

PUPPY BEHAVIOR HANDBOOK

01

Puppy Nature



There are no blank slates.

Your puppy was **born** an individual.
They entered this world with instincts, drives, and inherent qualities already in place.

Enjoy getting to know them as the amazing, unique, one-of-a-kind individual they are.

Brain & Body

Let's take a peek 'under the hood' at how your puppy's brain and body are developing during this impactful stage of life.

#1



A Critical Window

Between ~3-14 weeks of age, your puppy's brain is specially primed to form new connections in response to sensory and **social experiences.**

The network of neurological connections formed during this critical socialization period will influence your puppy's future ability to cope with novelty, regulate emotions, and learn effectively.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Providing safe, positive exposure to different people, dogs, & environments is critical to your puppy's healthy brain development. Learn how in Section 04: Socialization.

Brain & Body



#2

Under Construction

At this stage of life, your puppy's brain and body are still very much works in progress (*aren't we all?!*).

This means your puppy:

- has limited ability to regulate their emotions
- has limited amounts of impulse control
- has bones & muscles aren't yet ready for high impact activities
- needs more sleep than an adult dog
- is forming lots of impactful "first impressions" about the world; positive & negative experiences can have lasting effects

KEY TAKEAWAY

Your puppy is not mature enough to regulate themselves. Learn how to create low-stress environments & routines that protect their physical & emotional health in Section 02: Puppy Nurture.

Brain & Body



#3

Oral Explorer

Mouthing, nipping, chewing, and picking up anything that looks new or interesting are normal & expected puppy behaviors.

KEY TAKEAWAY

At this stage of life, puppies are going to explore the world using their mouths. Learn how to support healthy development *and* limit excessive mouthiness in Section 10: Bitey Behavior.

Individual Preferences

In addition to learning about your puppy's developing brain & body, now is the time to get to know them as a totally unique individual.

Get started by keeping track of your puppy's likes & dislikes:



02

Puppy Nurture

Dogs are Family.

Release yourself from old "rules" about dog ownership and move forward with joyful compassion, as you say to your puppy, "I see you. I acknowledge your needs. I am here to help."

Nurture Components

Your puppy is a dependent family member who is 100% reliant on you to meet their needs. You can help them navigate the world feeling safe, secure, & loved by following the Nature-Driven Nurture framework.

FOUR ELEMENTS *of* NATURE-DRIVEN NURTURE:



Environmental Design

Environment is (almost) everything. Your environmental design can determine whether you & your puppy enjoy a peaceful, happy life together - or a life filled with frustration and stress.

LET YOUR ENVIRONMENT DO THE WORK!

ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN



Encourage Desired Behaviors

- Have lots of toys & chews readily available
- Put treat jars around your home to make it easy to reward desired behaviors
- Provide lots of quiet, cozy resting places



Prevent Unwanted Behaviors

- Use gates & pens to block access to certain areas
- Pick up and put away items you don't want your puppy to chew
- Use visual barriers & white noise to reduce alert barking at sights & sounds outside the home



Minimize *Harmful* Exposure to Stressors

- Avoid loud, hectic walking routes
- Avoid people or dogs who come on too strong
- and ignore your puppy's boundaries

Relationship Dynamics

A healthy, positive relationship is one of the greatest gifts you can give your puppy. It promotes a secure attachment style, increases trust & responsiveness, and supports your puppy's overall wellbeing .

LEADERSHIP MATTERS

RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS

A healthy relationship is one in which your puppy views you as a Safe, Predictable, Helpful Leader.



Be a SAFE Human

- Avoid behaviors your puppy is likely to find threatening: yelling, leaning over, staring down
- Learn puppy body language; adjust interactions when you see signs of fear or stress



Be a PREDICTABLE Human

- Respond to your puppy in a reliable manner: praise good choices and enforce rules consistently
- Establish predictable routines for daily activities



Be a HELPFUL Human

- Acknowledge your puppy's needs; respond to their requests with 'Yes', 'No', or '*How about this, instead?*'
- Provide guidance & comfort in scary situations

Wellness Routines

Wellness routines are all about nurturing your puppy's physical, emotional, mental, and social health, so they can feel comfortable & fulfilled in their daily life.

FOUR COMPONENTS OF WELLNESS

WELLNESS ROUTINES

Meeting your puppy's wellness needs will reduce destructive & disruptive behavior, promote learning & cooperation, and increase happiness.



EXERCISE

- Keep exercise low-impact; avoid slick/hard surfaces
- Exercise where your puppy feels safe & comfortable



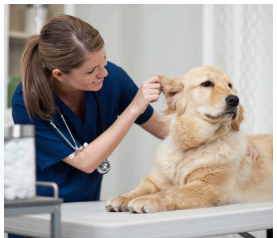
ENRICHMENT

- Provide daily opportunities for your puppy to **chew**, **sniff**, and **play** with people and/or other (vaccinated, friendly) dogs



SLEEP & REST

- Help your puppy get enough sleep (14-16+ hours/day) by scheduling nap times & providing quiet, comfy sleeping spots



HEALTHCARE

- Follow your veterinarian's advice & guidance about vet care
- Practice handling at home to keep vet visits low stress

03

Essential Gear

The Inside Scoop

The right gear can make all the difference.

Safety & Supervision

These essential items create a SAFE, relaxing home environment in which puppies can be easily & effectively supervised.

