

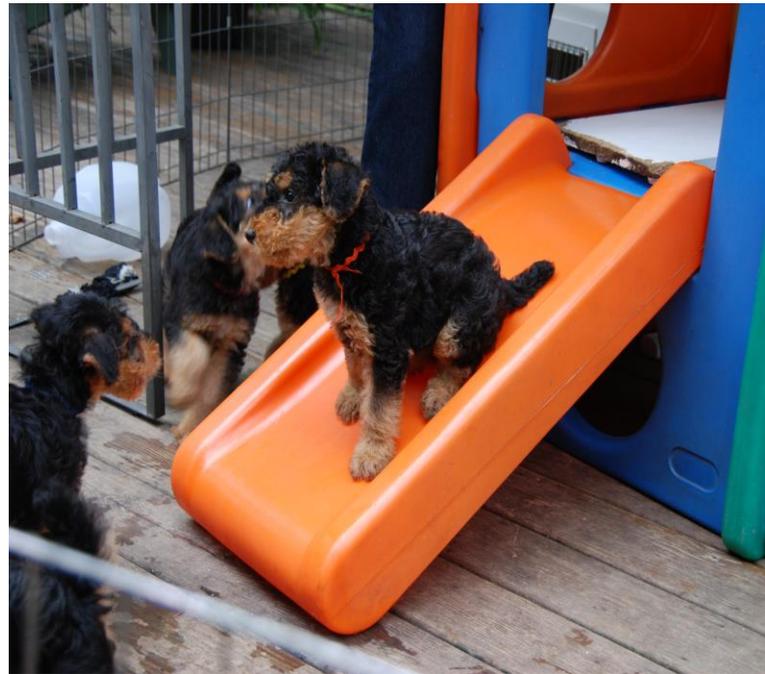
Temperament Testing Puppies

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For 30 years I have been temperament testing puppies. I have used a number of different formats, including one I designed myself. For many years I found them extremely helpful in selecting the right puppy for the right home. However, once I designed and began using what would become the Puppy Headstart Program, I found that all of the puppies were testing exactly the same. The tests had become meaningless in the context of the way I was now raising puppies.

Puppies who have gone through the Puppy Headstart Program cannot be tested accurately with traditional temperament tests. These tests, normally done at 49 days of age, are designed to determine what characteristics each puppy is born with, not what he has learned. Prior to the Headstart Program, most litters were raised with toys to interact with and plenty of handling, but without the concentrated, systematic introduction of environmental enrichment the Program provides. That limited experience lent itself to being able to test a puppy's primary reaction to a variety of new situations.

Headstart puppies have already been exposed to so many sights and sounds by 7 weeks of age that a true reading of their initial reaction to a new sound or a new place or person during a test is no longer valid. They have generalized the concept of "new is fun!" Even evaluating how each puppy behaves on his own without the rest of the litter for support can no longer be done, since each puppy has been removed from the litter for multiple one on ones in new places and situations.



A more accurate way of evaluating temperaments in Headstart puppies is the quiet observation that the breeder can do each day as the puppies are introduced to the ever changing environment of the Headstart play yard. Who is first to get on the teeter board, through the tunnel, down the slide, etc.? What does each puppy do when you bang pans, introduce a windup toy, blows a whistle? Each puppy has a "style" of dealing with the world that will show itself in the way he interacts with his environment, and determining each puppy's style is probably a more useful overall picture of the puppy than a onetime set of tests.

