on the floor or left on counters. Even a small dose can cause problems. *Toxicity Ranking: varies.*

**Nail polish/nail polish remover (acetone)** is caustic to skin, mucous membranes and gastrointestinal tracts and the fumes are potentially harmful. *Toxicity Ranking: moderate to severe.*

**Paint, varnish, lacquers, sealants, stains** are caustic to skin, mucous membranes and gastrointestinal tract and the fumes potentially harmful. *Toxicity Ranking: moderate to severe.*

**Paint thinners and paintbrush cleaners (mineral spirits, turpentine, etc.)** are caustic to skin, mucous membranes and gastrointestinal tracts and the fumes potentially harmful. Toxicity Ranking: moderate to severe.

**Pesticides:** same as herbicides and fertilizer. *Toxicity Ranking: mild to moderate.*

**Rodenticides**, such as mouse and rat poisons, can contain a number of different toxins, which have varying effects on dogs.
Several common ingredients, such as warfarin and coumadin, can cause blood clotting problems and hemorrhaging. *Toxicity Ranking:* mild to severe.

**Tobacco** can be severely toxic to dogs. Ingestion of nicotine in the tobacco plant, cigarettes or patches can lead to vomiting, tremors, collapse and death. *Toxicity Ranking:* moderate to severe.

**Salts (specifically rock salt/sidewalk salt) and other De-icers** can irritate the skin and feet of dogs and are also potentially harmful if ingested. *Toxicity Ranking:* mild to moderate.

**Unbaked bread dough** can expand in the stomach. If the stomach bloats and twists, cutting off the blood supply, emergency surgery is needed. The yeast in the dough can also produce alcohol, leading to seizures and respiratory failure. *Toxicity Ranking:* mild to severe.

**Veterinary prescriptions**, such as arthritis medications, are often meat-flavored, which can be enticing to dogs. Ingestion of large quantities can result in stomach ulcers, liver failure or kidney failure. *Toxicity Ranking:* moderate to severe.

**Windshield wiper fluid** can contain methanol or ethylene glycol. Ingestion of methanol can cause low blood sugar and drunken walking. *Toxicity Ranking:* mild to moderate.

**Xylitol** is a sugar-free sweetener commonly found in chewing gum, breath mints and toothpaste. In dogs, it can lead to dangerous drops in blood sugar levels and liver failure. *Toxicity Ranking:* mild to severe.

**Yard products**, including snail and slug bait, herbicides and fertilizers, are never good for dogs. Signs will vary by the ingredient. *Toxicity Ranking:* variable.
**Zinc** toxicity can occur when dogs eat metal or coins. Ingestion of even a single zinc penny can be fatal. Zinc can cause anemia, as well as liver, kidney or heart failure. *Toxicity Ranking*: moderate to severe.
4. HOUSEBREAKING Guide

The following methods can all be equally successful ways to quickly house or potty train your new Shih Tzu puppy. You may wish to choose one method, or try a combination of several.

**Human Training**

House training, or “potty” training, is a critical first step in the training of any new puppy, and the first part of of a successful process is training the human guardian.

When you bring home your new puppy, they will be relying upon you to teach them what they need to learn.
When you provide your puppy with your consistent patience and understanding, they are capable of learning things at a very early age, and house training is no different, especially since it’s all about establishing a regular routine.

Potty training a new puppy takes time and patience — how much time depends entirely upon you.

Check in with yourself and make sure your energy remains consistently calm and patient and that you exercise plenty of compassion and understanding while you help your new puppy learn the new bathroom rules.

Puppies and dogs flourish with routines and happily, so do humans, therefore, the first step is to establish a routine that will work for both canine and human.

Make a plan to take your puppy out every two hours and stick to it because while you are in the beginning stages of potty training, the more vigilant and consistent you can be, the quicker and more successful your results will be.

Some of the first indications or signs that your puppy needs to be taken outside so they can relieve themselves will be when you see them:

- sniffing around
- circling
- looking for the door
- whining, crying or barking
- acting agitated

Always take your puppy out after they wake up from a nap or after they eat a meal or have a big drink.

Also, your happy praise goes a long way toward encouraging a new puppy to make the right decisions.
Initially, treats can be a good way to reinforce how happy you are that your puppy is learning to relieve themselves in the right place.

Next, now that you have a new puppy in your life, you will want to be flexible with respect to adapting your schedule to meet the requirements that will help to quickly teach your puppy their new bathroom routine.

This means not leaving your puppy alone for endless hours at a time because firstly, they are pack animals that need companionship and your direction at all times, plus long periods alone will result in the disruption of the potty training schedule you have worked hard to establish.

If you have no choice but to leave your puppy alone for many hours, make sure that you place your puppy in a paper lined room or pen and never scream or yell or hit your puppy for having an accident.

Remember, they are a growing puppy with a bladder and bowels that they do not yet have control of and you will have a much happier time and better success if you simply train yourself.

Pay attention to when your puppy eats, how much they eat, check the clock and take them outside approximately 20 minutes later to relieve themselves. Likewise, depending on how young they are, if they had a big drink, they will need to go outside to relieve themselves within ten to fifteen minutes.

Again, if they’ve just woken up from a nap, immediately take them outside. Remember that when a puppy is young, their bladders will still be growing, which means that as they age, they will be learning to hold it longer and longer as they are growing into adulthood.
Generally speaking, while your Shih Tzu puppy is still growing, a young puppy can hold it approximately one hour for every month of their age.

This means that if your 2-month-old puppy has been happily snoozing for a couple of hours, as soon as they wake up, they will need to go outside.

**My Dog Rings a Bell to go Pee**

Another very easy way to introduce your new puppy to house training is to start off by teaching them to ring a doorbell whenever they need to go outside.

Teaching a puppy to ring a doorbell when they want to go outside is not only convenient for you, your visitors will be most impressed, and it also means that when your puppy becomes an adult dog, you will not have to listen to your dog whining, barking or howling to be let out, plus your door will not be all scratched up from their nails.

You can easily make yourself a doggy doorbell. First, go to your local novelty store and purchase a small bell that has a nice, loud ring, then tie it to a piece of ribbon or string and hang it from the door handle or near the door where you will be taking your puppy out when they need to relieve themselves.

Next, every time you take your puppy out to relieve themselves, say the word “Out”, pick up their paw and have them ring the bell, or show them how to ring the bell with their nose. Praise them for this “trick” and immediately take them outside.

The only down side to teaching your puppy or dog to ring a bell when they want to go outside, is that even if they don’t actually have to go out to relieve themselves, but just want to go outside because they are bored, you will still have to take them out every time they ring the bell.
There are many types and styles of “gotta’ go” commercially manufactured bells you could train your puppy or dog to use, ranging from cute novelty ones to the simple bell you can buy at a craft store, and tie to a doorknob with a string or tape to the bottom of a door sill.

Every time your puppy or dog needs to go outside, say “Out?” and simply have them use their nose or paw to ring the bells hanging on this little stuffed dog.

Once they ring the bell, praise them and immediately take them outside.

**Tell Bell™**

The Tell Bell™ is a specialized dog training device somewhat reminiscent of the old school bell teachers used to have sitting on their desks or that you see on countertops in stores so you can ring for service.

When you teach your puppy or dog to ring this bell, they will be “telling” you when they need to go outside to relieve themselves.

It’s very easy to teach a puppy or dog to ring this type of bell because it sits on the floor beside the door.

Every time you are ready to take your puppy or dog outside, simply take their foot and place it on the top of the Tell Bell™ so that it rings and say the word “Out?”.

Once the dog or puppy’s paw makes the bell ring, immediately praise them and take them outside.
High Tech Doorbells

There are also several varieties of high tech doggy doorbells, that have a with a much larger base (examples: In The Company Of Dogs, Lentek Koolatron, Pebble Smart] that you can train your dog to step on and when they do, these devices will produce a “ding-dong” a dog bark or other sounding chime.

Dogs and puppies quickly learn that when they step on these device with their paw or push them with their nose that the sound means someone will come and let them outside.

Poochie Bells™

These bells are another simply elegant way to help teach your dog or puppy to let you know when they need to go outside to relieve themselves.

TIP: When training your puppy, after they ring the bells, take them outside on a leash (rather than allowing them to freely run out to the yard) to be sure that they do their business and not just sniff about and play. This can help to ensure that your puppy learns that ringing the bells is a way to notify you to their bathroom needs, rather than a convenient way to get the humans to open the door so that they can go outside to play.

TIP: Hanging the bells near the door, or on the wall right next to your door, rather than from the actual door handle is also a good idea, because otherwise the bells will also ring every time you open the door for anything, which could possibly be confusing to your dog.

Most people will agree that training your dog to nudge a bell with his nose or give it a swat with their paw to signal you that they need to go outside saves the irritation and confusion of whining or barking and the damage to the door that pawing or scratching can cause.
As you can see, there are a wide variety of doorbells designed for our canine friends that you can purchase, or you can make a simple doggy doorbell yourself, by visiting your local craft store.

Now, all you need to do is choose the one that works best for your situation or make a bell that appeals to you and teach your puppy or dog to ring it whenever they need to go outside for a doggy bathroom break.

**Kennel Training**

Many professional trainers will agree that kennel training is the superior method for potty training any puppy, and that if you begin here, what could otherwise be a lengthy process, will go much more smoothly.

If you are going to kennel or crate train your puppy, this obviously means that you will need to purchase an appropriately sized kennel where your puppy will be confined for short periods of time when you are not able to watch them.

It’s always a good idea to get your puppy used to having their own safe zone or den and a crate or kennel is the perfect place for them to sleep undisturbed, as well as being a convenient and safe way for them to travel with you inside your vehicle.

While your puppy is growing and getting better at holding their bladder, you will need to take them outside to relieve themselves at least every couple of hours and this is where having them confined in a crate or kennel can work to your advantage.
All puppies and dogs, will by instinct not want to relieve themselves in their sleeping area, and will hold it as long as they possibly can.

When you take your puppy out of their kennel, immediately take them outside through the same door to the same spot in the yard or street corner each time, so that they smell the scent and understand that this is where they must relieve themselves.

The correct size of kennel for your puppy will be one that seems much too large for them as a puppy, because you will want to purchase one that they will be able to stand up in and turn around in when they reach their full grown adult size.

If a large kennel seem uninviting to a very small puppy, you can block off the rear portion to make it feel cozier for them, until they grow larger in size and need the bigger space.

**Puppy Apartment™ Training**

There is an indoor training “pen” that is relatively new to the marketplace, called a Potty Training Puppy Apartment™ (PTPA) that makes the process of crate or pen training without accidents, even easier during the first stages of house training, while your puppy’s bladder is still growing and they can only hold it for short period of time. When you’re unable to pay close attention, must be away from the home for a few hours or during the late evening or early morning hours when the household is still asleep, the Puppy Apartment™ is convenient for everyone.
The Puppy Apartment™ is quite intuitive for most puppies or dogs whose instinct is to never relieve themselves where they sleep, as it has a division in the crate, whereby one side is the puppy’s bed and the other side is the potty area. This way, your puppy can relieve themselves whenever they wish, even if they can’t yet hold it all night.

Anyone who has ever house trained a puppy will know all too well how time consuming and frustrating it can be for us busy humans who are unable to keep a 24/7 vigilant eye on our new puppy’s every activity.

This is where the innovative Puppy Apartment™, which is a one bedroom, one bathroom home that teaches and trains your puppy or dog to always go potty in their own indoor doggie bathroom, could be a significant help to the busy humans.

This system, which is a highbred of the kennel/training pen combination, can certainly help to eliminate the stress of worrying about always keeping a watchful eye on your puppy and making sure that you notice every time they need to relieve themselves.

Apparently this house training device is the only one of its type in the world that includes a patent pending ROOM DIVIDER™ which is the key element in making the Puppy Apartment™ a successful potty training device.

According to “Modern Puppies”...

“The Puppy Apartment™ takes the MESSY out of paper training, the ODORS AND HASSLES out of artificial grass training, MISSING THE MARK out of potty pad training and HAVING TO HOLD IT out of crate training. House training a puppy has never been faster or easier!

The Puppy Apartment™ has taken all the benefits of the most popular potty training methods and combined them into one magical device and potty
training system. This device and system has revolutionized how modern puppies are potty trained!

These devices allow us and our pets to potty in a safe, warm and comfortable environment. We decided to invent the amazing Potty Training Puppy Apartment™ (PTPA), because dogs deserve the same potty option as cats and people. Not only does the PTPA provide your puppy a safe, warm and comfortable environment, it also potty trains your puppy at the same time in a very humane way. In addition, veterinarians strongly recommend keeping your puppy indoors until they have all their vaccinations.

Thousands of puppies and dogs all over the United States and Canada have been successfully potty trained by the innovative Potty Training Puppy Apartment™. They still continue to use their Puppy Apartment™ as an indoor doggie bathroom after they have been potty trained.”

This product is manufactured in the United States and ships directly from the supplier (Modern Puppies) in California.

Most small dogs live long lives and if you live in a climate where winters are wet and cold, your small dog may appreciate the convenience of being able to use their indoor Puppy Apartment™ throughout their entire life.

The Potty Training Puppy Apartment™ (PTPA) is not sold in stores and is only available online at Modern Puppies.

**Exercise Pen Training**

The times that you must be away longer than your puppy can hold it, are the perfect times to introduce your puppy to an exercise pen (if you haven’t already decided to purchase one of those Potty Training Puppy Apartments™).

