

Salt of the Earth

— DACHSHUNDS —

Puppy Go-Home Guide

Everything you need to know for a wonderful start together

Prepared with love for your new family member

www.SaltoftheEarthDachshunds.com

Table of Contents

Welcome Home	3
Before You Arrive Home.....	4
The Journey Home	6
The First 24 Hours	7
The First Week: Building Routine & Trust	9
Nutrition & Feeding	11
Socialization & New Experiences	13
Basic Training: Starting Right.....	15
Health & Veterinary Care	17
Vaccination Education.....	19
Dachshund Back Health & IVDD	21
Common First-Week Challenges	23
Building Your Support Network.....	25
The Big Picture: Patience & Perspective.....	27

Welcome Home

Congratulations on your new family member! Bringing home a puppy is one of the most exciting and rewarding experiences, and I want to help make this transition as smooth as possible for both you and your new companion.

This guide covers everything you need to know for those critical first days and weeks — from the car ride home all the way through building a lasting foundation of health, trust, and happiness. Keep it somewhere easy to find so you can reference it anytime.

Your puppy has been raised with love and intention. They have been:

- Raised in my home with daily handling and socialization
- Introduced to household sounds, different surfaces, and varied experiences
- Socialized with people of different ages
- Started on basic handling and grooming routines
- Exposed to crate training concepts from an early age
- Fed high-quality nutrition appropriate for their growth stage
- Veterinary examined with all age-appropriate care completed

I've done my part to give your puppy the best possible start, and I am so excited to watch you continue building on that foundation. I am here as a resource throughout your puppy's entire life — please never hesitate to reach out with questions, concerns, or just to share updates. I genuinely love hearing how your puppy is doing!

With love,

Megan Zofnas

Salt of the Earth Dachshunds

Before You Arrive Home

Prepare Your Space

Before pickup day, set up a dedicated area for your puppy. This becomes their anchor — the first familiar place in a brand-new world.

- A crate or secure sleeping area in a quiet location
- Food and water bowls — stainless steel or ceramic are most hygienic
- Age-appropriate toys for chewing and play
- A comfortable bed or blankets with familiar scents (your puppy comes home with a blanket that smells like mom)
- Puppy pads, Fresh Patch, or easy access to a private outdoor potty area not frequented by wildlife or other animals

Puppy-Proof Your Home

Walk through your home at puppy level and remove or secure anything hazardous:

- Electrical cords and charging cables
- Toxic plants (lilies, sago palm, pothos, and many others — check ASPCA's toxic plant list)
- Small objects that could be swallowed
- Cleaning products, medications, and chemicals
- Trash cans without lids
- Accessible food on low counters or tables
- Loose items your puppy might chew — shoes, remote controls, children's toys

Essential Supplies Checklist

Essential Supplies — Column 1	Essential Supplies — Column 2
• Appropriately sized collar and/or harness	• Leash
• Food your puppy has been eating (provided)	• Stainless steel or ceramic food & water bowls
• Puppy-safe brush & grooming supplies	• Nail clippers or Dremel grinder
• Puppy-safe shampoo	• Waste bags for cleanup
• Pet first aid kit	• Enzymatic cleaner for accidents
• Safe chew toys in various textures	• Crate sized appropriately (stand, turn, lie down)
• Soft crate bedding / blanket	• Snuggle Puppy with heartbeat (provided)
• ThunderEase Calming Spray (provided)	• Puppy pads or Fresh Patch
• Carrier for safe transport	• Puppy-safe ID tag

Tip: Have enzymatic cleaner on hand before pickup day.

Regular household cleaners do not fully break down the scent markers in urine, which can attract your puppy back to the same spot. Enzymatic cleaners like Nature's Miracle or Rocco & Roxie eliminate the odor at the molecular level.

The Journey Home

Your puppy's trip home is their first big transition. This will not be their first car ride, but the change in people, environment, and smells can be unsettling. A calm, prepared trip sets the tone for everything that follows.