- [ ] **Metal/Wire Crate**
  - ✓ Big enough for your puppy to stand up, and lie down in a stretched out position
  - × Skip soft-sided, fabric crates that are easily destroyed
- [ ] **Exercise Pen**
  - ✓ Choose a pen that is high & sturdy enough for your puppy
  - × If your puppy can easily climb out, or move the pen around by leaning on it, it's too short and/or lightweight for them
- [ ] **Baby Gates**
  - ✓ Choose the right height: the gate should be taller then your puppy's head if they stand on two legs
  - ✓ Open floor plan? Search "fireplace baby gate" for options
- [ ] **Tethers**
  - ✓ Choose 3-6ft chew-proof tethers to create indoor tether stations
  - × Never leave your puppy alone/unsupervised while tethered
- [ ] **House Leash *Trainer Favorite!***
  - ✓ Lightweight leash your puppy drags during supervised free time
  - ✓ Gently lead your puppy away from hazards or toward desired locations without having to chase them, grab them, or repeat yourself over & over

Walking Equipment

Choose walking equipment that emphasizes safety, connection, & freedom of movement.

- [ ] **Flat Collar for ID Info**
  - ✓ Choose a flat collar with an **engravable ID plate** that includes your puppy's name and your contact information
  - × Hanging ID tags can be noisy & distracting for puppies
- [ ] **Walking Leash**
  - ✓ **Length:** 8 ft *(standard 4-6 ft leashes are quite restrictive; they can contribute to frustration & excessive pulling)*
  - ✓ **Material:** leather or nylon, which are sturdy & comfortable to grip
  - ✓ **Width:** 3/8 inch for small breed pups; 1/2 inch for medium breed pups, 3/5 inch for large & giant breed pups
  - ✓ **Clasp:** quality metal clasp that closes securely, but isn't so big and clunky that it weighs down your puppy
  - × AVOID: Dangerous extendable leashes
- [ ] **Harness**
  - ✓ Invest in a quality, well-fitting harness that doesn't restrict shoulder movement and keeps pressure off your puppy's delicate throat area
  - ✓ Our faves: Ruffwear Front Range Harness; Blue-9 Balance Harness
- [ ] **Long Line**
  - ✓ Choose a 20-30 ft line made of biothane that is 3/8 to 1/2 inch thick
  - ✓ Our absolute favorite way to SAFELY provide puppies with more freedom to explore in unfenced yards, parks, etc.
- [ ] **Safety Leash Connector**
  - ✓ A life-saving tool that connects your puppy's harness to their collar; search Etsy for "Leash Connector"

Enrichment Items

stock up on enrichment items that provide puppies with safe, healthy outlets for their natural drives to chew, play, sniff, and forage.

- [ ] **Bones & Long-Lasting Chews**
  - ✓ Bones & chews give outlets for your puppy's need to chew & gnaw
  - ✓ Because these behaviors are part of the eating sequence in nature, they often have a relaxing, soothing effect on our puppies, as they cue the body to prepare for "rest & digest" mode
  - ✓ Our faves: Nylabones, bully sticks, Himalayan chews, salmon skin rolls

- [ ] **Interactive Toys**
  - ✓ When choosing interactive toys, consider the size and breed of your puppy; terriers and toy breeds often enjoy small, rodent-like toys, while bully breeds and guardians often enjoy oversized/jumbo toys
  - ✓ Our faves: JW Pet Hol-ee Roller Ball; Jolly Balls; stuffed toys of varying shapes, sizes & textures (long & snake-like, puffy balls, etc.)

- [ ] **Foraging & Work-to-Eat Toys**
  - ✓ Foraging and work-to-eat toys have endless uses; our trainers use them as part of Home Alone routines, to encourage settling, to make mealtimes more fun, and to keep pups busy during work calls
  - ✓ Our faves: snuffle mats, classic KONG, West Paw Toppl, Nina Ottoson Treat Tumble ball, Likimats

04 Socialization

A Worldview in the Making

Your puppy is currently forming an endless series of first impressions about the world around them.

Exposure to different people, dogs, & environments that feels **safe & positive** is critically important to help them establish a view of the world as **Safe, Stable, and full of Opportunity.**

Socialization Goals

The social & sensory experiences your puppy has at this critical stage of life (especially up 'til 14 weeks of age) will shape their view of the world for years to come.

GOAL *of* SOCIALIZATION



SAFE, STABLE
& full of
OPPORTUNITY

The goal of socialization is to help your puppy establish a view of the world as Safe, Stable, & full of Opportunity.

Dogs who view the world as Safe, Stable, & full of Opportunity:

- Feel confident & curious in the face of novelty
- Feel comfortable in the presence of people & other dogs
- Adapt quickly & easily to new environments and situations
- Know they can look to their human for help & guidance when they feel uncertain

VARIATION IN NATURE IS NORMAL

Socialization is about helping your puppy grow into the most resilient, adaptable, confident version of themselves. Remember: some puppies will grow up to be naturally more social & outgoing than others, regardless of their socialization experiences.

Types of Socialization

Let's take a look at the two main types of socialization activities and the different ways they prepare your puppy to navigate the world peacefully & happily

#1



Active Socialization

Active socialization means that your puppy is directly interacting with people, dogs, or objects in their environment.

Active Socialization Examples

- Playdate with a friend's gentle, puppy-savvy, vaccinated adult dog
- Sniffing and saying hello to a polite neighbor
- Freely exploring different obstacles & surfaces in puppy class

AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT

Active socialization helps your puppy learn how feel confident & comfortable about being an active participant in their environment.

Types of Socialization

Passive Socialization

Passive socialization means that your puppy is observing people, dogs, sights & sounds from a distance.