The pen needs to be large enough so that you can place your puppy’s soft bed, crate, kennel inside one half (leave the crate door open) and cover the other half of the floor with newspapers or pee
pads. On the kennel side of the exercise pen you would leave fresh water. If you have to be away for many hours, you would also leave food for your puppy.

No puppy wants to relieve themselves near where they sleep or eat, so they will naturally go to the newspaper or pee pad covered area when they need to go, and when using this method, your puppy will become paper trained during the times you cannot be at home.

After a week or two, you will be able to reduce the amount of newspaper or pee pads because your puppy will now be consistently using the paper area for their bathroom.

When you are home, continue with the routine of crating your puppy, and taking them out to potty every one or two hours.

It can also be very useful to have an exercise pen in the house and another one outside in the yard. This way every time you take your puppy out to the yard, they will already be familiar with the scent and concept of the exercise pen and will immediately go to this area instead of running all over the place.

**Free Training**

If you have decided to let your puppy have the run of your home and be out of their kennel as long as they like, you will need to pay attention at all times and be aware of the “signs” that your puppy needs to go outside.

As soon as you see them circling and sniffing, immediately take them outside or to their appointed indoor potty spot.

If you are training them to ring a bell to alert you that they need to go outside, now is the time to use their nose or paw to ring the bell, say the word “Out?” and immediately take them outside.
Many people get really upset when a puppy makes a mistake and relieves themselves inside. Getting upset about it, will never help the situation and is unreasonable when a young puppy has very little control over their bowels or bladder.

For instance, a puppy can generally only hold their bladder for approximately one hour for every month of their age. During this time, you need to treat them with compassion and understanding, and if anybody is to be blamed, blame yourself for not noticing that they needed to go.

Never scold a puppy for relieving themselves in the wrong place because not only will you teach them to be afraid of you, you will also teach them to do it when you’re not watching or in places where you may not find it for many hours.

If you catch them in the act, don’t make a big deal out of it, just calmly say “no”, and take them to the place where you do wish them to go. Always remember to be happy and praise them when they do their business in the designated spot.

When you watch closely, and keep an eye on the clock after your puppy has eaten or had a big drink, you will quickly learn your puppy’s body language so that you will be able to predict when they need to relieve themselves, which will minimize the chances of them making a mistake.

Make sure you’re always watching as soon as your puppy wakes up, right after they finish eating, after a play session, first thing in the morning and every time you take them out of their crate, kennel, or exercise pen.

Puppies and dogs have a superior sense of smell many times more sensitive than humans, and they will always find an area that smells just right before relieving themselves.

Therefore, when your puppy needs to relieve themselves, it’s important that you do not let them run loose inside your home because each time they have an accident in the home, if you are unable to completely eliminate the odor, their superior sense of
smell will attract them to this area and they will want to go there again.

Make it easy on yourself and your new puppy, and be ultra watchful and vigilant so that every time they have to relieve themselves, you will know about it and can direct them to do so in the right place, because repetition and your joyful praise will quickly bring consistently happy results.

**Electronic Training Devices**

Generally speaking, positive training methods are far more effective than using devices that involve negative stimulation.

Further, unless you are training a hunting breed, using electronic devices is usually an excuse for a lazy person who will not take the time to properly train their dog by teaching them rules and boundaries which leads to respect and an attentive follower.

When you do not provide your Shih Tzu (or any dog) with a consistent leadership role that teaches your dog to trust, respect and listen to you in all circumstances, you will inevitably experience behavioral issues.

Electronic training devices such as e-collars, spray collars or electronic fencing all rely upon negative, painful or stressful reinforcement, which can easily cause a sensitive breed, like the Shih Tzu, to be nervous or live a life of fear.

For instance, a dog simply cannot understand the principles of “invisible” boundaries, and therefore, should never be subjected to the confusion of the punishment that occurs when walking across an invisible line within their own home territory.

Dogs naturally understand the positive training methods of receiving a reward, which are not only much more efficient when teaching boundaries, they are far kinder, and create a much stronger bond with your dog.
The Shocking Truth About Collars

First of all, it would have to be an extremely rare situation in which it would be necessary or recommended that you use a shock collar on a small Shih Tzu as these devices are usually only employed in extreme situations, and generally for much larger breeds who could seriously harm someone.

The use of remote, electronic, shock or “E-collars” is at best a controversial subject that can quickly escalate into heated arguments.

In certain, rare circumstances, and when used correctly, the e-collar can be a helpful training tool that could actually save a dog’s life.

An e-collar would generally be utilized in a circumstance where a dog has access to free range over a large property, and it may be very difficult to get their attention from a distance if they become distracted by other animals or smells.

Many dogs also learn that when they are off leash and out of your immediate reach that they can choose to ignore your commands, bark their heads off, terrorize the neighbors or chase wildlife.

All of these situations are generally not activities that a Shih Tzu would have the slightest interest in because they love being at home with their humans.

Generally E-collars can be effective training tools for working breed or hunting dogs.

In these types of circumstances a remote training collar can be an effective training device for reinforcing verbal commands from a great distance, such as “Come”, “Sit” or “Stay”.

Finally, electronic collars can be used as a last resort to help teach a dog not to engage in a dangerous behavior.
The Shocking Truth About Electronic Fencing

Honestly, there are far more reasons NOT to install an electronic fence as a means for keeping your dog inside your yard, than there are good reasons for considering one.

For instance, a dog whose yard is surrounded by an electronic fence can quite easily develop either fear or aggression, or both, toward what they may believe is the cause of the shock they are receiving.

Installing an electronic fence may cause your dog to become aggressive toward cats, other dogs, other humans, other wildlife, children riding by on bikes or skateboards, the mail carrier, or the dog or cat next door.

As well, a dog who receives a fright or in excitement forgets about the shock they are going to receive may run through an electronic fence and then be too frightened to pass through the barrier again and come back home.

Further, it is actually possible that electronic fencing may encourage a dog to escape the yard simply because they associate their yard with pain. This feeling can be reinforced if a dog escapes the electronic yard and then is again punished by the shock when they attempt to come home.

Another factor to keep in mind with respect to electronic fencing is that other dogs or teasing children can freely enter the yard and torment or attack your dog, and a thief bent on stealing your dog will be able to do so with ease.

The absolute best way to keep your dog safe in their own yard, while helping to establish your role as guardian and leader, is to be out there with them while they are on leash, and to only permit them freedom in your yard under your close supervision.
Easy Accident Clean Up

Sometimes accidents happen, and it’s no big deal, especially when you have the right clean up products at your fingertips.

Many of us waste much time and money trying to find products that will eliminate the smell of potty training accidents, when all we really need are superior products designed to completely eliminate all odors the first time.

TIP: Remove Urine Odors is a company dedicated to relieving your stress over what can be a smelly problem that just won’t go away, by providing you with a line-up of professional grade products that do exactly what they promise, the first time.

Without effectively and completely removing the smell of any accidents in your home, the canine heightened of smell, which is at least 2,000 times more powerful than our human noses, will easily attract your puppy to the “accident” area and once they smell this, your Shih Tzu puppy will naturally want to relieve themselves there again and again.

Masking Does Not Work — Neutralizing Does!

SUN (Severe Urine Neutralizer): is the most powerful Urine Neutralizer on the market.

SUN is an amazing new odor “counteractant” that is guaranteed to effectively eliminate odors by neutralizing them, while being quick and easy to use.

Neutralization is newer technology that is an amazing new odor “counteractant” that does not fit into the traditional categories of odor control agents.

It’s specially designed molecular structure has an expanse of surface area that absorbs, binds to and counteracts odors. This product is very effective on dog urine.
Neutralization works immediately on contact with odors to make your cleaning job more pleasant. Neutralization contains no bleaches, no bacteria, no enzymes, no oxidizers nor chemical desensitizers. It is safe to use even when children are in the home and this product can be used on any water safe surface, including carpet, draperies, upholstery, pet beds, mattresses, and more.

**Repair Pee Stained Lawns**

**Grass Revitalize** is your solution to lawn damage resulting from dog’s urine.

Everyone who shares their home and their back yard with a dog will be only too familiar with those brown spots caused from urine killing the grass.

Dogs generally eat a high protein diet; then the protein is broken down and excreted as nitrogen in the urine, so when your dog pees on your grass, it simply dies from a massive overdose of nitrogen.

Of course, you could follow your dog around and quickly saturate the area where they have just urinated with lots of water from your garden hose, which will then dilute the nitrogen, making it harmless to your lawn.

However, if you would rather not get out the hose every time your dog uses the back yard to relieve themselves, a simple solution for eliminating those brown spots will be to protect your lawn with Grass Revitalize, because once it has been applied (re-apply every 2-3 months), this product sets up a barrier that continues to neutralize the effects of excess nitrogen on your lawn.
**Paper Training vs. Outdoor Training**

Depending on what sort of climate you and your Shih Tzu may live in, you may be happy that you trained your dog to use a pad or potty patch when they need to relieve themselves.

Many Shih Tzu do not particular like to go outside when the rain is pounding down or there is a snow storm raging, therefore, in these cases, if you have trained them to relieve themselves both inside on a pee pad or potty patch, as well as outside, you may both be relieved.

As well, once your Shih Tzu becomes older and moves into their geriatric years, and they can no longer hold it for the same length of time they did when they were younger, they will be grateful for a handy pee pad.

**Pee Pads**

There are many manufacturers of puppy training pads on the market, and most will do just fine if you are only using them occasionally or for a week or two while you train your Shih Tzu puppy to go outside to relieve themselves.

Most puppy training pads have a soft, absorbent layer that is lined with a layer of plastic, so that the plastic side goes down on the floor, with the idea that the dog pees on the absorbent side and the floor or carpeting stays dry.

Many pee pads are also scented to attract the puppy or dog to go to the pad when they need to do their business.

However, one of the problems with pee pads is that they tend to be a “hit and miss” sort of situation, where your dog may get to the pad, but might not land exactly in the middle, and you’ll have a wet mess to clean up anyway. This is NOT your dog’s fault.
Every dog is attracted to just the right place to go pee or do their business by how it smells to them, and this is why some training pads work better than others.

For instance, there is a training pad, called "BullsEye Pee Pad™" that is infused with concentrated pheromones that attract a puppy or dog to pee in the center of the pad. These pads also absorb more liquid than many others because they are filled with super absorbent micro-beads.

**Potty Patch™**

The Potty Patch™ is another indoor bathroom arrangement that can be very convenient for small dogs when the weather is not cooperating or when they get older and cannot hold it long enough to make it outside.

The Potty Patch™ is make up of three layers, with the top layer being soft astro turf, the middle layer being a stay dry grate, and the bottom layer being an easy clean collection tray that can hold up to a gallon of liquid.

**Solving Housebreaking Problems**

**It’s All YOUR Fault**

The number one reason for a puppy not being quickly potty trained is because you are not a good candidate for sharing your
life with a dog, and you are leaving a dog at home alone for many hours while you are at work.

A young puppy or mature dog needs your guidance, and if you’re not there to provide it....I’m sure you can fill in the blank.

If your Shih Tzu is having difficulties getting house trained and it’s taking you longer than a week or two, you need to revisit what YOU are doing or NOT doing, because the chances are very high that is is YOU, not your Shih Tzu that is the problem.

As an example, little Boris was house trained at 11 weeks of age, within one week of bringing him home, and I used the free training method.

Most housebreaking problems are simply the human’s fault, because they get too busy or distracted by other events in their daily life and are not paying attention to the clock or learning their puppy’s signals that will tell them when their puppy needs to go.

The other problem is when you do not stick to a routine, and get up one morning at 7, and the next at 9. No tiny puppy can accommodate such huge differences in an hourly schedule when their bladder is still growing and they are learning to hold it.

If you are having house training problems, go back and re-read the entire section of house training because it will help you to better understand what is required of you, in order to help your puppy be house trained as quickly as possible.

Also, consider if there has been some serious changes in the home that could be causing the problem. Is your energy frightening your dog? If you are getting really upset over this problem, you could be making the problem worse.

For instance, has there been a change in the family dynamics? Has a grown child moved out, has a couple separated, has there
been a death of another long time pet, or is the dog perhaps suffering from a medical condition?

If there is no known reason for a lapse in house training, the next step will be to take your Shih Tzu for a checkup at your veterinarian’s office so that you can rule out any sort of medical condition that could be the cause.

Remember, there is no use in getting upset or angry when training a dog not to relieve themselves inside your home.

If your puppy or dog makes a mistake, almost always it is YOU that should be taking the blame because we humans get very busy and tend not to pay attention when we should.

If you try to blame your puppy or dog for having a bathroom accident, you will only teach them to disrespect you, and do it in secret.

**Pee on Command**

You can easily teach your Shih Tzu to “pee on command” when you are consistent about taking them outside on leash with you every time they need to relieve themselves.

Take them to a place where they have peed before, and simply say “Go Pee” when you take them out and when they oblige, reward them with your happy praise and a tasty treat.

After they become expert at peeing on command, you can remove the treat and instead, just praise them.
5. TRAINING Guide

The Proper Training Mindset

The happy Shih Tzu loves human company and will enjoy the close attention it will receive during Shih Tzu training sessions.

Be careful never to get upset or yell at a Shih Tzu because this sensitive breed responds best to calm energy, praise, affection and tasty treats during training.

Shih Tzu are very, very much smarter than many humans give them credit for, and so long as their human counterparts have the patience to teach them how, they can be successfully shown in obedience, rally and agility rings across the country.
Although they love to learn, they need to feel that the trainer loves it too, which means that your energy must be happy and upbeat whenever you are teaching commands or a new trick.