Safe Transport

- Transport your puppy in a well-ventilated carrier lined with a soft blanket — the familiar-smelling blanket from mom comes with your puppy for exactly this purpose
- Spray the inside of the carrier (not directly on your puppy) with the ThunderEase Calming Spray provided, about 10–15 minutes before placing your puppy inside
- Keep the car calm — soft music or silence, no loud conversations or sudden sounds
- Keep the car temperature comfortable — not too warm
- If someone is with you, one person can ride in the back and offer gentle reassurance without overstimulating the puppy

Potty Stops on Long Drives

Puppies are not fully protected from viruses like Parvovirus, Distemper, Herpes, and Parainfluenza until 2 weeks after completing their full puppy vaccine series (around 16–18 weeks). For this reason, please be very cautious about where your puppy touches the ground during the drive home.

Recommended approach for long drives:

Place puppy pads in your trunk or on the floorboard of the back seat and allow your puppy to potty safely in the vehicle. This completely eliminates the risk of exposure to dangerous pathogens in rest stops, gas stations, and parking lots where unknown dogs have been. If using the floorboard, be mindful that shoes carry germs — avoid letting your puppy directly contact the floor where shoes have been.

Upon Arrival

- Take your puppy directly to their designated potty area when you arrive — before going inside
- Let them sniff around and relieve themselves if needed
- Praise calmly and softly — avoid loud excitement that might startle them
- Then bring them inside and begin a quiet, gradual introduction to their space

The First 24 Hours

The first day at home is about one thing: making your puppy feel safe. Resist the urge to do too much, introduce too many people, or take your puppy everywhere. Less is more on day one.

Introducing Your Home

- Introduce one room at a time — start with the areas that matter most: crate, food, water, and potty area
- Avoid letting your puppy roam the whole house unsupervised immediately
- Limit interactions to immediate household members for the first few days
- Keep it quiet — resist the urge to invite friends and family over on day one

The First Night

The first night is often the hardest. Your puppy has just left their littermates and every familiar smell and sound they've known. Some crying and whimpering is completely normal and expected — it does not mean something is wrong.

1. Place the crate near your bed so your puppy can hear and smell you
2. Spray the crate interior and cover (if using one) with a few sprays of ThunderEase Calming Spray about 15 minutes before bed
3. Place the Snuggle Puppy in the crate with the heartbeat turned on — you may also use the warming pack to mimic littermate warmth. Keep the heat pack securely inside the Snuggle Puppy's Velcro pouch so your puppy cannot chew it
4. A ticking clock or white noise machine nearby can provide additional comfort
5. Set an alarm to wake every 3–4 hours for a potty break — you want to wake the puppy, not the other way around
6. Keep nighttime potty breaks silent and uneventful: take out, let them go, calm praise, return to crate immediately — no play, no extended interaction

Important: Do not reward crying by immediately opening the crate.

Wait for a quiet moment, even if brief, before opening the door. Giving in while your puppy is crying or whining reinforces the behavior. This is hard in the moment, but consistency here makes the first week much smoother for everyone.

Feeding on Day One

- Offer a small meal shortly after arriving home, at a calm moment
- Use the same food your puppy has been eating — do not introduce new food during the first week
- Do not be alarmed if your puppy eats less than normal on the first day — stress can temporarily suppress appetite
- Fresh water should be available at all times

Watch for signs of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) on day one, especially if your puppy is not eating well.

Signs include: lethargy, glassy eyes, weakness or wobbling, trembling, and in severe cases, seizure activity. If you see these signs, rub a small amount of Karo syrup on the puppy's gums and contact your vet immediately.

The First Week: Building Routine & Trust

Dogs thrive on consistency. During the first week, your job is to establish a predictable schedule, begin house training, and start building a bond through gentle, positive interactions.