Passive Socialization Examples

- Sit on your front step with your puppy on a leash, and watch the world go by together
- Go to a quiet area of a park with a playground in view and sit on a blanket with your puppy
- Park your vehicle at the far edge of a pet store parking lot; pop open the door or trunk & watch the people, cars, & dogs moving about in the distance

Pro Tip: Give your puppy a relaxing activity to do, like chewing a bully stick, while they observe their environment

A PASSIVE OBSERVER

Passive socialization gives your puppy the chance to watch & process the events happening around them. It lets them practice being a relaxed, passive observer of their environment.

Socialization Rules

Follow these three rules to help ensure your puppy enjoys safe, positive socialization experiences with you:

THREE RULES *of* EFFECTIVE SOCIALIZATION

Follow these three rules to help ensure your puppy enjoys safe, positive socialization experiences with you:

#1

PUPPY SETS THE PACE

- ✓ Allow your puppy to approach objects, people, & dogs at their own pace; offer support & praise them for effort
- × Never force your puppy to interact with someone or something

#2

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

- ✓ Focus on short, positive exposures that leave your puppy feeling confident & wanting more
- × Don't overwhelm your puppy with long outings & a constant stream of greetings with people or other dogs

#3

BE YOUR PUPPY'S PROTECTOR

- ✓ Step in & protect your puppy if someone is coming on too strong or ignoring your puppy's boundaries
- ✓ If stepping in & asking for space doesn't work, walk away with your puppy; show them you will always keep them safe
- × *Do not compromise your puppy's view of the world, and your role as their protector, to appease a stranger*

Health Precautions

Your puppy's critical socialization window takes place during a time when they are not yet fully vaccinated. Here are some simple safety precautions to follow to help protect your puppy's physical health while ensuring their critical socialization needs are met.



CHOOSE A REPUTABLE PUPPY CLASS

- Look for a licensed training facility that sanitizes their site prior to puppy class. Make sure the class uses only positive, dog-friendly teaching methods, and allows puppies to opt-in and opt-out of the different class activities



AVOID DOG PARKS

- Dog parks and other areas that are frequented by lots of different dogs are high risk for multiple reasons, including a notable risk of disease transmission



USE BLANKETS, CARRIERS, & LAPS

- Manage your puppy's contact with the ground in busier public spaces by making use of a blanket, carrier, or even your lap



WIPE THEIR PAWS

- Stick a box of grooming wipes in your bag and another just inside your front door. Make a habit of wiping your puppy's paws immediately after outings



STAY CURRENT ON VACCINES

- Be sure to stick to your veterinarian's recommended vaccine and booster schedule for your puppy

05

Skills Training

A peaceful, happy life together

Puppies have so much to learn about how to navigate our human world. Embrace your role as their coach, guide, and biggest cheerleader.

Skills Training Goals

The goal of skills training is to help your puppy (eventually) develop key life skills that allow them to navigate life alongside you, cooperatively & confidently.

LIFE SKILLS *for* ADULT DOGS

LIFE SKILLS



Patient & Polite Skills

the ability to show patience and respond thoughtfully around food, toys, thresholds, people, and other dogs



Settling Skills

the ability to relax & hang out in many situations, including when home alone, at home with family, & in public



Leash Skills

the ability to comfortably move in sync with a handler while on leash, and follow gentle direction as needed



Off-Leash Skills

the ability to be comfortable & responsive during off-leash adventures *(or on a long line, depending on the dog's Nature)*

ENJOY THE JOURNEY

Remember: Your puppy is still a baby, and learning is a lifelong process. Take your time and enjoy the journey.

Foundation Behaviors

The first step toward developing Life Skills is teaching your puppy a few key foundation behaviors

#1



Unprompted Attention

What it looks like:

A puppy who checks in with you regularly for info & feedback, without being asked to do so

Get Started!

- During leash walks, praise your puppy whenever they look back in your direction, then immediately follow up with a treat
- Use tiny, healthy treats so you can reward frequently: 20-30 times on a 10-minute walk
- Don't worry if your puppy is "only looking at you for the food"; that's part of learning! You are building a strong history of reinforcement for the simple, powerful behavior of turning to you for help & guidance.

GROUNDWORK FOR:

Everything (seriously)! Unprompted attention is especially useful for developing amazing Leash Skills and Off-Leash Skills down the road.

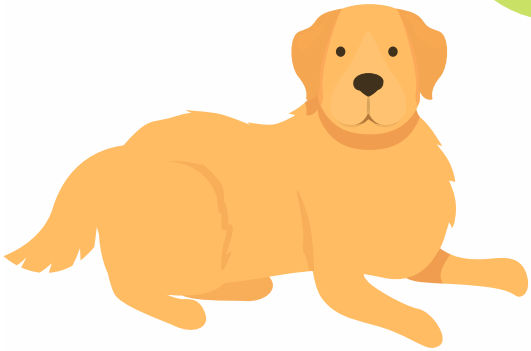
Foundation Behaviors

#2

Settle on a Mat

What it looks like:

A puppy who can relax & hang out on a mat or bed in a variety of different situations



Get Started!

- ✓ Grab some treats and a bath mat or kitchen mat
- ✓ Set the mat on the floor, then lure your puppy into a Down position on the mat
- ✓ Reward with a treat every 2-3 seconds as your puppy stays in the Down position
- ✓ After 5 seconds, say "All Done!" and toss a treat off the mat for them to go and retrieve
- ✓ Repeat, slowly increasing the length of time your puppy stays on the mat before you say "All Done!"
- ➡ Pro Tip: Be calm and quiet during this exercise; model relaxed behavior for your puppy by using a slow, soothing voice; avoid petting your pup while they're on the bed, as it can distract & excite them

GROUNDWORK FOR:
Settling Skills!