Any training requires patience and consistency, and every dog will be different, with respect to how quickly they can learn a specific command or new trick. Do not get frustrated or upset if your Shih Tzu is taking longer than you might like to learn something new.

Instead, just break the training of the new command or trick down into shorter training sessions and make them always fun, and your Shih Tzu will learn quicker.

Find out what really motivates your Shih Tzu, whether it’s food or your happy praise or a combination of the two, and when you combine this with your happy energy, you will both be on your way to learning endless new commands, tricks and skills together.

Remember that just because the Shih Tzu have been bred as true lap dogs, to love and give companionship, this does not mean that they cannot learn to truly enjoy many fun canine sports or activities with their guardians.

So long as you keep it fun and entertaining for them, they will eagerly participate and will look forward to training sessions, because what they love the most is being with you.

**When to Begin Training**

You will want to begin training your new Shih Tzu puppy just as soon as you bring them home. Even before they get home, you will have placed them inside their kennel or Sherpa bag, so that they can be safely transported, which is all part of their new training.
If you have never trained a dog before, there is no need to panic, because this book contains everything you need to know to have a very successful relationship with your Shih Tzu.

If you are at all worried about making mistakes, do yourself a favor and hire a professional dog whisperer to come to your home and provide you with all the extra insights you may need for your particular Shih Tzu because what you learn from a dog whisperer you can apply to all dogs in your life.

The most important aspect of training a Shih Tzu (or any canine) is to be kind, patient and consistent, and not to tire them out by expecting them to maintain attention for long periods of time, especially when they are younger than six months.

The next important aspect of training a dog for your first time, is not to let them be the boss, because in order for a dog to be truly happy and not stressed out, they need to feel that YOU are the boss so that they can relax.

All dogs thrive on rules and boundaries, and this does not mean that you must be a tyrant, always laying down the law, it only means that you must not be a wet noodle when it comes to teaching your Shih Tzu rules and boundaries.

Bottom line...when you are kind, patient and consistent, and the more you teach rules, boundaries, commands and tricks, the more your Shih Tzu will love you, and the more closely they will bond with you, which mean the happier your relationship will be.

**Daily Training**

You will need several pieces of equipment for basic training, including a 4 foot leash, a Martingale collar, and a 20 foot lunge line, which is a really long leash with a clip on the end that you will attach to your Shih Tzu’s Martingale collar.
The Martingale collar will be an integral part of your training process. Not only is it the safest collar for your dog, because it is comfortable and loose for them to wear, it also provides security to the handler when attached to a leash, because your dog will not be able to back out of this collar should they become nervous or frightened.

The 4-foot leash is the perfect length of leash for almost every circumstance when out walking with your dog. It’s long enough to give them some slack when they need to do their business, and short enough to keep them in a disciplined walking position at your side. You may also wish to purchase a 6-foot leash if you are interested in doing umbilical work with your dog.

The 20-foot Lunge Line will be used while training outside in an open field, or to allow your adolescent dog to have more freedom, while still being attached to you. This can also be a very useful tool, for instance, in a circumstance where an older dog may be displaying aggression toward other dogs, and you need to give them a correction from a distance or when you
are teaching them the “Come” command and are not yet certain that they won’t decide to run off in the other direction.

The lunge line is a great tool for helping your Shih Tzu to learn that they must follow you everywhere you go. When they are about five or six months old, start training with the lunge line (see Adolescent Training).

**What If You’re a Busy Person?**

First of all, if you are a very busy person, with long hours away at work or spending a great deal of time traveling, you are not a good candidate for being a conscientious guardian for a Shih Tzu (or any dog, for that matter).

Dogs are pack animals who thrive on following their leader, not being left alone all day.

If you are asking the question, “How do I train my dog if I’m a busy person?” honestly, wait until you are not such a busy person before you consider having a dog in your life.

If you are a busy, stay-at-home worker, you absolutely must carve out times in every day when you can remove yourself from work and pay attention to your dog.

Training sessions do not have to be hours long, and in fact, work much better when they are done in short spurts of 15 or 20 minutes at the most.

All you have to do is dedicate the time to do the work you need to do with your puppy or dog.
Training for Different Ages

No matter what the age of your Shih Tzu, they will require training that continues for their lifetime.

All that’s necessary for effectively training your puppy is a calm, consistent approach, combined with endless patience.

Remember that you are working with Mother Nature, and every puppy or dog will be different in how quickly they learn as well as what they are capable of learning.

Once you figure out what works best for your puppy, you’ll quickly be on your way to teaching them everything they need to know to be a safe and obediently happy member of your family.

Most puppies are ready to begin training at about 10 to 12 weeks of age, however, be careful not to overdo it — make your training sessions short, positive and pleasant with lots of praise and/or treats so that your puppy will be looking forward to more of these sessions.

Basic Puppy Training

The three most important commands you can teach your puppy are “Come”, “Sit” and “Stay”. Successfully teaching your puppy these three commands will ensure that they remain safe in almost every circumstance.

When your puppy learns the “Come” command, should danger be approaching, you can bring them back to you quickly and avert any disaster.
When you teach your puppy the “Sit” and “Stay” commands they will calmly accept their place while you will be demonstrating to them that you are their leader. Establishing leadership is paramount for a happy puppy because knowing that you are their leader and understanding what you want of them relieves the stress of decision-making from the puppy.

A Discipline Sound

You will make it much easier for your puppy to learn what they can or cannot do when you and your family decide on one discipline sound that every family member will use to warn the puppy when they are doing something that is not wanted.

The best types of sounds are short and sharp so that you and your family members can quickly say them and so that the sound will immediately get the attention of your puppy.

It doesn’t really matter what the sound is, so long as everyone in the family is consistent. My favorite sound, that is very effective for most puppies and dogs is a simple “UH” sound said sharply and with emphasis. Most puppies and dogs respond immediately to this sound and if caught in the middle of doing something they are not supposed to be doing will quickly stop and give you their attention or back away from what they were doing.

Come Command

While most puppies are capable of learning commands and fun tricks, the first and most important command you need to teach your puppy is the recall, or “Come” command.

The hand signal for “Come” is your arms spread wide open. This is a command they can see from a great distance.

Begin the “Come” command inside your home. Go into a larger room, such as your living room area. Place your puppy in front of you, attach their leash or a longer line to their collar, while you
back away from them a few feet. Say the command “Come” and hold your arms open wide. If they do not immediately come to you, gently give a tug on the leash so that they understand that they are supposed to move toward you. When they come to you praise them and give a treat they really like.

Once your puppy can accomplish a “Come” command almost every time inside your home, you can then graduate them to a nearby park or quiet outside area and repeat the process.

You may want to purchase an extra long line (25 or 50 feet) so that you are always attached to your puppy and can encourage them in the right direction should they become distracted.

**Sit/Stay Command**

the “Sit” and “Stay” commands will not take long to teach and will help to keep your puppy safe and out of danger in most every circumstance.

Find a quiet time to teach these commands. Ask your puppy to “Sit” and if they do not yet understand the command, show them what you mean by gently squeezing with your thumb and middle finger, the area across the back that joins with their back legs. Do not just push them down into a sit as this can cause damage to their back or joints.

When they sit, give them a treat and praise them. When you say the word “Sit”, at the same time show them the hand signal for this command. Although you can choose to use any hand signal to mean “Sit”, the universal hand signal for “Sit” is bending your arm at the elbow and raising your hand toward your chest.

Once they are in the “Sit” position, say the word “Stay” and hold your outstretched arm, palm open toward their head and back away a few steps. If they try to follow, calmly say “No” and put them back into “Sit”. Give a treat and then say again, “Stay” with the hand signal and back away a few steps.
Once your puppy is sitting and staying, you can then ask them to “Come”. Don’t forget to use the open arms hand signal for “Come.”

Practice these three basic commands everywhere you go, every time you go for a walk, before you open the door, after you are on the other side of the door, before you go down the stairs, once you are at the bottom of the stairs, and every time you stop when you are on your walk, and pretty soon you will have a puppy who automatically sits whenever you stop moving.

As your puppy gets older, and their attention span increases, you will be able to train for longer periods of time.

**Stop Puppy Biting or Nipping**

It’s important to discourage your puppy from chewing or biting your hands, or any part of your body for that matter. If you allow them to do this when they are puppies, they will want to continue to do so when they have strong jaws and adult teeth and this is not acceptable behavior for any breed of dog.

Do **not** get into the habit of playing the “hand” game, where you rough up the puppy and slide them across the floor with your hands, because this will teach your puppy that your hands are play things.

When your puppy is teething, they will naturally want to chew on everything within reach, and this will include you. As cute as you might think it is, this is not an acceptable behavior and you need to gently, but firmly, discourage the habit.

**Distraction and Replacement**

When your puppy tries to chew on your hand, foot, or your clothing, you need to firmly and calmly tell them “No”, and then distract them by replacing what they are not supposed to be chewing with their chew toy. Praise them for chewing on the toy.
Distraction and replacement is an easy way to teach your Shih Tzu puppy exactly what they CAN and CANNOT use as chew toys.

**TIP**: keep a favorite chew toy in your pocket so you always have one quickly available when needed.

If the puppy persists in chewing on you, remove yourself from the equation by getting up and walking away. If they are really persistent, put them inside their kennel with a favorite chew toy until they calm down.

If your puppy tries to nip or bite at your fingers with their sharp little razor teeth when you are petting them, simply give them a little flick on the muzzle with your finger and they will soon be discouraged from this painful practice. Always praise them when they stop so that they begin to understand what they can and cannot do.

**Beginner Leash Lesson**

Equipment Required: 4 or 6 foot leash, Martingale collar.

The most important bonding exercise you will experience with your new puppy is when you go out for your daily walks together.

Far, far too many people ignore this critical time that is not only important for your puppy’s exercise, it also helps to fulfill their natural roaming urges, while also being a disciplined time when your puppy will learn to follow, trust and respect you as their pack leader.

Without daily walks together with your puppy properly walking on leash beside or slightly behind, you will likely have an unbalanced or problematic relationship with your dog.

As soon as you bring your new puppy home you will be teaching them how to walk on leash, so get out your Martingale training collar and 4 or 6 foot leash.
Every time your puppy needs to go out to relieve themselves, slip on their collar and snap on that leash because there is no time like the present to teach your puppy proper walking manners.

At first your puppy may struggle or fight against having a collar around their neck, while at the same time they will want to go with you.

Be careful not to drag them, and if they pull backward and refuse to walk forward with you, simply stop for a moment, while keeping slight forward tension on the leash, until your puppy gives up and moves forward. Immediately reward them with your happy praise, and if they have a favorite treat, now is the time to give them one.

Always walk your puppy on your left side with the leash slack so that they learn that walking with you is a relaxing experience. Keep the leash short enough so that they do not have enough slack to get in front of you.

If they begin to create tension in the leash by pulling forward or to the side, simply stop moving, get them back beside you, and start over.

Be patient and consistent with your puppy and very soon they will understand exactly where their walking position is and will walk easily beside you without any pulling or leash tension.

Remember that walking with a new puppy is an exciting experience for them as they explore their new world, so give them lots of understanding and don’t expect them to be perfect all the time.

**Basic Adolescent Training**

Now that you have your adolescent Shih Tzu puppy walking nicely beside you on leash without tension or pulling, it’s time to do a
little umbilical leash training to help get your adolescent puppy firmly glued to your side when you’re out walking together.

If your adolescent has not yet learned to walk properly on leash, without pulling, you will need to be very patient and consistent with your daily training.

If they struggle or fight against having a collar around their neck, or pull backward and refuse to walk forward with you, simply stop for a moment, while keeping forward tension on the leash, until your young dog gives up and moves forward. Immediately reward them with your happy praise, and one of their favorite treats.

Walk your Shih Tzu puppy on your left side with the leash slack so that they learn that walking with you is a relaxing experience. Keep the leash short enough so that they do not have enough slack to get in front of you.

Hopefully, you will have taken the time when your Shih Tzu puppy was younger to learn proper leash walking. If not, and they have previously learned that walking means straining against a tight leash, you will need to be even more patient because now you will need to put in extra time to teach them that the only time they move forward, is the just the opposite — when there is no tension on the leash.

When the leash becomes tight, simply stop moving, get them back beside you, and start over. You might not get very far on your first few walks.

**Umbilical Training**

Umbilical training will also help to teach a young Shih Tzu not to pull on the leash when you are out walking.

You can begin umbilical training inside your home by simply tying your Shih Tzu puppy’s leash around your waist and going about your everyday activities. Every time you move, your puppy has no choice but to follow you.
Next, take your puppy outside on your regular walks and search out obstacles, such as telephone poles, large rocks, trees, fence posts, any sort of upright that you can weave about while having your puppy tied about your waist. (NOTE: you can also do the same when holding the leash in your left hand)

Vary your speed when continuing your umbilical training, so that sometimes you are walking sedately, while other times you may be jogging. Stop and turn suddenly, so that your adolescent Shih Tzu puppy will not know which way you will be traveling unless they have their eyes on you.

This type of training is both effective at teaching your young Shih Tzu closely watching you, and fun for both dog and guardian.

**Lunge Line Training**

Equipment Required: Martingale collar, 20 foot lunge line.

Continuing to train your adolescent Shih Tzu puppy on a lunge line is an easy way to get them to pay attention and follow your every lead. No time is more perfect to begin lunge line training than when your puppy has reached the adolescent phase of their life.

You’ve already put in many long hours of training your puppy in basic commands, such as “Come”, “Sit” and “Stay”, and when they reach adolescence they may begin to have troubles remembering how to perform these simple tasks. Lunge line training will really help to get them back on track.