Daily Routine Framework

Activity	Timing and Notes
Morning potty	Immediately upon waking — carry puppy outside if needed
Feeding	Same times daily; puppy should eat within 15–20 minutes
Potty breaks	After every meal, drink, nap, and play session (every 1–2 hours)
Play sessions	Short, supervised play multiple times daily
Nap time	Enforce rest periods; puppies need 18–20 hours of sleep per day
Training time	Brief 5–10 minute sessions, several times daily
Bedtime routine	Last potty break, then settle in crate for the night

House Training Basics

Successful house training requires consistency, patience, and precise timing. The rule: reward the good, calmly redirect the bad, never punish.

- Take your puppy to the same potty spot every single time
- Use a consistent cue word or phrase — "go potty," "do your business," etc.
- Praise immediately and enthusiastically the moment they finish eliminating in the right spot — pair with a high-value treat
- Never punish accidents — simply clean thoroughly with enzymatic cleaner and move on
- Supervise constantly when your puppy is loose in the house; confine when you cannot watch
- Keep a log of accidents in the first week to help identify timing patterns

Bladder capacity rule of thumb:

A puppy can hold their bladder approximately one hour per month of age, plus one hour. A 2-month-old needs to go out every 2–3 hours at most. Do not expect more than this.

Helpful potty training tools: potty bells hung on the door (teach your puppy to ring them to signal the need to go out), leash tethering to you so your puppy cannot sneak off and have accidents, and a consistent verbal cue used every single time.

Crate Training

This is not something that you have to do with your puppy, but we personally believe in crate training and the benefits that it provides dogs. The crate should be your puppy's safe haven — a cozy den, never a punishment. We have already begun positive crate exposure in our care, so your puppy has a head start if you choose to continue crate training.

- Feed meals inside the crate with the door open
- Toss treats inside randomly throughout the day to build positive associations
- Place special toys or chews that only appear in the crate
- Start closing the door for short periods (5–10 minutes) while you are nearby — wait for quiet before opening
- Gradually increase duration as your puppy becomes comfortable
- Always take your puppy directly out to potty immediately after any crate time

Crate sizing matters:

The crate should be large enough for your puppy to stand, turn around, and lie down comfortably — but not so large they can potty in one corner and sleep in the other. A divider panel can adjust a larger crate as your puppy grows.

Nutrition & Feeding

Your puppy's nutritional foundation during growth is critical for long-term health — particularly for proper bone, joint, and spinal development. What they eat now matters greatly.

What Your Puppy Has Been Eating

Your puppy's current feeding schedule at our home:

Feeding Schedule (from our home):

Breakfast: 5–7 AM | Lunch: 12:30 PM | Dinner: 6–7 PM

Meal preparation: Nulo Challenger mixed with 1 tsp pure canned pumpkin + Provable DC probiotic + 1–2 tbsp warm water or dog-appropriate bone broth. Puppies can tend to graze throughout the day so do not be alarmed if they do not eat everything at one time.

Feeding Guidelines

- Keep your puppy on the same food for at least 1-2 weeks — I'll send you home with a bag to get you started
- If you choose to transition to a different food, do so gradually over 7–10 days (25% new food each few days)
- Feed 3–4 times daily until at least 6 months of age — their immature systems and high energy needs make them vulnerable to hypoglycemia
- Stick to regular feeding times — this also helps predict potty break timing
- Avoid table scraps during the adjustment period and beyond (many human foods are toxic to dogs)
- Provide fresh water at all times

Free-Feeding vs. Scheduled Meals

Free-feeding (leaving food out at all times) is acceptable during the young puppy phase when it is very hard to overfeed. However, this should not continue into adulthood.

Dachshunds and weight management:

Dachshunds as adults must have their food intake closely monitored and regulated — they are highly food-motivated and will overeat if given the opportunity. Obesity in Dachshunds places enormous stress on their already vulnerable spines and joints, and is one of the leading contributors to IVDD (intervertebral disc disease). Adult Dachshunds should be fed measured meals on a consistent schedule.