Foundation Behaviors

#3



Polite Pauses

What it looks like:

A puppy who learns to wait patiently for a couple of moments before accessing something they want

Get Started!

- ✓ Ask your puppy for a moment of polite waiting before they go through a gate or in/out a doorway
- ✓ Give a clear "Wait" cue and show them a stop sign hand signal
- ✓ Slowly move your hand to the door, and open it just a crack
- ✓ If your puppy waits and watches, say "Okay" and invite them through the threshold
- ✓ If your puppy tries to crowd the door, use your body to gently block their path, then try again

GROUNDWORK FOR:

Patient & Polite Skills

Foundation Behaviors

Hand Target



#3

What it looks like:

A puppy who comes to you and boops your flat palm with their nose, when asked to do so

Get Started!

- ✓ When your puppy is close by and paying attention to you, present your flat palm, with fingers pointing toward the ground, a few inches away from them at nose level
- ✓ When your puppy moves forward to sniff your hand, praise and immediately reward with a treat
- ✓ Repeat, gradually presenting your hand when you are farther away from your puppy
- ✓ Start to say your puppy's name just before you present your hand
- Pro Tip: Some puppies do better if you present two fingers as a target, instead of your whole palm; do what works best for your pup!

GROUNDWORK FOR:

Off-Leash Skills, plus lots of other fun, useful things!

Training Checklist

Set your puppy (and yourself) up for success! Use this simple checklist to make sure you are training in a way that works with your puppy's life stage.

☐ MEET WELLNESS NEEDS FIRST

- ✓ Make sure your puppy is well-rested & has a chance to go potty before training
- × Skip training if your puppy is feeling under the weather

☐ CHOOSE THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT

- ✓ Start off teaching in quiet environments with few distractions
- ✓ Graduate slowly to more challenging settings

☐ USE A COACHING MINDSET

- ✓ Be a safe, predictable, helpful teacher
- ✓ Stay patient & positive
- ✓ Reward desired behavior consistently & generously

☐ LEVERAGE PREFERENCES

- ✓ Use your puppy's 'likes' as rewards in training sessions

☐ KEEP SESSIONS SHORT & SWEET

- ✓ Remember that your puppy has a limited attention span
- ✓ Train for just 2-5 minutes at a time

06

Crate Training

Safety, Sleep, & Potty Training

Getting your puppy comfortable with confinement is an important part of keeping them safe, reducing potty accidents, and promoting healthy sleep habits.

Crate Training Goals

More accurately called "confinement training", crate training refers to helping your puppy learn to feel comfortable spending time in a restricted area, without direct access to you or other family members.

IMPORTANCE *of* CONFINEMENT TRAINING

It is important to help your puppy feel comfortable with confinement for several reasons:



SAFETY

- While your puppy is in the 'oral explorer' phase, you need a safe, puppy-proofed area for them to stay when they are not being supervised



SLEEP

- Many puppies will go-go-go until they are overtired and irritable; providing nap times in a confinement area helps your puppy get enough sleep each day



HOUSE TRAINING

- Crates can be a helpful part of a potty training routine, because many puppies prefer not to eliminate in a confined area where they are resting

BONUS REASON:
Teaching your puppy to feel comfortable in a crate prepares them for future travel, boarding stays, and veterinary procedures!

Crate Training Checklist

Use this simple checklist to make sure confinement training feels low-stress for you & your puppy!

☐ MEET WELLNESS NEEDS FIRST

- ✓ Before you confine your puppy, make sure they get a healthy dose of exercise, some cuddle time, a potty break, and a drink (if they are thirsty)

☐ CREATE A SOOTHING ATMOSPHERE

- ✓ Use background noise to create a relaxing soundscape & prevent alert barking; try a fan pointed away from your pup, relaxing nature sounds, classical music, or talk radio
- ✓ Consider buying a dog appeasing pheromone (DAP) diffuser and plugging it in near your puppy's confinement area

☐ REMEMBER RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS

- ✓ Be Safe
  - Don't yell if your puppy makes noise in their crate
  - Don't use the crate as a punishment
- ✓ Be Predictable & Helpful: Use a clear cue to tell your puppy when it's crate time, then let them know what to expect:

  "It's crate time! Let's go get your special treat. In you go. I'm going into the kitchen now. See you in a little bit."

☐ TAKE IT SLOW

- ✓ Start off with short periods of confinement and stay close to your puppy while they are confined; as they settle, move farther away, then eventually, out of sight

Confinement Distress

We don't want your puppy to learn that fussing is an effective way to be released form their crate or pen, but we also don't want to leave them in distress.

RECOGNIZING CONFINEMENT DISTRESS

Use these guidelines to know when it's *likely* okay to ignore your puppy's fussing in their confinement area (*unless you think they have to go potty!*), and when their behavior likely indicates harmful levels of stress.



IGNORE *if*:

- ✓ Your puppy's barks are spaced apart, with pauses in between: '*bark...bark...bark...*'
- ✓ Your puppy talks and grumbles to themselves: '*grr...brumble...mumble...arwoo...boof...yaaawn*'
- ✓ Your puppy howls quietly: '*arwoooo...wooooo*'
- ✓ Your puppy's fussing lasts less than 10 minutes



SEEK HELP FROM A TRAINER *if*:

- × Your puppy's barking sounds shrill & panicked, like screaming or shrieking
- × Your puppy displays signs of distress like heavy panting, wide & red-rimmed eyes, or gnawing or scratching frantically at the crate bars
- × Vocalizations lasts longer than 10 minutes

07 House Training

Progress, not perfection.

