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Winnie

CH BriarRidge's Written On The Wind

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PHOTOGRAPHY

Ultimate Puppy Online Course

Sydney Bleicher and Peggy van Dam, the team behind Ultimate Puppy (www.ultimatepuppy.com) describe their program, as “pre-school for puppies,” aimed specifically towards puppies 16 weeks and younger. They achieve this by providing information and tools that new puppy owners can use to set themselves up for success through preventative steps, as opposed to falling into damage control mode. An ounce of prevention is always better than a pound of cure, right? The web-based class “You’re Lucky You’re Cute” (something I’ve said to every dog I’ve ever owned) is approximately 48 minutes of good, solid, common-sense puppy advice and is found under the “Live Virtual Lessons” tab (www.crowdcast.io/ultimatepuppy).

Before beginning “You’re Lucky You’re Cute,” students are advised to do a little reading beforehand. Included in the class is a PDF printout, about 20 pages, briefly covering what to expect from the class. The PDF is cute, colorful, and informative; however, it also leaves space specifically for notetaking, which, as an avid taker of notes, I really liked to see. Additionally, there are some useful links embedded in the document, so don’t delete the electronic copy!

The class is structured in three sections (“pillars”), which cover the importance of crate training and successful bathroom training, the vital concept of supervision all the time, and the underrepresented notion



of appropriate priorities when training a puppy. I particularly liked the structure; those three pillars provided a helpful visual and made the three points easy to remember. This is especially important when you’re in the throes of puppy-training and are feeling a little overwhelmed (or, depending on the puppy, completely besieged). In fact, one of the points that arises during the class is that feeling of being out of one’s depth—sleep deprivation is real, Sydney stresses. And, speaking of stress, Bleicher touches on the various stressors common to both first-time and seasoned puppy owners and, more importantly, ways to combat them. This little bit of honesty was particularly refreshing; there are a great many books on puppy training and not all of them warn you about the kind of wild ride you’re in for.

One other thing that sets YLYC apart

from a lot of other puppy-training guides is the time spent on explanation—the why behind the training. Sydney explains not only why crate training is important and how it aids and even facilitates other aspects of dog training throughout the different phases of the dog’s life, but she also touches on the ways in which new puppy owners subtly sabotage themselves while also providing methods to counter that self-sabotage. She acknowledges that crate training can be stressful and challenging (for both puppy and owner!) and provides tips on how to mitigate the crate struggle, or even prevent it entirely.

The second part of the first pillar, because it relates so closely to crate training, is bathroom training. Again, the emphasis is on how to be successful during this process, and how to avoid some of the most common missteps that result in potty accidents.

The second pillar focuses on “100% Supervision” and, again, there is a great deal of honesty in this section. As with the previous pillar, this one also focuses on preventing common problems before they have a chance to develop. It’s important to emphasize that these are not hacks and they aren’t shortcuts. Instead, it’s as if Bleicher and van Dam put the earliest stages of the puppy training process under a microscope and found all of the most common pitfalls, mistakes, and basic errors in judgment a beleaguered, sleep-deprived puppy-owner



You're Lucky You're Cute

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might make in the heat of the moment, and then, if you'll forgive the mixed metaphor, debugged that process. YLYC wants people to be successful, and success is rooted in forethought and prevention.

Finally, the third pillar, "Puppy Friendly Priorities" focuses on maintaining realistic, reasonable expectations regarding training. This module was probably my favorite because it was a great reality check and includes a list of training priorities appropriate for a young puppy.

Ultimate Puppy's "You're Lucky You're Cute" is a short class, roughly 48 minutes long (\$19.95/CDN or approximately \$15/US). It's not meant to be a substitute for a puppy class or private lessons, but rather a way to lay some solid groundwork that starts when the puppy first comes home, bridging the gap until the pup is ready for a class. Though it's on the short side, there was a lot of useful information included throughout both the class and the PDF printout. I'd say the class would probably be of most use to a first-time puppy-owner, or someone bringing home a new puppy after living with adult dogs for a while. It would also be a great resource for a breeder to share with puppy-buyers, or to include as a gift on the day the puppy goes home with its new family. As for me, I enjoyed the class and would recommend it to anyone looking to get an early start on training their very young puppy.



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