Foods to Avoid

The following are toxic to dogs and must never be fed, even in small amounts:

- Xylitol (sweetener found in sugar-free products, including some peanut butters and Benadryl formulas)
- Grapes and raisins
- Onions, leeks, and chives
- Chocolate and caffeine
- Macadamia nuts
- Walnuts
- Alcohol
- Raw yeast dough
- Fruit pits and apple seeds
- Cooked bones (Raw, non-weightbearing bones are OKAY)
- Hops
- Moldy foods
- Mushrooms
- Mustard

Automatic Feeders

If you work away from home and cannot stop back for a midday feeding, automatic feeders are a wonderful solution. Many models include built-in cameras and motion sensors to alert you when your puppy visits the bowl — giving you peace of mind throughout the day.

Socialization & New Experiences

The period between 8 and 16 weeks is the most important socialization window in your puppy's life. Positive experiences during this window shape how your puppy perceives and responds to the world for the rest of their life. The goal is thoughtful, positive exposure — not overwhelming flooding.

Please also refer to the separate Socialization Checklist provided with this packet.

Safe Socialization Activities

- Carry your puppy to new environments — parks, pet-friendly stores, busy parking lots — so they experience sights, sounds, and smells without touching potentially contaminated ground
- Introduce household sounds gradually: vacuum cleaner, dishwasher, TV, doorbell, hair dryer
- Introduce different surfaces: grass, concrete, gravel, tile, carpet, wood floors, rubber mats
- Meeting vaccinated, friendly dogs you personally know
- Handling exercises daily: gently touch paws, ears, mouth, belly, tail — mimic what a vet or groomer will do
- Short, calm car rides to positive destinations
- Introducing people with hats, beards, umbrellas, sunglasses, and other items that can startle dogs
- Children (supervised and calm), elderly people, and people of varying appearances

Avoid until fully vaccinated:

Dog parks, pet store floors, areas where unknown dogs congregate, veterinary office waiting rooms if not necessary, and high-traffic outdoor areas with unknown animals.

NOTE: Always be cautious if you choose to visit dog parks when appropriate. Many unhealthy and untrained dogs visit dog parks and this is a very high-risk place to pickup illness and for your small puppy/dog to become injured.

Introducing Family Members & Other Pets

Introduce new people gradually, one or two at a time, allowing your puppy to approach rather than being approached. Teach children to sit on the floor and let the puppy come to them — calm and gentle always.

Introducing existing pets:

- Keep initial meetings short (5–10 minutes)
- Use a baby gate for first visual introductions — let them see and smell each other without direct contact
- Supervise all interactions closely during the first weeks
- Give your resident pet breaks, escape routes, and their own space

- Do not allow the puppy to pester or overwhelm your existing pets
- Feed separately to prevent resource guarding from the start

Understanding Fear Periods

As your puppy grows, they will go through normal developmental stages called fear periods. During these phases, your puppy may suddenly seem worried about things that never bothered them before, or react strongly to new sights and sounds. This is normal brain development — not a sign of permanent damage or bad temperament.

Typical fear periods: around 8–12 weeks, and again somewhere in adolescence (6–14 months).

- During a fear period, return to the basics of training/socialization/desensitization
- Be calm, patient, and matter-of-fact
- Do not force your puppy toward anything they find frightening
- Give space to observe at a distance, paired with treats and calm praise
- Avoid harsh corrections or frustrated responses — negative experiences "stick" more easily at these ages
- Most fear periods pass within days to a couple of weeks
- Maintain predictable routines — structure is deeply comforting during uncertain periods

Basic Training: Starting Right

Training is not just about obedience — it is how you communicate with your puppy, build trust, and give them mental stimulation. Start simple, stay positive, and keep sessions short and fun.

Golden Rules of Training

- Keep sessions to 5–10 minutes, multiple times per day — short and successful beats long and frustrated
- Always end on a success, even if you have to simplify to do it
- Use positive reinforcement: treats, praise, and play are your primary tools
- Never use physical punishment — it damages trust and is not effective
- Be consistent: every member of the household must use the same cues and rules

Name Recognition (Start Day One)

Say your puppy's name in a happy, clear tone. The moment they look at you, reward immediately with a treat and enthusiastic praise. Practice this in different rooms and at different times throughout the day. Within a week, your puppy should reliably look to you when called by name.