It is helpful to remember that accidents are a normal part of potty training. So long as you are doing your best to stick to a schedule, and so long as you are seeing a positive trend, you & your puppy *will* be okay!

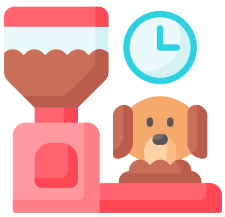
Have patience, and look for progress, not perfection.

House Training Goals

The goal of house training is to help your puppy learn to go to the bathroom only in the desired location- ideally outside only.

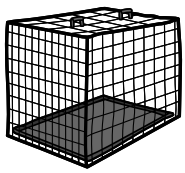
HOUSE TRAINING GUIDELINES

Potty training takes effort and consistency, but it is *generally* a straightforward process if you follow three simple rules:



PREDICTABLE SCHEDULE

- Be consistent about wake-up time, potty times, mealtimes, & bedtime, so your pup can develop a routine



SUPERVISION & CONFINEMENT

- In between potty breaks, your puppy will require close supervision as well time in their confinement area(s)



PATIENT, POSITIVE APPROACH

- Your puppy *will* have accidents in the house during the potty training phase! Maintain a patient, positive attitude

TIMELINES VARY

Some puppies take longer to potty train than others. If you & your puppy are struggling, a positive trainer can help with targeted tweaks that work for your puppy's unique Nature.

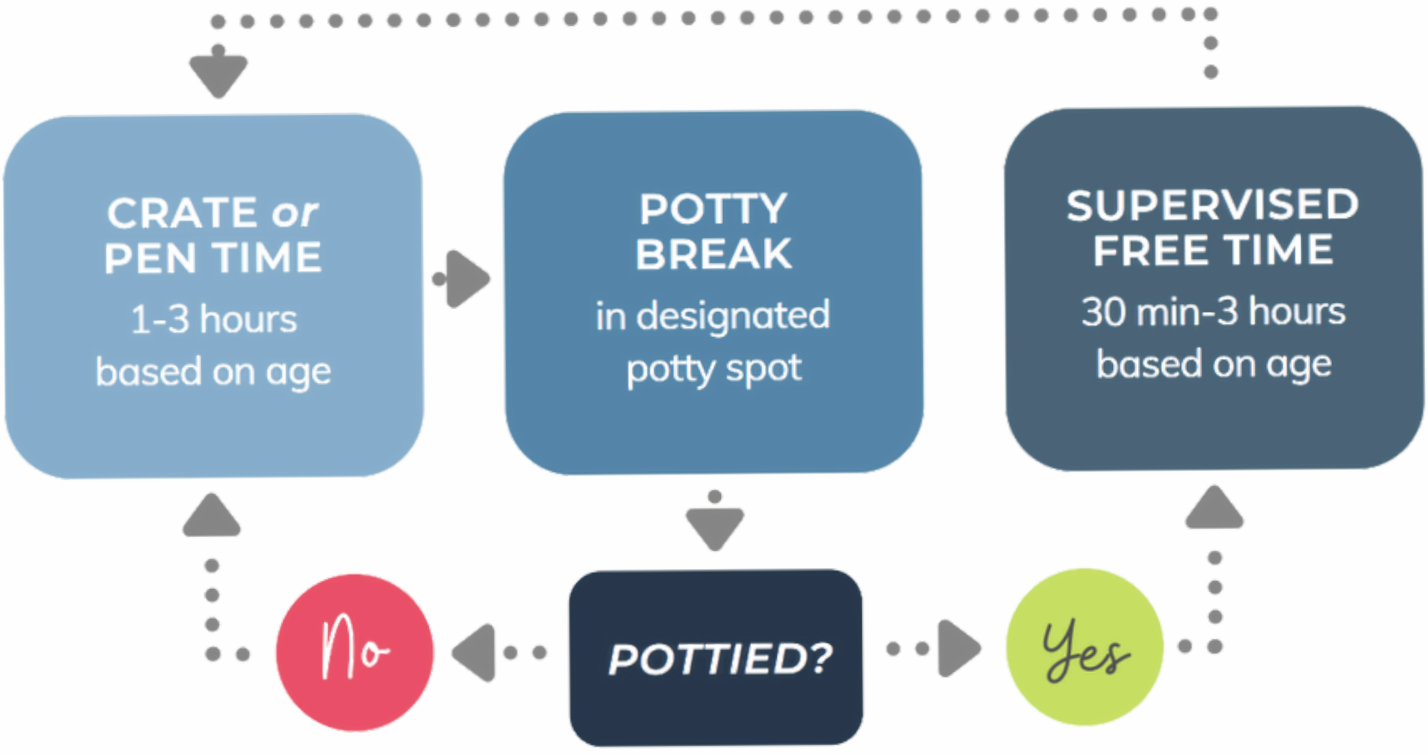
Setting a Schedule

Follow two simple guidelines to create an efficient, effective potty training schedule.

#1

Follow the Flow Chart

Your puppy's potty training schedule should repeat this predictable cycle of events throughout the day: potty break, free time, crate time.



Pro Tip: Feed meals at the end of free time, just before crate time. Your puppy will then rest with a full belly, then be ready to potty when you take them out for their next potty break.

Setting a Schedule

#2

Adjust the Schedule by Age

Use this table as a starting point to optimize your potty training schedule based on your puppy's age.