At this critical developmental stage in your young dog’s life, it’s very important to give them tasks that are a little more challenging as their brain is growing and changing and they are beginning to question who is the boss in this human/dog relationship.
Lunge line training is the perfect way to reinforce what they’ve already learned as a younger Shih Tzu puppy, while also showing them that you are indeed their leader and putting a stop to any ideas to the contrary that their adolescent brain may be testing.

As well, giving your adolescent puppy something new to learn will really help to settle them down because there is nothing that will exhaust them quicker than a good brain workout.

Find yourself a large field or open park area and snap the lunge line onto your puppy’s Martingale collar. Keep a tight hold on your end while you drop the rest of the line and let your puppy do whatever they will.

As your puppy gets busy sniffing about, thinking they are pretty much free, find a tree or a rock or something that stands out across the field and walk straight toward it, forgetting all about what your puppy might be checking out.

If your puppy does not notice that you have started walking in a straight line toward your target, within a short period of time, they will get a little “reminder” that you are still in control of them, because when the slack runs out in the 20 foot line, they will get a little pull in your direction.

As soon as your puppy gets a reminder to look your way, immediately switch directions and start walking in a straight line to a new target. Your puppy may or may not pay any attention to your new direction, and if they do not, once you get to the end of the 20 feet, they will again get another tug toward your direction.

Keep practicing this lunge line exercise for the next ten minutes and if your puppy begins to follow you before they get a reminder at the end of the 20 feet, they are doing exactly what you want them to do, which is pay attention to what you are doing.

At least every few days, practice this lunge line exercise with your adolescent puppy, and when you can no longer give them a little
tug when the lunge line slack runs out, because they return to you before this happens, start to speed up your walking, then jog a little bit, and switch directions more quickly.

Once you can no longer give your puppy a reminder to watch you with a tug when the slack of the 20 foot lunge line comes to an end, it’s time to shorten the lunge line by five feet.

Practice with the lunge line at 15 feet for the next week, and then shorten it to ten feet, and practice another week at this length.

Remember to mix up your directions and speeds, sometime walking slowly, other times jogging, then running for short bursts, always trying to catch your adolescent puppy off guard and give them a little tug if they are not paying close enough attention to you.

Once your adolescent follows your every time, no matter what you do, whatever direction or speed your are moving, you and your young dog have just graduated lunge line training.

**Advanced Training**

**Hand Signals**

Hand signal training is by far the most useful and efficient training method for a Shih Tzu, or for any breed of dog.

This is because all too often we inundate our canine companions with a great deal of chatter and noise that they really do not understand because English is not their first language.
The first language of a Shih Tzu, or any dog, is a combination of sensing energy and watching body language, which requires no spoken word or sound.

Therefore, when you take the time to teach your dog hand signals for all their basic commands, you are communicating with them at a level they instinctively understand, plus you are helping them to become great followers as they must watch you to know what is required of them.

**Come Hand Signal**

Always show the hand signal (arms open wide) for this command at the same time you say the word. If they are totally ignoring the command, it will be time to incorporate a lunge line to help you teach the “Come” command. Simply attach a 20 foot line to their collar and let them sniff about in a large yard or at your neighborhood park.

At your leisure, firmly ask them to “Come” and show the hand signal. If they do not immediately come to you, give a firm tug with the lunge line, so that they understand what you are asking of them.

If they still do not “Come” toward you, simply reel them in until they are in front of you. Then let them wander about again, until you are ready to ask them to “Come”. Repeat this process until your dog responds correctly at least 80% of the time. You can also reinforce the command by giving a treat when they perform as you wish. Always ask them to “Sit” when they return to you.

**Sit Hand Signal**

Sit is a very simple, yet extremely valuable command for all puppies and dogs. The mere act of the sitting motion helps to calm an excited mind, while teaching discipline and respect. Always incorporate the hand signal for sit (arm bent at the elbow,
palm open and facing up, and raised to the shoulder) at the same time as you say the word.

If your dog is not sitting on command, try holding a treat above and slightly behind their head, so that when they look up for it they may automatically sit to see it. Slowly remove the treats as reward and replace the treat with a “life reward”, such as a chest rub or a thumbs up signal and your smile.

If your dog is not particularly treat motivated, lift up and slightly back on the leash when asking them to sit (stand in front of them), and if they still are having difficulties, reach down with your free hand, place it across your dog’s back at the place where the back legs join the hip and gently squeeze.

Do NOT simply push down on your dog’s back to force their hind legs to collapse under them as this pressure could harm their spine or leg joints.

**Stay Hand Signal**

Once your dog is in the “Sit” position, ask them to “Stay” with the hand signal, by holding your open hand in front of them and saying “Stay”. If you are right-handed, use your right hand for the signal, and if you are left-handed, use your left hand for the signal. Using your dominant hand will be much more effective because your strongest energy emanates from the palm of your dominant hand.

While your dog is sitting and staying, slowly back away from them. If they move from their position, calmly put them back into sit and ask them to “Stay” again. Continue to do this until your dog understands what you require of them.

Keep repeating this training exercise until you can ask your dog to sit and stay from five feet away, then from ten feet away, then from 20 feet away.
Lie Down Hand Signal

There are several ways you can teach this command, with your dog wearing their leash and collar, or without.

With your dog’s Martingale collar on and their leash attached, have a treat in your hand. Put your dog into the “Sit” position while standing in front of them.

Show them the treat and slowly lower it to the floor, while saying the command “Down”. At the same time put slight downward pressure on the leash. Most dogs will immediately follow the treat to the ground and when they do, praise them and allow them to eat the treat.

You can practice exactly the same routine without the leash, and this time you will have a free hand, which means that you can now add the hand signal. With your dog in the sitting position, say the command “Down” while at the same time showing them the hand signal.

Hold your arm bent at the elbow, with your palm facing toward the floor, then while still standing, say the command and lower your hand toward the floor by straightening your arm.

Another way to teach the “Down” command is to stand in front of your dog, say the command “Down”, reach down and slide their front feet toward you until they are in the “Down” position.

Choose the “Down” lesson that works best for your Shih Tzu and stick with it.

Practice this new command for a few minutes every day and once your dog goes into the “Down” position every time, you can begin to ask them to “Down” from a distance.

Start at five feet, then increase it to ten, then fifteen. Every time they go down on command, return to their position and give...
them a treat. They should also be able to go “Down” from a distance with just the hand signal.

Eventually, you will be able to exchange the treat for a “life” reward of you returning to their down position and giving them praise and a nice chest rub.

**Stay For Long Periods of Time**

Once your dog is in the “Sit” position, ask them to “Stay” with the hand signal, by holding your open hand in front of them and saying “Stay”.

Then ask them to “Down”. This combination of “Stay” and “Down” will put your dog into a more relaxed position so that they will naturally stay for a longer period of time.

Once they have stayed as long as you wish, release them with the “Come” command.

Keep repeating this training exercise until you can ask your dog to stay from five feet away, then from ten feet away, then from 20 feet away for as long as you wish.
6. PROBLEM BEHAVIOR Guide

When reading anything about how to prevent or cure behavioral issues, please be aware that behavioral problems can not often be properly assessed or cured by reading a book.

The reason for this is because there are just too many variables and unique situations, individual dogs, individual humans and endless reasons why they may have developed any particular behavioral issue.

Therefore, without knowing the dog’s particulars and all the history that came before, attempting to write about how to cure a particular issue will be no more than a best guess.

This is why someone whose dog is suffering from a specific behavioral issue that is in turn, at the least embarrassing, or at worst, driving the humans and the entire neighborhood crazy,
must be properly addressed by engaging the services of a professional dog whisperer (behaviorist) who can ask many questions, properly assess the situation and then design a unique plan for alleviating the problem.

**Barking Dogs**

Generally speaking, when properly trained and socialized, the Shih Tzu is not an excessive barker and because of their friendly natures they do not usually growl at other dogs or people.

However, if a dog has been mistreated or not properly socialized, they may develop these behaviors out of fear or as a protective mechanism, and the best way to overcome them is to hire a professional dog whisperer to help determine the root cause of the problem.

While dogs can get into the habit of barking for a variety of reasons, often they are barking in an attempt to tell their guardians that they are bored, distressed or upset, lonely, afraid or because they are defending what they consider to be their territory.

Every conscientious canine guardian needs to keep in mind that dogs are pack animals, and as such they really hate to be left alone. They want to do what they are naturally born to do, which is follow their leader or guardian.

Leaving any dog alone for long hours during the day is torture, and this is even more harmful for a true companion dog, such as the Shih Tzu, who is bred to provide love and companionship.

**Boredom Barking**

If your dog is barking because they are simply bored, there are simply steps you can take to help prevent this, including:
• walk your dog at least three times every day;

• give them at minimum of 4-5 opportunities to relieve themselves throughout the day;

• give them plenty of chew toys and when they wear out buy new ones;

• opportunities for mental stimulation every day, such as a game of search where they find treats; a game of hide and seek; or a training session where they learn a new trick;

• enroll your dog in Agility, Flyball, Obedience or other canine sports that provides physical and mental stimulation;

• take them with you everywhere you go.

**Barking at Strangers or Noises**

It is within every dog’s nature to bark at strange noises or intruding strangers, therefore, allowing a little bit of this is perfectly normal and should not be totally curtailed, unless it becomes more serious and out of control.

If your Shih Tzu is having a problem with barking to excess at unfamiliar noises or strangers, the following tips may help to curtail this unwanted activity, including:

• provide daily interaction and socialization with unknown people in different locations, and praise your Shih Tzu for their friendly behavior;

• When people visit your house, allow your dog to calmly greet guests and give them a treat or toy so that they learn to associate visitors with something positive;
• When something frightens your dog, encourage them to sit, and then gently take them to explore the noise, so that they can understand what caused it. If this is not possible, distract your dog with a treat or toy when they calm down.

Desensitizing training may be required in cases of extreme barking and you will need to contact a professional dog whisperer or behaviorist to help you learn the techniques involved with this humane method of re-training your dog.

**Alarming Noises and Fireworks**

Many dogs will become extremely distressed by fireworks, loud popping or banging noises or the sound of household fire alarms.

Some dogs become so upset that they literally “lose their minds”, cannot hear you, try to run away, or hide and tremble in fear.

Be compassionate in these circumstances, and remember that your Shih Tzu’s sense of hearing is much more acute than your own and, if possible, immediately remove them from such situations.

If your Shih Tzu is upset, act normally and assure them with your calm, yet assertive voice that everything is alright, and do not pick them up or try to console or baby them when they are extremely agitated.

If they come to you for help, allow them to sit on your lap and offer a soothing brushing session to help calm them.

**TIP:** During times when fireworks noises are prevalent, such as Halloween and New Year’s, keep your Shih Tzu inside and turn up the ambient noise by playing soothing music to help drown out any fireworks that may be happening outside.
**Biting or Nipping**

Again, the Shih Tzu is a friendly, social breed who will not usually bite or nip at other dogs or people unless seriously provoked or intimidated.

If your Shih Tzu is displaying biting tendencies, this means that they have not been properly socialized at a young age or have been played with roughly and, for instance, have been allowed to nip at hands or show aggression toward other animals.

The best way to overcome this unwanted behavior is to hire a professional dog whisperer to help you understand the root cause of this behavior and suggest solutions to eliminate it.

If you know that your Shih Tzu is starting to develop nipping or biting tendencies toward other dogs or people, do not wait for them to really bite someone or someone’s dog for the first time, rather, search out immediate help from a professional so that you can alleviate this problem BEFORE it becomes serious.

Doing nothing to alleviate this type of unwanted behavior is being an irresponsible guardian, and if your Shih Tzu bites someone, you may find yourself in a great deal of trouble, including a possible lawsuit and/or having your dog deemed “dangerous”.

Depending on the rules in the area where you live, there is the possibility of a dog who has bitten someone and deemed to be dangerous, not being allowed out in public without wearing a muzzle for the rest of their life.

If you have not sought professional help soon enough, and your dog does bite someone, or someone’s dog and causes serious trouble, immediately offer your apologies and sympathy, do all you can to help and offer to pay for any veterinary costs.
Thankfully, a bite from a Shi Tzu is not usually very serious and if a Shih Tzu gets into a squabble with another dog, generally it’s more noise than anything terribly harmful.

**Fear Aggression**

If your dog has developed an extreme fear of an object, other dog or person, or you have adopted a dog that is displaying overly aggressive behavior toward other dogs or people that frightens or worries you or others passing by, you will want to do the responsible thing for everyone concerned by engaging the services of a professional to help you get this situation under control as quickly as possible.

The sad consequences of not immediately helping your dog to overcome an extreme situation may be that your dog harms another dog or person which can result in you being involved in a lawsuit, or at the very least having to foot the bill for veterinary costs.

If your dog harms another dog or person they may be deemed a dangerous dog and be required to wear a muzzle when out in public for the remainder of their life or if the laws where you live are more strict, it may be ruled that your dog be euthanized.

Many dogs develop aggression out of fear for any number of reasons and then become unreasonably reactionary in an attempt to protect themselves from the object they fear by displaying aggression.

If your dog is displaying even mild signs of fearful, anti-social or aggressive behavior, you will want to immediately contact a professional to help you determine the cause and provide methods for alleviating these problems before they become serious enough to be harmful or life-threatening to themselves or others.
Dog Aggression or Dominance

While this type of behavior is not normal for the Shih Tzu breed, if your dog is displaying aggressive or dominant behavior toward other dogs or unknown people there will be other underlying causes for this.