First Commands

Sit: Hold a treat above your puppy's nose and slowly move it back over their head. As their bottom touches the ground, say "sit" and reward immediately.

Come: In a safe, enclosed area — crouch down, say your puppy's name followed by "come," and reward enthusiastically every single time they reach you. Never call your puppy to come and then do something unpleasant (like nail trimming). The recall must always be positive.

Stay: Ask for a sit, then say "stay" and wait just 1–2 seconds before rewarding. Gradually extend the time. Release with a consistent cue word like "okay" or "free."

Leave it: Place a treat in your closed fist. Let your puppy sniff and paw at it. The moment they pull away, say "leave it" and reward with a different treat from your other hand. This command can prevent accidental ingestion of dangerous items.

Bite Inhibition

Puppies explore with their mouths, and nipping is completely normal behavior. Their puppy teeth are razor sharp — we don't call them land sharks for nothing! The goal is to teach appropriate bite pressure, not to eliminate mouthing entirely.

- When your puppy bites too hard, say "ouch!" in a high-pitched voice and immediately stop play
- Turn away and ignore for 10–20 seconds
- Resume play when your puppy is calm
- Redirect to appropriate chew toys
- Be consistent — every person in the household must respond the same way

Puppy Classes & AKC Programs

Consider enrolling in a puppy kindergarten class once vaccinations allow (typically after 12–14 weeks). Look for trainers who use positive reinforcement methods exclusively.

- AKC S.T.A.R. Puppy Program — a great structured introduction to basics that can earn your puppy an official AKC title
- AKC Canine Good Citizen (CGC) — more advanced manners, obedience, and socialization skills. Successful completion earns another AKC title and is recognized by many therapy dog and insurance programs

Health & Veterinary Care

While we have had your puppy examined twice by our veterinarian and monitor them very closely, things can develop quickly and change. Schedule a vet visit within the first few days of bringing your puppy home.

First Vet Visit — What to Bring

- The complete health records and vaccination history provided in your packet
- A list of any questions you have
- Deworming history
- Vaccination dates and products used

What Your Vet Should Do

- Complete physical examination
- Review and plan the remainder of the puppy vaccination series
- Confirm deworming protocols and schedule
- Discuss spay/neuter timing — please share that we require waiting until 12 months of age. Reproductive hormones play a critical role in proper closure of growth plates. Early spay/neuter in Dachshunds has been linked to increased orthopedic issues like Angular Limb Deformities and increased IVDD risk
- Establish baseline health records

Finding the Right Veterinarian

If you haven't established care yet, ask for recommendations from friends, family, or local dog owners. Look for a practice that:

- Has experience with Dachshunds or other small breeds
- Communicates clearly, listens to your questions, and answers patiently
- Is open to discussing breed-specific protocols (vaccine spacing, spay/neuter timing)
- Has emergency or after-hours services, or can direct you to a local emergency clinic
- Makes you feel comfortable and heard as your puppy's advocate

Health Monitoring: Normal vs. Call the Vet

Sign to Watch For	What It May Indicate
Good appetite & steady weight gain	Normal — healthy growth
Bright, clear eyes	Normal — no concern
Firm stools (some variation during transition)	Normal — expected during first week
Playful energy + restful sleep cycles	Normal — healthy development
Lethargy, vomiting, or diarrhea > 24 hrs	Contact your vet promptly
Blood in stool or urine	Contact your vet promptly
Loss of appetite > 12 hours	Contact your vet — risk of hypoglycemia
Difficulty breathing or pale gums	Emergency — seek immediate care
Head tilting, stumbling, or seizure activity	Emergency — seek immediate care

Spay/Neuter: Why We Wait

Our program requires waiting until 12 months of age to spay or neuter.