Age	Max Time between Potty Breaks *(daytime)*	Ratio of Free Time to Crate Time	Overnight, I can last:
2 months	1-2 hours	**1:2** *(example: 30 min of free time, then 60 min of crate time)*	5-7 hours
3 months	2-3 hours	**1:2** *(example: 45 min of free time, then 90 min of crate time)*	7-8 hours
4 months	3-4 hours	**1:1** *(example: 90 min of free time, then 90 min of crate time)*	8 hours
5 months	4-5 hours	**1:1** *(example: 2 hrs of free time, then 2 hrs of crate time)*	8-9 hours
6 months	5-6 hours	**3:2** *(example: 3 hrs of free time, then 2 hrs of crate time)*	9 hours

Pro Tip: In addition to their regularly scheduled potty breaks, puppies often need to pee or poop:

- ✓ Immediately after running & playing
- ✓ Soon after eating or drinking
- ✓ Immediate after waking from a nap

Putting it into Action

Now that you know how to create an effective potty training schedule, let's review some best practices for putting all the pieces into action.



The Potty Break

There are a few simple tricks you can use to avoid accidents and get your puppy to 'go' quickly & consistently each time you take them out for a potty break

Tips for Successful Potty Breaks

- **Don't Dilly Dally**. Take your puppy outside immediately after they come out of their crate or confinement area
- **Keep your Puppy on a Leash**, even if you're in your backyard; this ensures you can keep a close eye on your puppy, *and* it makes it easier for you to praise & reward them promptly when they do pee or poop
- **·Stick to a Small Area**. If you walk from place to place, your pup will constantly be distracted by new sights & smells, and it will take them longer to go potty; wait until after they pee and poop, then praise and reward them with the chance to explore
- **Get 'em Moving**. If your pup is on "poop strike", try doing a quick little run-around with them in a small area; the activity can stimulate them to go

Putting it into Action

Supervised Free Time

#2



Providing proper supervision during free time is a critical part of a successful potty training routine. Follow these two simple rules to make sure free time doesn't become "free for all" time:

#1. Free Time = Supervised Time

- Your puppy needs to be in the same room as you
- You should have **two eyes** on your puppy **at all times** when they are out for free time
- Your puppy should go in their crate or pen if you need to step outside, **even for just a minute**

#2. Free Time = Active Play + Tether/Settle Time

- For many puppies, the ideal ratio of active play to settle time during free time is about 1:1
- *Example: if your puppy gets 40 minutes of free time before going to their crate, do 20 minutes of active play & training, then 20 minutes of quietly chewing a bone while on a tether*

Pro Tip: Doing a mix of active play **and** settle time helps your puppy hold it until the next potty break, and prevents them from learning that free time = non-stop party time

Putting it into Action

Confinement Time

You will use both your crate and your pen or gated area during potty training. Each one serves a different purpose, as outlined below:



#3

Use the Crate to Teach Your Pup to 'Hold It'

- If sized correctly, the crate can encourages your puppy to hold their bladder until their next potty break
- This cuts down on accidents & makes for faster potty training progress

Use the Pen to Keep Things Low Stress

- The pen provides a safe space with a designated indoor potty spot, for times when your puppy will need to be confined for longer than they are able to comfortably hold it
- This helps ensure your puppy is not soiling their crate, and they are still practicing going in an 'approved' spot

08 Separation Training

A necessary part of life.

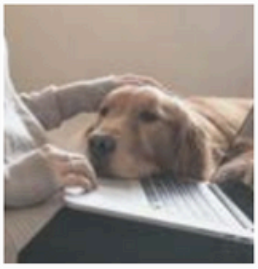
Spending time alone, separated from humans, is a necessary part of life for our puppies. Learn how to prep your puppy to feel safe, secure, and comfortable being left home alone.

Separation Training Goals

The goal of separation training is to help your puppy learn to feel comfortable spending time alone, apart from you & other family members.

FIND the GOLDILOCKS RATIO

The Goldilocks Ratio is the "just right" amount of alone time that teaches your puppy to feel safe & secure when alone, while still meeting their needs for social companionship.



NOT ENOUGH TIME ALONE?

- × your puppy may become reliant on 24/7 access to their humans in order to function
- × 24/7 company may interrupt healthy sleep patterns



TOO MUCH TIME ALONE?

- × extended periods of isolation are harmful to your puppy's overall wellbeing and happiness
- × long periods alone make it difficult to meet your puppy's needs; destructive, disruptive, and anxious behaviors are more likely to occur



THE '*JUST RIGHT*' AMOUNT:

- ✓ short, daily absences help your puppy feel confident & secure that being alone is no big deal, and that you will return before too long

Separation Training Checklist

Use this checklist to help ensure separation training is a positive experience for you & your puppy!

☐ AGE-APPROPRIATE ABSENCES

- ✓ Practice short absences (10-30 minutes, 2-3 times per day)
- ✓ Keep in mind that most puppies can last a maximum of 3 hours before their companionship meter runs low

☐ RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS

- ✓ Help your puppy develop a secure attachment with you by being responsive to their needs in daily life; this will help them cope better with periodic separations
- ✓ Establish predictable routines for departures. Use specific phrases to tell your puppy when they are coming with you, and when they are staying behind
- ✓ Never punish or yell at your puppy if you come home to find a soiled crate or destroyed items

☐ EXERCISE & ENRICHMENT

- ✓ Make sure your puppy's daily exercise & enrichment needs are met, so they do not feel restless when left alone

☐ ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

- ✓ Chose the right confinement type for the length of your absence: crate for short absences, pen or gated area for longer ones
- ✓ Follow the crate training guidelines presented earlier in this booklet to create a relaxing "home alone" atmosphere with background noise, comfy bedding, a stuffed food toy, etc.