You will want to immediately consult with a professional dog whisperer who can assess the situation, understand the root cause and provide solutions before you and your Shih Tzu get into serious troubles.

A dog who displays dominance or aggression toward other dogs or people has not been taught proper rules and boundaries, therefore, the problem has its beginnings in the home.

For instance, any time your puppy displays dominance over another puppy or adult dog, by jumping on their back, putting the other dog in the submissive position on its back, or displaying serious growling, immediately step in and break this up as this may be the first signs of dominant behavior.

Food or Toy Aggression

Being aggressive over food or toys is also not a normal Shih Tzu trait and if they have developed this unwanted behavior, this may be the result of improper socializing and training during their early months, or perhaps competition with other animals in the home.

If your Shih Tzu has food or toy aggression issues, the chances that they also have other, more serious issues, is very high, and you need to consult with a professional who can help you understand the root of the problem and how to best alleviate it.
If dominance or possessiveness over toys between dogs breaks out during a play session, immediately step in, firmly tell your puppy or dog “NO” and remove the toys.

If your Shih Tzu begins to show dominance or possessiveness over food or treats, this requires an immediate discipline from you, involving a very loud “NO” and sending your puppy or dog away from the scene, with a “GO” and point away. If they do not move away, walk into them until they are forced to walk away.

**Snapping Teeth**

If your puppy or dog has snapped at another puppy or dog, or used their teeth on another dog, unless you were not paying attention, and they were merely forced into protecting themselves from another dog, say “NO” and immediately place your Shih Tzu on their side and hold them there while the other puppy or dog stands close by (the closer to your dog, the better).

Place your thumb on the side of their head where the jaw hinges and hold the head to the ground with light pressure, while you use your other hand to hold their body to the ground. If the tail goes between their legs, pull the tail out from between the legs.

Placing your dog onto their side (into the submissive position) switches roles on your dog, placing them in the vulnerable role, while “telling” them that this type of serious transgression is absolutely not permitted.

This tactic should be used any time your puppy or dog seriously tries to bite another dog or person (unless they were trying to protect themselves), not if they are only playing.

Keep them in this submissive position until their body totally relaxes and they will stay lying on their side with very light pressure or no pressure from you, then say “OK” and let them up, or simply stand up and walk away from them.
Excessive Chewing

The Shih Tzu breed is not normally big time chewers and so long as you provide them with suitable toys and items they are permitted to chew on during their puppy teething time, they will rarely destroy property with excessive chewing.

If your puppy is chewing something you don’t want them to chew, yelling at them is NOT a good tactic. Simply distract them and replace with an object they ARE permitted to chew, and as soon as they chew on the correct item, praise them.

Other Problem Behaviors

Eating Feces

Many puppies will go through a phase of eating their own or the feces of other animals, and if they are doing this at a very young age, it is likely because they learned it from their mother.

The mother dog always eats the feces of the puppies until they are weaned. This is to keep the nesting area clean and also as an instinctive way to keep the puppies safe from predators that could be attracted to the scent. Naturally the puppies learn from their mother, and may also learn to do this.

Of course, there are numerous other reasons why a puppy or dog may be attracted to eating their own or other animal’s stools, including boredom, to get your attention, being hungry because you are not feeding them enough, not digesting their food properly, stress from being brought into a new environment, or some other medical reason.

In the long run, it is up to you, as your Shih Tzu’s guardian, to be more vigilant and never give your Shih Tzu the opportunity to eat
their own stools, or anyone else’s, by distracting them and getting it picked up before they get a chance.

A puppy will usually grow out of this behavior by the time they are one year of age, and if they do not, you will need to make an appointment with your veterinarian to identify what may be the underlying problem.

**Aggressive Food/Treat Grabbing**

Never permit your Shih Tzu to get become grabby or “hard” mouthed when taking treats from your hand, otherwise you will have a lifetime of worrying about getting your fingers bitten every time you feed a treat.

Teach your Shih Tzu puppy to be gentle right from the moment you bring them home. If they accidentally hurt you with their teeth, say “OWWW” in a high pitched voice, which will usually stop the puppy from continuing.

When feeding treats by hand, teach your puppy to be patient, and never allow them to immediately grab a treat from your fingers. Instead, show them the treat, and hold it close to their mouth, but do NOT give it to them. Say “Gentle” and slowly move it toward them. When they take the treat gently, praise them for their gentle mouth.

If they attempt to grab suddenly, firmly say “NO!” and remove the treat. Put them in a sit and try again, until they can be patient enough to gently take a treat from you.

**Begging at the Dinner Table**

Any dog begging at the dinner table is a direct result of their guardian not teaching them that there are rules and boundaries.

If your Shih Tzu is begging at the table, the chances are very high that there are other areas that you have also neglected to
teach your dog that could lead to troubles in many other areas of your life.

As soon as you bring your Shih Tzu puppy home, you need to be teaching them that they must stay a respectable distance away from you (at least 5 to 10 feet) whenever and wherever you are eating.

Send them to their bed where they must stay any time you are eating, and they absolutely must never be permitted into the kitchen area when you are preparing food.

These are two very important dog whispering rules and boundaries that will go a very long way toward establishing yourself as the leader and your Shih Tzu as the follower in your human/canine relationship.

Teaching your Shih Tzu to stay away a respectful distance when you are either preparing or eating food is a very primal exercise that helps to establish that YOU are their leader.

For instance, if your dog was running in a pack of wild dogs, where they had to hunt for their food, there would be a pack leader, and once prey was caught, the pack leader would get to eat first, while all the other dogs would have to stay back a respectful distance, until the pack leader had eaten their fill. Only then could the rest of the hungry dogs advance and eat what was left over.

When you ask your dog to stay away from you while you are eating, you are creating a similar scenario, which your dog will instinctively understand and respect you for.

**TIP:** when feeding your Shih Tzu, always mix their food with your hands, so that your scent is all over the food. This is another primal signal to your dog that you are the leader, that you ate this food first, and that you are now allowing them to eat what is left over.
Digging

The Shih Tzu breed is a lover, not a digger, therefore, it would be rare to experience a problem in this area.

If your Shih Tzu is digging, this means that they are being left along too long, they are extremely bored, not getting enough mental or physical stimulation and you are not paying attention.

Take them for more walks, teach them more commands or tricks, and keep them happy by taking them everywhere with you.

Jumping on People

If your Shih Tzu is jumping on people when greeting them while out walking, or when guests visit you in your home, you have not properly socialized and taught your Shih Tzu when they were a puppy that this type of behavior was not permitted.

If the problem is severe, you may need to hire a dog whisperer to help you alleviate this behavior, because it may be a result of many other problems going on inside the home.

If the problem is minor and you want to attempt to correct it without help from a professional, who can teach you multiple techniques, this will be much easier if you can ask your friends to help you.

Arrange a time for a friend to visit and get ready to teach your Shih Tzu that jumping on them is no longer acceptable, but first you need to teach your friend what they must do.

Most people pull away when a dog is going to jump on them, and when they do this, they have allowed the dog to take over their personal space.

Instead, when a dog is going to jump on you, quickly and sharply walk into them, to take over THEIR personal space. When you
and your friends practice this exercise consistently, and in different situations, very soon your Shih Tzu will give up on jumping on people as a way of greeting.

Also, when they do NOT jump up, praise them and give them a treat for keeping their feet on the ground.

**Licking**

Some Shih Tzu will develop a licking habit and this is usually a result of their guardians permitting this behavior when they were tiny puppies.

If you do not want your dog licking you, your children, your friends or other dogs, you must train them at an early age not to do this.

The technique is simple — every time your Shih Tzu puppy tries to lick your hand, give them a quick flick on the muzzle with your finger. While this will not hurt them, if you are consistent, it will definitely deter this behavior.

If your Shih Tzu is constantly licking themselves, this can mean that they need a bath or grooming as they may have itchy skin, debris, tangles or knots in their hair, or there could be something stuck in their coat or between the pads of their feet that is causing them irritation.

If there is no recognizable reason for them to be licking themselves, simply say “No Licking” and distract them from this behavior so that they learn it is not wanted.

**Separation Anxiety**

Generally speaking, if you have training your Shih Tzu properly from early on in their life, you will never experience separation anxiety.
As well, most people who think their dog is suffering from separation anxiety do not realize that often the problem is not actually separation anxiety, but rather that the human part of the equation has not provided the leadership that their dog requires in order for them to be a well balanced member of the household.

Often what is thought to be separation anxiety, when a Shih Tzu gets upset and whines and cries when left alone for a period of time, is the dog protesting because they believe that THEY (ie. the Shih Tzu) is the leader, and followers (the humans) never leave a leader.

If your Shih Tzu is displaying real or imagined separation anxiety, you will need to solicit the expertise of a professional dog whisperer who can ask the right questions and determine the real cause of the behavior.

Remember again, that your dog is a loving companion, and all dogs want to be with their guardians, especially the Shih Tzu, therefore, if you always take them with you, you will never have a problem.

**Whining**

Again, whining is similar to what many humans believe to be separation anxiety, and is generally caused because the human has not given their Shih Tzu proper leadership when they were a puppy.

If this is the case, the only way to stop the whining is to re-train the human and this will require the expertise of a professional dog whisperer who can accurately assess the cause of the situation.

**What If My Puppy Bites Someone?**

Many people ask the question, "what should I do if my dog bites someone?" and thankfully, this is not often a question asked by
Shih Tzu guardians as their dogs are usually friendly and happy family members.

Of course, this question cannot be properly answered without understanding the circumstances that may have led up to the biting incident, however, generally speaking, any dog that seriously bites another dog or human needs to first be seriously disciplined by having their guardian immediately intervene.

Disciplining a Shih Tzu for biting another dog or human does not involve yelling or hitting or becoming aggressive, as displaying this type of unstable energy will not help to get the message across to the dog that what they have done is not acceptable behavior.

As an example, if your Shih Tzu bites another dog, the following steps will help to diffuse the situation and teach your dog that they are not permitted to act in an aggressive way.

Again, the best course of action to take when a dog bites another dog or human is to calmly and immediately put the biter onto their side on the ground and hold them there while you bring the “bitee” to stand over them. This switches roles by placing the biter into the vulnerable position, while putting the “bitee” into the position of power.

It is important to take your time with this exercise, and not allow the biter to jump up from their prone position until they are completely relaxed and will actually remain laying on the ground without their guardian holding them into this position.

Once the biter is standing again, the best thing to do is walk the two dogs side by side for five to ten minutes and all will be forgotten.

Of course, if the owner of the other dog is seriously upset by the altercation they may not be willing to go through this exercise with you and may immediately leave the scene.
If you are able, ask them to please participate and, of course, while unlikely, if their dog has actually been harmed, you will immediately apologize and offer to pay for any veterinarian costs.

Generally, when two young dogs go at it, it is a lot of scary noise and very little real injury, and with respect to the Shih Tzu, who is not the type of dog to get themselves into fights, it will be highly unusual for them to seriously harm another dog.

**Counter-Conditioning**

Counter conditioning is a technique used to help your dog overcome behavioral issues that have become more serious, such as aggression, barking, lunging, growling, or in any way acting threateningly toward other animals or people.

To learn proper counter conditioning techniques it is highly recommended that you engage the services of a professional dog whisperer or trainer to help you properly learn this technique.

In a worst case scenario, counter conditioning is a technique used when your dog is being perceived as a danger to others and you are concerned that they may harm another animal or person, which could involved you in a lawsuit.

A Shih Tzu that is acting out in aggressive ways usually means that there are other problems that need to also be addressed inside the home in order to establish the proper leadership and follower roles.

Counter conditioning involves helping your dog to literally change a bad or traumatic association that causes aggressive or fearful behavior, into a good one.
7. GROOMING Guide

The most important aspect of grooming will be taking the time to help your Shih Tzu puppy get used to the routine of grooming early on in their young life, so that they will not be traumatized for the rest of their life, every time grooming is necessary.

Not taking the time to regularly involve your Shih Tzu puppy in every aspect of a grooming session could lead to serious, unwanted behavior that may include trauma to your dog, not to mention stress or injury to you in the form of biting and scratching, that could damage your relationship and result in a lifetime of unhappy grooming sessions.

When you neglect regular, daily or at least a weekly at home grooming session with your puppy or dog to remove tangles and keep mats to a minimum, this will not only cost you and your
Shih Tzu companion, in terms of possible trauma and extended time on the grooming table, it will cost you a higher fee should you opt to have regular clipping and grooming carried out at a professional salon.

An effective home regimen will include not just surface brushing, but also getting to all those sensitive areas easily missed around the ears and collar area, the armpit area, and the back end and tail, as well as regular inspection and trimming of nails and hair around the eyes.

Do not allow yourself to get caught in the “my dog doesn’t like it” trap which is an excuse many owners will use to avoid regular grooming sessions.

When you allow your dog to dictate whether they will permit a grooming session, you are setting a dangerous precedent that could lead to lifetime of trauma for both you and your Shih Tzu.

When humans neglect daily grooming routines, many dogs develop a heightened sensitivity, especially with regard to having their legs and feet held, touched, brushed or nails clipped and will do anything they can to avoid the process.

Make the correct decision, right from the first day you bring your puppy home, never to neglect a regular grooming routine and not to avoid sensitive areas, including trimming toenails, just because your dog may not particular “like” it.

**Bath Time**

**How Often?**

Obviously where you live, the weather conditions and what sort of activities you get up to on a regular basis with your Shih Tzu will more closely dictate how often they may need to have a bath.
However, as a general rule of thumb, if they are not out running through the mud or rolling in dead seagulls washed up on the beach, a good bathing schedule for the average companion Shih Tzu would be once a month.