Reproductive hormones (estrogen and testosterone) are critical for proper bone and joint development, including the closure of growth plates. Early removal of these hormones has been associated with increased risk of orthopedic issues, certain cancers, and — particularly relevant for Dachshunds — intervertebral disc disease (IVDD). This is not just our policy; it is backed by growing veterinary research. We are happy to discuss this further or share resources with your veterinarian.

Vaccination Education

Vaccines are an essential part of protecting your puppy from serious, often fatal diseases. The goal is never to avoid vaccination — it's to approach it thoughtfully, especially for this breed.

Why Dachshunds Need Extra Care with Vaccines

Dachshunds and other very small dogs have a higher reported rate of vaccine adverse events. Research has found the highest adverse event rates in dogs weighing 5 kg (11 lbs) or less, with Dachshunds among the breeds with the highest odds of reactions compared to other purebred and even mixed-breed dogs. Dachshunds receive the exact same vaccine volume as a large dog, which represents a significantly greater antigen load relative to their small body size.

Because adverse event rates rise as more vaccines are given at a single visit, spacing vaccines out is a practical and effective way to reduce risk.

What to Ask Your Veterinarian

Please bring these talking points to your vet appointments. Most veterinarians are very receptive when families come in informed and advocate thoughtfully for their dog.

- **One vaccine per visit.** Ask your vet to administer only 1 vaccine per visit and not to give DHPP, rabies, or leptospirosis together in the same appointment. Please NEVER allow your veterinarian to administer the DHPPL vaccine (this vaccine combination includes Leptospirosis).
- **Space vaccines at least 3 weeks apart.** This gives the immune system time to handle each vaccine individually and makes it easier to identify which vaccine caused a reaction if one occurs.
- **Discuss pre-medication for dogs with prior reactions.** If your Dachshund ever has a vaccine reaction — even just hives or facial swelling — ask your vet about pre-medicating with diphenhydramine (Benadryl) before future vaccines. Important: always verify any Benadryl formulated for human use does NOT contain Xylitol, which is highly toxic to dogs.
- **Always disclose past reactions.** Even a mild reaction is important medical information. Never minimize it — it should change how your dog is vaccinated going forward.

A Note on Leptospirosis

Leptospirosis is worth a dedicated conversation with your veterinarian. All dogs in North America may be at some risk depending on lifestyle and environment. Despite vaccine reformulation in the early 2000s, Dachshunds still regularly experience adverse reactions to the leptospirosis vaccine. I do not advise automatically skipping it — rather, I encourage an informed discussion with a vet who knows your region and advise proceeding cautiously based on your puppy's specific lifestyle and local wildlife exposure.

Recognizing a Vaccine Reaction

Most vaccine reactions occur within hours of vaccination, but adverse events can occur up to 3 days after administration. Watch closely after every vaccine appointment.

Sign / Symptom	What to Do
Mild soreness, low energy, acting "off"	Keep day low-key; monitor 24–48 hours
Hives, itching, or skin redness	Call your vet; monitor closely
Facial swelling (muzzle or eyes)	Call your vet immediately
Vomiting or diarrhea	Call your vet if persists beyond a few hours
Marked lethargy or dramatic behavior change	Call your vet; monitor closely
Trouble breathing, collapse, or pale gums	⚠ EMERGENCY — Go to vet or emergency clinic immediately

For mild post-vaccine soreness or sleepiness: keep the day low-key, encourage rest and water intake, and monitor closely for the next 24–48 hours. When in doubt, call your vet — and feel free to reach out to me as well. I am always happy to review a vaccine schedule or help you prepare questions.

Dachshund Back Health & IVDD

Intervertebral Disc Disease (IVDD) is the most important breed-specific health topic for Dachshund owners to understand. Dachshunds are genetically predisposed to this condition due to a process called chondrodystrophy — the same gene mutation responsible for their characteristic long-and-low body shape also causes their spinal discs to begin calcifying (hardening) at a young age, rather than remaining soft and flexible.

What Is IVDD?