09

Handling

Effective, Low-Stress Care

Teaching your puppy to feel comfortable with all different kinds of body handling sets the stage for a lifetime of effective, low-stress veterinary visits, grooming visits, and at-home care.

Handling Goals

The goal of handling practice is to help your puppy feel comfortable being gently restrained and handled, so they can receive the care they need to stay

THREE TYPES OF HANDLING PRACTICE



Gentle Restraint

What it looks like:

The "puppy hold" is a great default position to use when you need to check or handle your puppy's ears, eyes, teeth, or front paws

Get Started!

- Gently scoop or lure your puppy into the puppy hold position, so they are sitting against your body, facing away from you
- Rest one hand on their chest, and the other on their shoulders; don't squeeze, just gently hold
- Breathe deeply and slowly, praising your puppy calmly as they stay in position
- Start off holding your puppy for just 3-5 seconds; gradually build the length of time up to 25-30 seconds

Handling Practice

Body Handling



#2

What it looks like:

Practice gently handling your puppy's ears, mouth/muzzle, paws & tail, several times per day

Get Started!

Pro Tip: Always start by touching your puppy closer to their body, then gradually move your hand outward toward the limb/extremity you will be handling. Check out the examples below!

- Paw handling: always start by placing your hand on your puppy's shoulder (front legs) or hip (back legs), then sliding down slowly to their paw
- Mouth/muzzle handling: start by stroking your pup on the side of their neck, then moving to their cheek or chin, then gently stroking their lip with your thumb, then lifting the lip with your thumb, to look at their teeth
- Tail handling: start by slowly stroking your puppy's back, then moving the base of their tail, then gently lifting the tail for just a moment

PAUSE TO CALM:

If your puppy starts to squirm or nibble at you during body handling, first try pausing in place for a moment, then resuming. Or, you can return to the default puppy hold position to regroup, then try again.

Handling Practice



#3

Tools & Equipment

What it looks like:

Introduce your puppy to some of the equipment they will encounter during vet visits, so they can have a positive, low-stress experience

Get Started!

- Oral Vaccine Prep: Fill a syringe with low-sodium chicken broth, and let your puppy lap the liquid
- Stethoscope Prep: Buy a toy stethoscope; allow your puppy to sniff & get familiar with it; hold the chest piece in your hand and gently stroke your puppy on their back, shoulders, & side with it
- Needle Prep: Use a syringe as a pretend needle; as with the stethoscope, hold the syringe in your hand and gently pet your puppy with it; then, very gentle press the end of the syringe against their shoulder, and against the upper part of their hind leg before going back to gentle petting
- Scale Prep: Practice using a treat to lure your puppy onto different surfaces, such as a mat, a large book, or a low step; reward them several times in a row as the stay on the new surface

Handling Checklist

- [ ] **PRACTICE WHEN PUPPY IS SLEEPY & CALM**
  - × If you try to practice handling when your puppy is excited, they are more likely to be squirmy and bitey
  - ✓ Practicing when your puppy is a little sleepy can help them associate handling with feeling calm and relaxed

- [ ] **NAME & EXPLAIN**
  - ✓ Tell your puppy what is happening as you handle them; name the body parts you are handling, as well as what you are doing to them
    - "I'm going to look in your ears"; "I'm going to lift your paw"
  - ✓ Using consistent phrases during handling will make the experience more predictable for your puppy

- [ ] **MODEL RELAXED BEHAVIOR**
  - ✓ Stay calm & relaxed during handling practice; breathe slowly, relax your muscles, and use slow, soothing tones and movements to help your puppy feel safe and secure

- [ ] **BREAK THINGS INTO SMALL STEPS**
  - ✓ When practicing handling, break each exercise into small steps: if your end goal is to clean your puppy's ears with cotton balls and ear solution, start by using a dry cotton ball to gently stroke around your puppy's ears, then move to the ear opening, etc.

Bitey Behavior

Help for Teensy Land Sharks

Bitey behavior is a normal & expected part of puppyhood. But, certain situations can make biting more likely to occur. Learn the common scenarios that lead to excessive puppy biting so you can adjust & keep your fingers intact.

Bitey Behavior Goals

During this stage of your puppy's life, they have an innate need to bite, mouth, gnaw and chew. Your goal is to limit excessive bitey behavior directed toward you, while giving your puppy lots of outlets to meet their needs.

CAUSES & SOLUTIONS for PUPPY BITING

#1



They are TIRED

Being overtired is one of the most common reasons we see puppies exhibit overly nippy behavior. Much like a human baby or toddler, puppies get fussy and cranky when they are tired.

How You Can Help Your Puppy:

- Give your puppy scheduled rest periods and quiet times throughout the day
- If you have a lively, active household, make sure your puppy's resting place is in a quiet, low-traffic spot where they won't be disturbed by household commotion.

Causes & Solutions

#2

They are OVEREXCITED



Young puppies have not yet learned to regulate their emotional arousal. When they get overly excited, they start to lose inhibition, which leads to them getting extra bitey.