**Shampoo**

NEVER make the mistake of using human shampoo for bathing your Shih Tzu because dogs have a different pH balance than humans.

For example, shampoo for humans has a pH balance of 5.5, whereas shampoo formulated for our canine companions has an almost neutral pH balance of 7.5.

Any shampoo with a lower pH balance will be harmful to your dog because it will be too harshly acidic for their coat and skin, which can create skin problems.

Always purchase a shampoo for your dog that is specially formulated to be gentle and moisturizing on your Shih Tzu’s coat and skin, that will not strip the natural oils, and which will nourish your dog’s coat to give it a healthy shine.

As a general rule, always read the instructions provided on the shampoo bottle, and avoid shampoos containing insecticides or harsh chemicals.

**Tip:** if you think your Shih Tzu may have picked up a flea or two, you may want to bathe them with shampoo containing pyrethrum (a botanical extract found in small, white daisies) or a shampoo containing citrus oil as both of these will naturally kill fleas.

**Conditioner**

Choose a conditioner that is specially formulated for the correct 7.5 pH balance for a dog.
While many of us humans use a conditioner after we shampoo our own hair, a large number of us canine guardians forget to use a conditioner on our own dog’s coat after bathing.

Even if the bathing process is one that you wish to complete as quickly as possible, you will want to reconsider this little oversight because, just as conditioning our human hair improves its condition, the same is true for our dog’s coat.

Conditioning your Shih Tzu’s coat will not only make it look shiny and feel softer, conditioning will also help to:

- prevent the escape of natural oils and moisture
- keep the coat cleaner for a longer period of time
- repair a coat that has become damaged or dry
- restore a soft, silky feel
- dry the coat more quickly
- protect from the heat of the dryer
- protect from breakage during toweling, combing or brushing

Spend the extra two minutes to condition your Shih Tzu’s coat after bathing because the benefits of doing so will be appreciated by both you and your dog who will have an overall healthy coat and skin with a natural shine.

**De-tanglers**

There are many de-tangling products you can purchase which will make the job of combing and removing mats much easier on both you and your Shih Tzu, and should be especially considered if you have opted to let their hair grow longer.

De-tangling products work by making the hair slippery, and while some de-tanglers work well when used full strength, you may prefer the lighter, spray-in products, which are often easier to use.
As well, there are silicone products and grooming powders, or you can even use corn starch to effectively lubricate the hair to help with removing mats and tangles before proceeding to the bathing steps.

**Step One**: before you get your Shih Tzu anywhere near the water, it’s important to make sure that you brush out any debris, knots or tangles from their coat before you begin the bathing process because getting knots or tangles wet could make them tighter and much more difficult to remove, which will cause your dog pain and distress.

As well, removing any debris from your dog’s coat beforehand, including dead undercoat and shedding hair will make the entire process easier on both you, your dog, and your drains, which will become clogged with hair if you don’t remove it beforehand.

**Step Two**: if your Shih Tzu has a long coat, the process will be much easier if you first spray the coat with a light mist of leave-in conditioner before brushing. This will also help to protect the delicate hair strands from breaking.

**Step Three**: whether you’re bathing your Shih Tzu in your kitchen sink or your bathtub, you will always want to first lay down a rubber bath mat to provide a more secure footing for your dog and to prevent your sink or tub from being scratched.

**Step Four**: have everything you need for the bath (shampoo, conditioner, sponge, towels) right next to the sink or tub, so you don’t have to go searching once your dog is already in the water.

**TIP**: Place cotton balls in your Shih Tzu’s ear canals to prevent accidental splashes from entering the ear canal.

**Step Five**: fill the tub or sink with four to six inches of lukewarm water (not too hot as dogs are more sensitive to hot water than us humans) and put your Shih Tzu in the water. Completely wet your dog's coat right down to the skin by using a detachable
shower head. If you don’t have a spray attachment, a cup or pitcher will work just as well.

**TIP:** no dog likes to have water poured over it’s head and into it’s eyes, so use a wet sponge or wash cloth to wet the head area.

**Step Six:** apply shampoo as indicated on the bottle instructions by beginning at the head and working your way down the back. Be careful not to get shampoo in the eyes, nose, mouth or ears. Comb the shampoo lather through your dog’s hair with your fingers, making sure you don’t miss the areas under the legs and tail.

**Step Seven:** after allowing the shampoo to remain in your dog’s coat for a couple of minutes, thoroughly rinse your Shih Tzu’s coat, right down to the skin with clean, lukewarm water using the spray attachment, cup or pitcher. Comb through your dog’s coat with your fingers to make sure all shampoo residue has been rinsed away.

**TIP:** shampoo remaining in a dog’s coat will lead to skin irritation and itching. Once you’ve rinsed, take the time to rinse again, especially in the armpits and underneath the tail area.

Use your hands to gently squeeze all excess water from your dog’s coat.

**Step Eight:** apply conditioner as indicated on the bottle instructions and work the conditioner throughout your Shih Tzu’s coat. Leave the conditioner in your dog’s coat for two minutes and then thoroughly rinse it out with warm water, unless the conditioner you are using is a “leave-in”, no-rinse formula.

Pull the plug on your sink or tub and let the water drain away as you use your hands to squeeze excess water from your Shih Tzu’s legs and feet.
At this point they will be wanting to shake, therefore, if you can draw the shower curtain to prevent water from being sprayed all over the walls, or hold up a towel so you don’t get drenched, and teach them to shake on command, by saying “Shake” and rewarding them with your happy praise when they do.

Allowing your dog to shake a couple of times before you wrap them in a towel will help to remove excess water and it is something they naturally want to do after being wet, which makes teaching them to shake on command an easy process.

**Step Nine:** once your Shih Tzu has had a shake or two, immediately wrap them in a dry towel so they don’t get cold and use towels to gently squeeze out extra water.

[Remove the cotton balls from their ear canals]

If your Shih Tzu has long hair, do not rub your dog with the towels as this will create tangles and breakage in the long hair.

**NOTE:** if your dog has a short or shaved coat, you will not need to be so particular when washing or drying and in this case may massage the shampoo or conditioner in circular motions through the coat and can rub them down a little more with the towels after they are out of the tub.

**Blow Drying**

Dry your Shih Tzu right away with your hand held hairdryer and be careful not to let the hot air get too close to their skin. Make this a pleasant experience for them so that they will learn to always come running when they hear the dryer.

**TIP:** if your Shih Tzu’s hair is longer, blow the hair in the direction of growth to help prevent breakage and if the hair is short, you can use your hand or a brush or comb to lift and fluff the hair to help it dry more quickly.
**TIP**: place your hand between the hairdryer and your Shih Tzu’s hair so that they will never get a direct blast of hot air and never blow air directly into their face or ears.

**Ear Care**

You will easily be able to find a variety of ear cleaning creams, drops, oils, rinses, solutions and wipes at your local pet store that are especially formulated for cleaning your Shih Tzu’s ears.

Or you may prefer a less expensive home remedy that will just as efficiently clean your Shih Tzu’s ears, such as Witch Hazel or a 50:50 mixture of hydrogen peroxide and purified water.

**TIP**: make your own ear cleaning solution: find a bottle with a nozzle, measure your properly diluted and mixed solution into the bottle. Use your preparation to moisten a cotton makeup remover pad and use this to wipe out the visible part of your Shih Tzu’s ears. Make sure their ears are totally dried after cleaning.

**Eye Care**

The Shih Tzu are much more prone to build up of daily eye secretions, which means that they need to have their eyes regularly wiped with a warm, damp cloth to remove build up of daily secretions in the corners of the eyes.

The Shih Tzu will be prone to a build up of secretions that can be unattractive and uncomfortable for the dog as the hair becomes glued together and if this builds up is not removed every day, it can quickly become a cause of bacterial yeast growth that can lead to eye infections.

When you take a moment every day to gently wipe your dog’s eyes with a warm, moist cloth, and keep the hair trimmed away from their eyes, you will help to keep your dog’s eyes comfortable and infection free.
Also, when they are walking outside, get them used to wearing eye protection (especially on windy and sunny days).

**Teeth Care**

You will help to keep your dog’s pearly whites and your dog happily smiling when you regularly look after their dental hygiene.

**Retained Primary Teeth**

Often a dog will not naturally lose their puppy or baby teeth without intervention from a licensed veterinarian. Keep a close watch on your puppy’s teeth, especially around the age of six or seven months to make certain that the baby teeth are gone and that the adult teeth have space to grow in.

If your Shih Tzu puppy has not naturally lost their baby teeth, they will need to be pulled, in order to allow room for the adult teeth to grow in, and a good time to do this is around the age of six months, or at the same time they visit the veterinarian’s office to be spayed or neutered.

**Permanent Teeth**

All canine breeds will have two sets of teeth in their life. The first set of 28 teeth start to grow in at around age 3 to 8 weeks and are referred to as "milk teeth", "baby teeth" or those razor sharp "baby fangs". Puppies will start to lose their baby teeth at around 4 to 8 months of age.

The second, or permanent set are the 42 adult teeth. Sometimes the number of permanent or adult teeth may vary, which is fine as long as this is not causing an uneven bite.
Because smaller dogs, like the Shih Tzu, have a small jaw they may have more problems with overcrowding if the baby teeth do not fall out as the permanent or adult teeth grow in. An overcrowded mouth can cause food and plaque to build up, which will eventually cause bacteria to grow on the surface of the teeth, and this will lead to dental disease.

Sometimes the new teeth are forced to grow into an abnormal position and cause a crooked or uneven bite. The retained teeth may stay or fall weeks after the new teeth have developed. When necessary, the retained deciduous or baby teeth need to be removed surgically by your veterinarian.

A good time to do this is at the same time your puppy is booked for their spaying or neutering.

**Periodontal Disease**

Many people are unaware that 80% of three year old dogs suffer from periodontal disease and bad breath. This is a very high and very sad statistic, because it is entirely possible to prevent canine gum disease and bad breath.

Just as you would suffer from a cavity or gum disease, a dog with cavities and gum disease is forced to suffer in silence.

The pain associated with periodontal disease will make your dog’s life miserable as it will be painful for them to eat and the associated bacteria can infect many parts of the dog’s body, including the heart, kidney, liver and brain.

If your dog has bad breath, this could be the first sign of gum disease or tooth decay.
Brush Those Teeth

The above daily teeth brushing routine will help to keep your Shih Tzu’s teeth and gums healthy and white.

Introduce your Shih Tzu to teeth brushing early on in their young life, and introduce the procedure to them slowly, so that they will not fear it.

Begin with a finger cap toothbrush when they are young puppies, and then move to a soft bristled toothbrush, or even an electric brush, as all you have to do is hold it against the teeth while the brush does all the work. Sometimes with a manual brush, you may brush too hard and cause the gums to bleed.

Never use human toothpaste on your dog’s teeth. There are many flavored dog toothpastes available.

Also, it’s a good idea to get your Shih Tzu used to the sensation of occasionally having their teeth scraped, especially the back molars which tend to build up plaque.

**TIP:** if you need help keeping your dog’s mouth open while you do a quick brush or scrape, get yourself a piece of hard material
(rubber or leather) that they can bite down on, so that they cannot fully close their mouth while you work on their teeth.

Begin by getting your puppy used to having its mouth handled and your fingers rubbing its teeth.

Next, buy some canine toothpaste specially flavored to appeal to dogs and apply this to your dog’s teeth with your finger.

Then slowly introduce the manual or electric toothbrush. When you go slowly, they will get used to the buzzing of the electric brush which will do a superior job of cleaning their teeth.

Do not turn the toothbrush on and immediately put it in your puppy or dog’s mouth because you will frighten them. First, let them see the brush (without turning it on), next turn it on and let them hear the buzzing, followed by letting them feel the buzzing against their body (not in their mouth yet).

Once they are slowly used to the noise of the electric brush, it’s time to brush just one tooth and remove the brush. Keep doing this until your puppy or dog will allow you to brush all teeth in one session.

Whether you let the electric toothbrush do the work for you, or you are using a manual toothbrush, make certain that you brush in a circular motion and also get underneath the gum line to help prevent gum disease and loose teeth.

**Teeth Scraping**

Use a tooth scraper to get rid of the plaque buildup once or twice a month. Most accumulation will be found on the outside of the teeth and on the back molars, near the gum line. Go slowly and only do this when your dog is calm and relaxed, a little bit at a time.
Be extra careful because these tools are sharp and if your Shih Tzu suddenly moves, you could cut their gums.

**Healthy Teeth Tips**

Despite what most dog owners might put up with as normal, it is not normal for your dog to have smelly dog breath or canine halitosis.

If your dog’s breath leaves you reeling, this is the first sign of an unhealthy mouth, which could involve gum disease or tooth decay. Left untreated, unhealthy teeth and gums can be the precursor of dangerous bacteria that could lead to life-threatening health problems.

a) if you want to keep your dog’s teeth sparkling white, buy yourself some good, old-fashioned hydrogen peroxide and use this as your doggy toothpaste (hydrogen peroxide is what’s in the human whitening toothpaste). Pour some into the cap and dip in your toothbrush. There will be such a small amount on the brush that it will not harm your dog, and will kill any bacteria in your dog’s mouth.

b) many canine toothpastes are formulated with active enzymes to help keep tartar build-up at bay.

c) help prevent tooth plaque and doggy halitosis by feeding your dog natural, hard bones at least once a month, which will also help to remove tartar while polishing and keeping their teeth white. Feed large, bones so there is no danger of swallowing, and do NOT boil the bones first because this makes the bone soft (which defeats the purpose of removing plaque), and could cause it to splinter into smaller pieces that could create a choking hazard for your dog.

d) small dogs with short muzzles, such as the Shih Tzu tend to be more vulnerable to teeth and gum problems than our larger
fur friends, so you really need to be brushing their teeth every single day.

e) feeding a daily dental chew will also help to remove tartar while exercising jaws and massaging gums and some dental chews contain natural breath freshening cinnamon, cloves or chlorophyll.

f) coconut oil helps to prevent smelly dog breath while giving your Shih Tzu’s digestive, immune and metabolic functions a boost at the same time. Dog’s love the taste, so add a 1/4 teaspoon to your dog’s dinner and their breath will soon be much sweeter.