The spinal discs sit between the vertebrae and act as cushions, absorbing shock during movement. In Dachshunds, these discs are prone to herniation — where the disc material bulges or ruptures and presses on the spinal cord. Depending on the severity, this can cause pain, weakness, wobbling, paralysis, and loss of bladder/bowel control.

IVDD can happen at any age, but most commonly presents between 3 and 7 years. Some Dachshunds never experience an episode; others experience it more than once. The right lifestyle choices significantly reduce risk.

Protecting Your Dachshund's Spine — Starting Now

Protect the Spine: DO	Protect the Spine: AVOID
Use ramps or stairs to high surfaces they're allowed on	Allowing high impact jumping (on/off furniture is ok)
Support the full body when lifting	Lifting by front legs only
Keep weight healthy — measure meals	Obesity (very hard on the spine)
Choose low-impact exercise (walking, core strengthening)	Rough play, rough tumbling with large dogs
Delay spay/neuter until 12 months	Early spay/neuter (affects bone closure)

Warning Signs of a Disc Problem

If you notice any of the following, contact your vet same-day or go to an emergency clinic:

- Sudden crying out in pain, especially when picked up, moving, or jumping
- Reluctance to move, jump, or go up and down stairs (that they normally do with ease)
- Hunched back or rigid posture
- Weakness, wobbling, or dragging of the rear legs
- Loss of bladder or bowel control
- Knuckling (walking on the tops of the back feet)

IVDD is a medical emergency.

Time is critical. The sooner treatment begins — whether conservative management or surgery — the better the outcome. Do not wait and see if a dog with neurological symptoms improves on their own. Please reach out to me as well — I am always here to help you navigate this.

Proactive Options

- Some owners choose a preventive MRI baseline after age 2 to screen for calcified discs before symptoms appear
- Maintain a healthy weight — this is the single most impactful lifestyle factor
- Keep them active, helping them to build and maintain the muscles that support the skeletal system
- Physical therapy and hydrotherapy after an IVDD episode can dramatically improve recovery outcomes

Common First-Week Challenges

Every new puppy owner encounters at least a few hurdles. Knowing what to expect — and how to handle it — makes all the difference.

Separation Anxiety

Separation anxiety can develop if puppies are not gradually taught that being alone is safe and temporary. Begin building independence early — even during the first week.

- Practice short departures while you're home — go to another room for 5 minutes, then return calmly
- Make departures and arrivals low-key — no long goodbyes or excited hellos
- Leave a special toy or treat-stuffed Kong that only appears when you leave (ensure safety while unsupervised)
- Use a camera to monitor stress levels when you're away
- Gradually increase alone time duration as your puppy adjusts
- Avoid letting your puppy follow you everywhere from the start — gently encourage independence

Sleep Schedule & Overtiredness

Puppies need 18–20 hours of sleep per day. They often resist napping even when they desperately need it. An overtired puppy looks a lot like an undertired toddler: hyperactive, mouthy, moody, and difficult.

- Enforce rest periods by placing your puppy in their crate or pen with a safe chew toy
- A general rhythm: approximately 1 hour awake and active, followed by 2–3 hours of rest
- Don't skip naps just because your puppy seems energetic — tiredness can mask as excitement

Normal Adjustment Stress

Some puppies bound into their new home with total confidence. Others need a week or more to settle in fully. Both are completely normal.

- Give your puppy space to adjust at their own pace — do not force interaction
- Keep the environment calm and predictable
- Avoid too many visitors, new experiences, and changes during the first week
- If your puppy seems stressed (hiding, not eating, excessive whining beyond the first couple of nights), give it a few more days of calm before considering whether something more specific needs to be addressed

Mouthing & Jumping

Both are normal puppy behaviors, but they should be addressed consistently from the start — especially jumping, which can become a habit that is much harder to break as your puppy grows.

- **Jumping:** Turn completely away the moment all four paws are not on the floor. Do not push down, knee, or say "off" — this is attention, even negative attention. Reward only when four paws are on the ground.
- **Mouthing:** Redirect immediately to an appropriate chew toy. If the bite is too hard, yelp and end play briefly. Consistency across every household member is the key.