How to Help Your Puppy:

- Imagine your puppy's excitability on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is totally calm & relaxed, and 10 is a full-on case of the puppy zoomies
- When you see your puppy's excitement level creeping up to a level 7 or 8 during play, help them learn to pause, take a break, and calm down a bit
- You can do this by modeling calm, relaxed behavior yourself: slow down your movements, blink your eyes softly, and stay quiet or speak using only low, slow tones
- With practice, your puppy will learn to take their cues from you that it's time to take a break and settle down before resuming play

Causes & Solutions

#3



They are FRUSTRATED

Just as young children may feel the desire to hit, slap, or kick when frustrated, young puppies will often use their teeth to display frustration & anger.

How You Can Help Your Puppy:

- If you see your puppy becoming frustrated, first try to identify the source of frustration *(for example, being restrained, being brushed, having a toy taken away)*
- Then, recreate an *easier* version of that scenario, and reward your puppy for doing whatever it is you would like them to do instead of biting:
  - If your puppy gets frustrated about being restrained, practice for just a couple of seconds, & reward them with a treat for those small successes
  - If your puppy gets frustrated about being brushed, start off doing a single brush stroke & giving a treat; then do 2 brush strokes, then three, and so on

Causes & Solutions

Your Actions say "BITE ME"



There are some these we do as humans that are the equivalent of wearing a great big "Bite Me" sign on our backs!

Here are two common ones:

1. Sitting on the floor with an active, excited puppy. *Why?* You are likely to become a living, breathing toy to climb, gnaw, and nibble on.

2. Making high-pitched noises & quick, jerky movements. When we make high-pitched noises and quickly pull our hands away from a puppy, they instinctively response with chasing and nipping.

How to Help Your Puppy:

- ✓ Instead of sitting cross-legged on the floor, try sitting on your knees; this makes it easy to quickly straighten up and remove access to your lap if your puppy gets nippy
- ✓ Avoid making squealing, overly excited sounds around your puppy. Keep your movements controlled. If your puppy nips at you, try freezing instead of jerking your hand away quickly

Causes & Solutions

#5



They are saying 'NO THANKS' to petting

Many puppies will become bitey when you pet them for too long. Your puppy is asking you, in the best way they know how, to please give them a break.

How You Can Help Your Puppy:

- We don't want puppies to learn that biting is an effective way to make human hands go away. Instead, we want to teach pups they can say, "yes please" or "no thank you" to petting, *without* having to use their teeth.
- Only pet your puppy when they are already calm & relaxed; pet for just 3-5 seconds at a time, then stop
- If your puppy nuzzles or moves toward your hand, pet them again; but, if they move away or just quietly lay in place, they are telling you they don't really care about or want petting at that time
- Over time, you can start to present your open hands to your puppy as an invitation that asks, "would you like some pets?" If they approach and curl in, they're saying, "Yes please!" But if they don't, they are saying "No thanks" in a manner that is far less painful than pointy puppy teeth!

Causes & Solutions

They are being a PUPPY!



#6

Viewing the world as one big chew toy is a normal part of puppy development. Your puppy WILL sometimes try to chew on your fingers and nip your pant legs - even if they are not feeling sleepy, overstimulated, or frustrated

How to Help Your Puppy:

- Since your puppy *is* going to bite, chew, and gnaw on something, be sure to provide them with access to a variety of safe toys, chews, and bones in different textures; this makes it easy for them to make good choices when they are looking for somewhere to put those needle-sharp teeth
- Provide your puppy with the opportunity to play with other puppies; this is a fantastic way to fulfill your puppy's need to bite and mouth as part of play

BONUS REASON:

Some puppies get a little wild right before they have to poop. If your puppy suddenly becomes wild-eyed and starts zooming around, biting at your hands, feet, and clothes, they may have to go potty!

II Looking Ahead

Adolescence is Coming.

As puppies enter adolescence, it is important to understand that – *just like human teenagers* – their behavior will naturally change & develop, particularly when it comes to impulsivity; play with other dogs; and listening skills & manners.



Canine Teenagers

Canine adolescence starts at about 6 months of age and continues until 18-24 months of age.

ADOLESCENT BRAIN & BEHAVIOR CHANGES

Learn what to expect as your puppy moves into this new stage of development:



IMPULSIVITY & RISK-TAKING

- During canine adolescence, the part of the brain that influences arousal and reward-seeking behavior shows increased activity. This often leads to increased levels of impulsivity and risk-taking behavior



SOCIAL BEHAVIOR *with* OTHER DOGS

- Your puppy may become more selective with other dogs
- Your puppy may start to experiment with rude & impolite behaviors during play



DECREASED RESPONSIVENESS

- Your puppy may seem to forget their previous training & become less responsive to your cues as the world around them begins to feel more interesting & exciting

NAVIGATING ADOLESCENCE

Canine adolescence can be frustrating, but these developmental changes are normal. Continue to provide positive, patient leadership, and reach out to a positive trainer for a little extra support.

12

Get Support

Find a kind, positive professional.

Dog training is an unregulated industry. This can make it difficult to know which trainers you can trust to provide you & your puppy with positive, professional, effective support.

Finding a Dog Trainer

HOLDS a REPUTABLE CERTIFICATION

- Choose a trainer who holds a certification (or is actively working toward one) from a positive reinforcement-focused organization such as:

FEAR FREE CERTIFIED Professional

karen pryor ACADEMY Certified Training Partner

IAABC INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ANIMAL BEHAVIOR CONSULTANTS CERTIFIED

CCPDT Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers® 20th Anniversary - 2001 to 2021

Is PROFESSIONAL, KIND, & CURIOUS

- Choose a trainer whose website, online reviews, and customer service indicates they are professional and kind; in addition, look for someone who listens well and seems genuinely interested in understanding the needs of you & your puppy