Help to keep your Shih Tzu comfortable and healthy by getting into the habit of brushing their teeth every day.

**Drooling**

Excessive drooling may simply be because your Shih Tzu is anticipating a tasty treat or could be secondary to dental disease. Your pet may be experiencing pain or the salivary glands may be reacting to inflammation from excessive bacteria. In the case of dental disease examination by your veterinarian will be necessary.

**Nail Care**

Allowing your Shih Tzu to have long, untrimmed nails can result in various health hazards including infections or an irregular and uncomfortable gait that can result in damage to their joints or back that can result in a limp or chronic lameness.

Although most dogs do not particular enjoy the process of having their nails trimmed, and most humans find the exercise to be a
little scary, regular nail trimming is a very important grooming practice that should never be overlooked.

**TIP:** the front nails will always be longer than the back nails simply because the motion of walking and running requires more pushing off with the back feet which helps to keep these nails shorter.

In order to keep your Shih Tzu’s toenails in good condition and the proper length, you will need to purchase a nail trimmer at a pet store and learn how to correctly use it.

**NOTE:** when your Shih Tzu is a small puppy, it will be best to trim their nails with a pair of nail scissors, which you can purchase at any pet store, that are smaller and easier to use on puppy nails.

When your Shih Tzu is full grown size, you may want to switch to a more robust, plier style of nail clipper.

The plier style of nail clipper is also readily available at all pet stores and comes in many different sizes and colors. You will want to buy a smaller sized one for your Shih Tzu. The blades on this type of nail clipper remain sharp and never need to be replaced.

Further, if you want your dog’s nails to be smooth, without the sharp edges clipping alone can create, you may also want to invest in a toenail file or a special, slow speed, rotary trimmer designed especially for dog nails.
While there are other rotary toenail products out there, the cordless, Dremel™ 7300-PT is by far the best one.

Some dogs will prefer the rotary trimmer to the squeezing sensation of the nail clipper and so long as you check their nails weekly and do a little trimming when needed, you can do all of your Shih Tzu’s nail trimming with the rotary Dremel™ if you prefer.

**NOTE:** *never* use a regular Dremel™ tool on a dog’s toenails as it will be too high speed and will burn your dog’s toenails. **Only use a slow speed Dremel™**, Model 7300-PT Pet Nail Grooming Tool.

How often you will need to clip your dog’s nails will largely depend upon how active your dog is and the types of surfaces he or she walks on. For instance, if your dog is always walking or running on grass or soft surfaces, you will need to trim more often than if they are regularly walked on hard surfaces, such as pavement, concrete or asphalt-like surfaces.

Always proceed carefully when trimming your dog’s nails and make the experience as pleasant as possible for them. If they are nervous, perhaps just trim one paw each day, or just the front paws one day and then the back paws the following day.

If you’re uncertain about how much of the nail to trim, just remove a little bit and check the nail — does the nail still look dead and whitish? If it does, you can probably cut back a little more.

As you cut a little more from the nail, you will see a dark gray to pink oval (depending on the color of your dog’s nails) starting to appear at the cut surface of the nail. When you see that oval, this is when you should stop cutting the nail, because the next cut could cause pain and bleeding as you will be cutting into the sensitive quick.
If you’re not 100% confident about your ability to properly trim your dog’s nails, save yourself the stress and your dog the possible trauma, and take them instead to a professional groomer to have their nails trimmed.

Some people like to trim their dog’s nails every week, and the more frequently you trim, the more the vein, or “quick” of the nail will recede higher up into the nail.

Most dog nails should be trimmed at least once a month. You will find that the front nails seem to grow longer than the back nails and this is because the back paws are used more forcefully for pushing to propel the dog forward and for scratching when marking territory.

It is easy to see if the nails are too long in all short haired breeds, and a little more difficult with those dogs whose hair covers the nails.

Have your dog stand while looking at the nails and if they are touching the ground, they are too long. Also, if you can hear the nails clicking on hard surfaces this is another good indication that the nails need trimming.

**Don’t Forget the Dew Claws**

Many dogs have extra claws that grow up higher on the inside of the leg, called dew claws.

Sometimes these extra claws are removed early in life or when the dog is spayed or neutered. If your dog still has dew claws you will need to remember to also regularly trim these dew claws, which will grow especially quickly, because they never touch the ground.

Dew claws which are not regularly trimmed can grow so long that they will curl completely around and grow into the dog’s leg, causing great pain that will lead to infection.
If your dog has longer fur on their legs, the dew claws will be hidden, which makes it ever more likely that you might forget to trim them while you’re trimming all the rest, so make a mental note, and always keep your Shih Tzu’s dew claws trimmed nice and short.

When trimming nails, go slowly and only remove a small bit until you gain confidence, because you don’t want to cut into the sensitive nerves and blood vessels.

If you’re really nervous about trimming your Shih Tzu’s nails, your dog will know it, and this will make the process that much more difficult for you both. If this is the case, take them to a professional.

If your dog has light colored nails you will easily be able to see where the nail ends and the blood vessel begins — not so easy if the nails are dark.

**TIP**: go online and watch videos all about the best ways to keep your dog’s nails short and healthy. There are plenty of very informative videos out there that will give you a valuable overview and a good starting point for learning the correct way to shorten your Shih Tzu’s nails.

**TIP**: shine a flashlight behind your dog’s nails to help you more clearly see where the quick ends.

Always keep a styptic pencil or styptic powder (called Kwik Stop) on hand just in case you accidentally cut into the quick and cause the nail to bleed as this will immediately stop the bleeding.

Hopefully this will never happen, however, if you cut too close, and your
dog cries or yelps, quickly lick your finger and dip it into the jar of Kwik Stop powder and immediately press it against the end of the bleeding toenail.

Calmly reassure your dog that they will be okay, and make a mental note never to do this to your dog again, as it will destroy their trust in you and make them fearful of having their nails trimmed.

**Paw Care**

Always check your Shih Tzu’s paws and pads after each walk because foreign matter can easily become lodged between pads or stuck in their fur.

It’s also a good idea to wipe the bottom of your dog’s feet with a mild cleanser after a walk because, while we humans have shoes to protect us, our dogs must walk through any dirt or debris that may be lying on the road, including oil or gasoline spills from vehicles.

Also, depending on the surfaces where your dog may be walking, cuts or abrasions could occur, and if left unattended, can become painfully infected, leading to lameness.

Some dogs living in drier climates may suffer from dry, cracked or rough pads, therefore, after checking or trimming their nails, it is best to apply a paw or hoof balm to help keep them soft and pliable so they are less likely to become so dried out that they crack, which can be the precursor to infection.

**TIP:** there are many creams and lotions especially formulated for the pH of your dog. These products are designed to repair cracks and restore lost resiliency to foot pads that are constantly exposed to many harsh elements, such as hot sidewalks, rough surfaces, chemical spills, or snow and ice.
Desensitizing

It is possible to desensitize just about any situation that may be causing problems for you and your dog, so long as you’re willing to be patient and put in the time necessary.

If you have just adopted a Shih Tzu who is resistant to having their feet handled or their nails trimmed, follow these simple steps:

a) get a highly scented bag of treats your Shih Tzu really likes;

b) sit on the floor with your dog, the treats, and the nail clipper;

c) have a treat in one hand while you SHOW the nail clipper to your dog — immediately give the treat — do this once a day for several days (no clipping, yet);

d) have a treat in your hand while you RUB the clippers all over your dog, especially the legs and feet — give your dog a treat — do this once a day for several days (no clipping, yet);

e) have a treat in your hand while you show the clipper to your dog and pick up a paw, separate and touch every toenail — immediately give your dog a treat — do this for several days (no clipping, yet);

f) have a treat in your hand while you hold your dog’s paw and rub it with the clipper, opening and closing the clipper several times, touching the clipper sometimes to the actual nails — immediately give your dog a treat — do this for several days (no clipping, yet);

g) have a treat at the ready, while you pick up your dog’s paw and clip one toenail — immediately give your dog a treat and praise them — keep doing this until all toenails are trimmed.
If you have an assistant to help you, one of you can be doing the rubbing and touching, while the other is giving the treats.

If you have been patient and taken your time with this desensitizing, your Shih Tzu should now accept having his or her nails trimmed because they understand that this is a pleasant experience with lots of tasty treats and praise from you.

This type of desensitizing routine can be most effective in helping to teach your favorite fur friend to accept any sort of grooming procedure that they may have previously been reluctant to permit.

**Dangerous Spear Grass**

Spear grass is a dangerous type of weed that grows in many locations, in over 60 different varieties, during the summer months or in warmer climates. Just as it has many different varieties, it is also known by many different names, including spike grass, porcupine grass, foxtail grass, and needle grass.

This dangerous grass can have a velcro-like outer surface that easily sticks to anything brushing past, with needle sharp ends that can pierce the skin of a dog and work it’s way inside the body, so check for these dangerous grasses between the toes and all over the body.

Spear grass seeds can lodge themselves in the ears, eyes and nose and can cause very serious problems, even to the point of becoming life threatening if not discovered and properly treated. Because these seeds literally stick to anything, and are designed to move forward through the hair, to pierce the skin, no body part is immune.

Spear grass seeds have been found in the urethra, vagina, anal glands, brain, and spinal cord. Veterinarians have even found a
seed in the lung, even though the original site of entry was through the paw. Spear grass can also gain easy entry through open wounds.

If your dog is running free in areas where spear grasses grow, always carefully check them over, including between their toe pads, and thoroughly brush out their coats to ensure no seeds are hiding in their fur.

**Clipping the Coat**

**Show Dog Coats**

If you have decided to let your Shih Tzu grow a long, flowing coat that reaches the floor or longer, as you can imagine, this type of coat will be much higher, daily maintenance.

Grooming for a Shih Tzu in full show dog coat can include weekly bathing and oiling of the coat to make the hair shine and to prevent the hair from breaking.

At the very least, you will need to be very careful where you permit your show dog to walk, as their long coat will drag in all sorts of debris, and you will need to provide daily brushing and combing sessions to remove anything caught in the longer hair.

Further, you will need to be much more careful when bathing a Shih Tzu with a long, silky coat.

For instance, when you apply the shampoo onto the back, you will not want to rub in circles, but rather use only downward strokes to distribute the suds or conditioner because washing up and down or massaging in circular motions will tangle and break
DIY Grooming

If you have decided to learn how to clip your Shih Tzu’s hair yourself, rather than taking them to a professional grooming salon, you will need to purchase all the tools necessary and learn how to properly use them.

The first step will be learning which blades to use in your electric clipper in order to get the length of cut you desire.

The “blade cut” refers to the length of the dog’s hair that will remain after cutting against the natural lie of the hair.

As an example, if the blade cut indicates 1/4” (0.6 cm) the length of your Shih Tzu’s hair after cutting will be 1/4” (0.6 cm) when you cut in the same direction as the natural growth of their hair, or it will be 1/8” (0.3 cm) if you cut against the natural direction of their hair growth.

Even if you decide to leave the full grooming to the professionals, in between grooming sessions you will still need to have a brush, a comb, a small pair of scissors and a pair of nail clippers on hand, so that you can keep the hair away from your Shih Tzu’s eyes, knots and tangles out of their coat and their nails trimmed short.

Choose a good quality clipper for a Shih Tzu, such as an “Andis”, “Wahl” or “Oster” professional electric clipper, which will cost between $100 and $300 or more.

Puppy Cut

The puppy cut is the easiest, most low maintenance type of cut for a Shih Tzu who is an active, companion dog.
Another good reason for keeping your Shih Tzu’s coat clipped in a puppy cut is that they will look forever like a cute puppy.

As well, when the coat is kept short, it will be much easier for you to bathe, brush and check for any irritants caught in the coat.

The above puppy cut can be easily achieved with an Andis (or other) professional canine clipper and a 4FC ceramic edge blade.

In order to get a cut that looks like Boris above, you will cut with the clipper following the growth of the coat, which will leave a 1/4” coat.

You will be able to clip most of the legs with the 4FC blade, however, for the more sensitive lower legs and feet, you will need to trim with a sharp pair of grooming scissors.

You will also need to regularly trim around your Shih Tzu’s eyes with a short pair of blunt tipped scissors in order to keep the hair out of their eyes.

Most clippers come with a size-10 ceramic edge blade and clipper oil. The size 10 blade will cut your Shih Tzu’s hair much too close and will only be used to trim hair between the pads of the feet or across the top of the nose.
In the summer, or if you live in warmer climates and you want the coat a little shorter (1/8”), you can cut against the growth of the coat with the same blade, which will leave enough hair so that your Shih Tzu will still be completely covered to protect them from sunburn.

Make sure that you get your Shih Tzu used to regular grooming sessions early in their young life by introducing them to the sound and feel of the electric clipper and having the hair trimmed around their eyes with scissors, as well as having their feet touched and their nails trimmed.