Resource Guarding

Some puppies may growl or snap when approached near food, toys, or resting spots. This is normal communication in dog language, but should be addressed early so it doesn't escalate.

- Approach your puppy frequently while eating and drop a high-value treat into the bowl — this teaches that humans approaching the bowl means good things
- Practice trading: offer a treat in exchange for a toy they are holding. Return the toy afterward — this teaches that giving something up is safe and rewarding
- Never punish growling — growling is communication. If you suppress the warning, you remove the early warning system
- If guarding behaviors escalate or include snapping, consult a certified positive-reinforcement trainer early

Building Your Support Network

Raising a puppy well is not a solo endeavor. Surround yourself with the right people and resources, and you'll always have somewhere to turn when questions arise.

Your Breeder

I am here as a resource for the life of your puppy — not just the first week. Please never hesitate to reach out with questions, health concerns, behavioral puzzles, or just to share how your puppy is growing. I genuinely love staying connected with my puppy families and am always happy to help you prepare for vet appointments or navigate any challenges.

Your Veterinarian

If you haven't established care yet, do so before pickup day if possible. In addition to your primary vet, locate a local 24-hour emergency veterinary clinic and save their number in your phone now — before you need it. Emergencies don't happen at convenient hours.

Training Professionals

- Look for trainers who use positive reinforcement (force-free) methods exclusively
- Ask whether they have experience with small breeds or Dachshunds specifically
- Check for certifications: CPDT-KA (Certified Professional Dog Trainer) is a widely recognized credential
- Puppy kindergarten classes (after 12–14 weeks) are excellent for both socialization and structured learning
- AKC S.T.A.R. Puppy and AKC Canine Good Citizen programs provide wonderful structure and benchmarks

Grooming

Long-haired Dachshunds require regular brushing and periodic professional grooming. Begin handling your puppy's ears, paws, mouth, and body early and frequently so grooming appointments are a calm, familiar experience rather than a stressful one.

- Brush 2–3 times per week with a pin-wire brush to prevent tangles, especially behind the ears and under the legs
- Check and clean ears weekly — Dachshunds can be prone to ear infections
- Trim nails every 2 to 3 weeks or as needed — long nails affect gait and posture, increasing risk of IVDD and joint issues
- Brush teeth several times per week — small dogs are prone to dental disease

Important Numbers to Have on Hand

ASPCA Animal Poison Control: (888) 426-4435 (24/7, fee may apply)

Pet Poison Helpline: (855) 764-7661 (24/7, fee may apply)

Your Primary Veterinarian: _____

Local Emergency Veterinary Clinic: _____

Your Breeder (Salt of the Earth Dachshunds): _____

The Big Picture: Patience & Perspective

The first few weeks with a new puppy can feel overwhelming. You may lose sleep, question your decisions, and wonder if things will ever calm down. This is completely normal — and it does get better.

Remember:

- Puppies are babies — they need time, patience, and consistent guidance
- Mistakes and accidents are learning opportunities, not failures
- Consistency matters far more than perfection
- Every puppy develops at their own pace — comparison is not useful
- The challenging puppy phase is temporary
- You are building a relationship that will last 12–16 years

By around 12–16 weeks, most puppies have settled into their routine and begun to mature noticeably. The effort and consistency you invest now pays dividends throughout your dog's entire life. The bond you build in these early weeks is the foundation for everything.

Dachshunds are exceptional companions — fiercely loyal, deeply funny, surprisingly stubborn, and full of personality. They will make you laugh every single day. They will follow you from room to room, claim the best spot on the couch, and look at you like you hung the moon. It is entirely worth it.

Stay in touch. Share photos. Ask questions. Tell me the funny stories. I love hearing every one of them, and I am rooting for you and your new family member every step of the way.

Salt of the Earth Dachshunds

Raising dachshunds with purpose, health, and heart.