Whether or not you decide to learn how to groom your Shih Tzu yourself or have them regularly groomed by a professional groomer, take time to get them used to being up on a table or countertop when they are still a young puppy, so that when it comes time for a full grooming session, they will already be used to the idea.

Unless you have the time to take a professional groomer’s course ($3,000. to $4,000), and have a collection of professional grooming tools at your disposal, it might be a good idea for you to hire a professional groomer to keep your Shih Tzu looking their best.

**TIP**: if you are interested in learning how to groom your Shih Tzu, but don’t have the time to take a course, ask a professional groomer to help you get started by letting you observe their technique. Ask them to suggest a clipper, blades and scissors you will need to maintain the type of cut you prefer for your Shih Tzu.

**Professional Grooming**

Not all of us have the time, experience, patience or desire necessary to professionally groom our own dog and if this is you,
it will soon be time to find a professional groomer for your Shih Tzu.

First, ask your friends and acquaintances who have non-shedding dogs where they take their dog, and if they are happy with the results. If they are, go and check them out yourself to see if this is the place for you and your Shih Tzu.

If you do not know anyone to ask, go to your local pet store and inquire if they know of anyone who is grooming in your area, or ask at your veterinarian’s office.

A full grooming session should only be attempted by a competent professional well versed in all the techniques required for shaving, clipping and trimming your dog because, firstly, you want the experience to be as stress-free as possible for your Shih Tzu, and secondly, you don’t want them to look like they’ve been run over by an out of control lawnmower.

If you’re at all nervous about any aspect of grooming, whether it’s just the nails or the whole dog, it’s well worth taking your Shih Tzu to a professional, or having a mobile groomer visit you in your home.

When you think of it, most professional groomers are very reasonably priced (on average, $40 to $50), and they rarely charge nearly enough for their services when you take into consideration all that they do, and that their clients are, generally speaking, less than cooperative.

**When to Help Them Transition**

The impending loss of a beloved dog, whether it happens when the dog is still very young, or whether it happens when they are older, is one of the most difficult and emotionally devastating coping experiences a canine guardian will ever have to face.
For the sake of our faithful companions, because we do not want to prolong their suffering, we humans will have to do our best to look at our dog’s situation practically, rather than emotionally, so that we can make the best decision for them.

They may be suffering from extreme old age and the inability to even walk outside to relieve themselves, and thus suffering the indignity of regularly soiling their sleeping area, or they may have been diagnosed with an incurable illness that is causing them much pain, or they may have been seriously injured.

Whatever the reason for a canine companion’s suffering, it will be up to their human guardian to calmly guide the end-of-life experience so that any further discomfort and distress can be minimized.

**When There is Uncertainty**

In circumstances where it is not entirely clear how much a dog is suffering, it will be helpful to pay close attention to your dog’s behavior and keep a daily log or record so that you can know for certain how much of their day is difficult and painful for them, and how much is not.

When you keep a log or journal, this way, it will be easier to decide if the dog’s quality of life has become so poor that it makes better sense to offer them the gift of peacefully going to sleep and passing to the other side.

During this time of uncertainty, it will also be very important to discuss with a veterinarian what signs of suffering may be associated with the dog’s particular disease or condition, so that you know what to look for.

Often a dog may still continue to eat or drink despite being distraught, having difficulty breathing, excessively panting, being disoriented or in much pain, and as their caring guardians, we will
have to weigh their love of eating against how much they are really suffering in all other aspects of their life.

Obviously, if a canine guardian can clearly see that their beloved companion is suffering throughout their days and nights, it will make sense to help humanely end their suffering by planning a euthanasia procedure right away.

We humans are often tempted to delay the inevitable moment of euthanasia, because we love our dogs so much and cannot bear the anticipation of the intense grief we know will overwhelm us when we must say our final goodbyes to our beloved fur friend.

Unfortunately, we may regret that we allowed our dog to suffer too long, and find ourselves wishing that if only we had the same option, to peacefully let go, when we reach such a stage in our own lives.

What is Euthanasia?

Every veterinarian will have received special training to help provide all incurably ill, injured or aged pets who have come to the end of their natural lives with a humane and gentle death, through a process called “euthanasia”.

When the time comes, euthanasia, or putting a dog or other pet “to sleep”, will usually be a two-step process.

First, the veterinarian will inject the dog with a sedative to make them sleepy, calm and comfortable.

Second, the veterinarian will inject a special drug that will peacefully stop their heart. These drugs work in such a way that the dog will not experience any awareness whatsoever that their life is ending. What they will experience is very much like what we humans experience when going under anesthesia during a surgical procedure.
Once the second stage drug has been injected, the entire process takes about 10 to 20 seconds, at which time the veterinarian will then check to make certain that the dog’s heart has stopped.

There is no suffering with this process, which is a very gentle and humane way to end a dog’s suffering and allow them to peacefully pass on.

Make the transition to the “Rainbow Bridge” that much easier on your best friend, by asking your veterinarian if they will attend at your home to perform the process, because many dogs may not really enjoy the trip to the vet’s office and all the peculiar and sometimes frightening smells that can be associated with it.

Allowing your special Shih Tzu friend to peacefully pass over to the other side while remaining in the safe, comfortable and familiar surrounding of their home with their lifelong, trusted guardian at their side will be much less stressful for them.
8. GRIEVING a LOST FRIEND

Often we humans do not fully recognize the terrible grief involved in losing a beloved canine friend who has been our companion for many years and who filled that special place in our hearts that only a dog can.

Those who do not understand the close bond we humans can have with our dogs, which is often unlike any we have with our human counterparts, may accuse us of being overly melodramatic.

Your friends may give you pitying looks and try to cheer you up, but if they have never experienced such a loss themselves, they may also secretly think you are making too much fuss over “just a dog”.

The Ultimate Shih Tzu Puppy Guide — Copyrighted © 2014 — Furry Joy
For some of us humans, the loss of a beloved dog is so painful that they decide never to share their lives with another because they cannot bear the thought of going through the pain of loss again.

Expect to feel terribly sad, tearful and yes, depressed because those who are close to their canine companions will feel their loss no less acutely than the loss of a human friend and the grieving process can take some time to recover from, and honestly, some of us never totally recover.

After the loss of a family dog, first you need to take care of yourself by making certain that you keep eating and getting regular sleep, even though you will feel an almost eerie sense of loneliness.

Losing a beloved dog is a shock to the system which can also affect your concentration and your ability to find joy in the rest of your life. During this early grieving time you will need to take extra care while driving or performing tasks that require your concentration as you may find yourself distracted.

If there are other dogs or cats in the home, they will also be grieving the loss of a companion, and may display this by acting depressed, being off their food or showing little interest in play or games. Therefore, you need to help guide your other pets through this grieving process by keeping them busy and interested by taking them for extra walks and spending more time with them.

Many people do not wait nearly long enough before attempting to replace a lost dog and will immediately go to the local shelter or buy a new puppy. While this may help to distract you from your grieving process, this is not really fair to the new fur member of your family because bringing a new pet into a home that is depressed and grieving the loss of a long time member may create behavioral problems for the new member who will be forced to deal with the unstable energy of the grieving family.
A better scenario would be to allow yourself the time to properly grieve by waiting a minimum of one month to allow yourself and your family to feel happier and more stable before deciding upon sharing your home with another dog.

The grieving process will be different for everyone and you will know when the time is right to consider sharing your home with another canine companion.

**Memorials**

There are as many unique ways to honor the passing of a beloved dog as each of our fur friends is unique and special to us.

For instance, you may wish to have your fur friend cremated and preserve their ashes in a special urn, or perhaps have a special marker, photo bereavement, photo engraved Rainbow Bridge Poem, or wooden plaque created in honor of your lost friend.

You may wish to keep their memory close to you at all times by having a DNA remembrance pendant or bracelet designed.

As well, you do not need to feel that you must go through the grieving process all on your own, because there are support groups to help you and your family through this painful period of loss and grief.
The Rainbow Bridge Poem

“Just this side of heaven
is a place called Rainbow Bridge.

When an animal dies that has been
especially close to someone here,
that pet goes to Rainbow Bridge.

There are meadows and hills for all of our
special friends so they can run and play together.
There is plenty of food, water and sunshine,
and our friends are warm and comfortable.

All the animals who had been ill and old
are restored to health and vigor;
those who were hurt or maimed are made whole
and strong again, just as we remember them
in our dreams of days and times gone by.
The animals are happy and content, except for one small thing;
they each miss someone very special to them,
who had to be left behind.

They all run and play together,
but the day comes when one suddenly stops and looks into the distance.
His bright eyes are intent; His eager body quivers.
Suddenly he begins to run from the group,
lying over the green grass,
his legs carrying him faster and faster.

You have been spotted,
and when you and your special friend finally meet,
you cling together in joyous reunion,
ever to be parted again.
The happy kisses rain upon your face;
your hands again caress the beloved head,
and you look once more into the trusting eyes of your pet,
so long gone from your life but never absent from your heart.

Then you cross Rainbow Bridge together”

Author unknown...
9. SHIH TZU FUN FACTS

Original Names and Facts

Most humans mispronounce the name Shih Tzu, running it together so that it sounds like “Shit Zoo”, when in fact, the name being of Chinese origin, is more correctly phonetically pronounced “She Zoo”.

The Shih Tzu name is both singular and plural and there have been at least six different names given to the Shih Tzu over their long history.

In England, Shih Tzu were nicknamed the "Chrysanthemum Dog" during the 1930s.
The Shih Tzu is also called the "Chinese Lion Dog".

Originating in China, the Shih Tzu was raised in the Imperial Palaces by eunuchs for the pleasure of the nobility and anyone owning one outside of the palace was subject to death.

During the Ming and Manchu Dynasties Shih Tzu were used as bed warmers and placed at the feet of the emperors and empresses to generate heat.

Shih Tzu appear in tapestries dating as far back as 2000 years.

Many believe that the Shih Tzu breed was developed by Tibetan Monks who offered the temple dogs as gifts to the emperors of China.

Dowager Empress Tzu Hsi, who ruled in China from 1861 through 1908, considered the Shih Tzu to be sacred.

The royal Shih Tzu finally arrived in America in the late 1930’s, after which this breed rose to enormous popularity by the 1960s.

According to DNA studies, the lovable Shih Tzu with the long silky hair is one of the 14 ancient breeds of dog, with a close genetic relationship to wolves. The Shih Tzu is the closest known descendant of Senji, the prehistoric Chinese wolf.

"Tibetan Shih Tzu Kou" is the original, complete name of the Shih Tzu breed, which translates as Tibetan Lion Dog.

Another ancient name for the Shih Tzu is the "Xi Shi Quan" which was based on the name Xi Shi, who was one of the most beautiful women of China.

In ancient times, old Tibetan monks regarded the Shih Tzu as a holy dog and called them the "Snow Lion Dog" because they were used to guard the Imperial Palace.
Celebrity, Famous & Working Shih Tzu

The following is a list of the names of a few Shih Tzu who are famous in their own right, or who did, or still do, share their lives with past or present well-known celebrities.

Ballmer — founder of Microsoft, Bill Gates
Bandit and Buster — author, Larry L. King
Bella — actress Rebecca Mader
Bing and Bong — singer Mariah Carey
Bonny — actor Colin Farell
Boris — team member, K-9 Super Heroes Dog Whispering
Bridget, Gemma and Jessie — actress Betty Buckley
Choo Choo — Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother
Fang — comedian Phyllis Diller
Honeychild — actress Nicole Richie
Lulu — actress, Shirley Jones
Moulin Rouge — actress Zsa Zsa Gabor
Munchie — singer Beyonce
Mr. Flinton — fashion designer, Oleg Cassini
Panda — actress, Betty White
Princess Lotus Blossom — actress, Joan Crawford
Sugar — actress Elizabeth Taylor
Wicket — singers, The Hanson brothers
Conclusion

Congratulations and all best wishes to you and your Shih Tzu companion.

When you give your Shih Tzu puppy or dog what they need to be happy and healthy, you will both enjoy an amazing relationship for many long years.

We hope that this book has answered any questions you may have had about this wonderful breed and we wish you much happiness and long life together.

May you share every precious moment with patience, understanding and unconditional love, and never forget that....

“He is your friend, your partner, your defender, your dog. 
You are his life, his love, his leader. 
He will be yours, faithful and true, 
to the last beat of his heart.
You owe it to him to be worthy of such devotion.”

~ Beverly Young and Asia Moore
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Bullseye Pee Pad (bullseyepeepad.com)

Cornell University, Department of Animal Science
Poisonous Plants Affecting Dogs (ansi.cornell.edu/plants/dogs/)

Dentastix (pedigree.com)

Dog Bowl for Your Dog (dogbowlforyourdog.com)

Doggles™ (doggles.com)

In the Company of Dogs (inthecompanyofdogs.com)

K-9 Super Heroes Dog Whispering - “With the proper training, Man can be dog’s best friend. You don’t have to live with behavioral problems.” (K-9SuperHeroesDogWhispering.com)

Modern Puppies (modernpuppies.com)

New Beginnings Shih Tzu Rescue, Inc. (nbstr.org)

NorthStar Shih Tzu Rescue (northstarshihtzurescue.org)

NOW FRESH™ Grain Free Dry Dog Food (petcurean.com)

NRG Pet Products (nrgpetproducts.com)
Pet Loss (petloss.com)

Photographs: K-9 Super Heroes Dog Whispering

Poochie Bells TM (poochie-pets.net)

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