



Holton's Hounds

TRAIN • SUPPORT • HAPPY HOUNDS



Your Puppy's First Few Weeks

A practical, reassuring guide to getting your puppy off to a great start

The big idea: your puppy isn't being difficult. They're a baby learning how to live in your world. Your job is to make success easy.

Small steps
brighter
tomorrows ♥



By Holton's Hounds

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Welcome Home!



Bringing home a puppy is exciting, exhausting, occasionally hilarious and sometimes a little overwhelming. There is a lot of advice out there, and it can feel as though you need to teach everything immediately.

You don't. In these first few weeks, your biggest job is to help your puppy feel safe, learn the routines of their new home and develop good habits. Training is much easier when we set puppies up to succeed rather than repeatedly asking them to cope with situations they aren't ready for.

Management first. Training second. If your puppy hasn't learned a skill yet, change the environment so they don't have the chance to get it wrong.

What's inside

-  Settling into a new home
-  Toilet training
-  Night-time
-  Puppy biting and chewing
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Happy
Hounds
Brighter
Days




1. Let your puppy settle in

Your puppy has just left everything they have ever known. Their mum, littermates, familiar smells, familiar people and familiar routines have all disappeared at once. The first few days do not need to be an adventure.

Keep things calm and predictable. Let puppy explore their new home at their own pace. Make sure they have somewhere comfortable to sleep and somewhere they can retreat to without being disturbed. Give them unrestricted access to you whilst they learn how to cope without their mum and littermates.

For the first few days, think less ‘What can I show my puppy?’ and more ‘How can I help my puppy feel safe here?’

Make sure that all areas puppy has access to are puppy-proofed – do not allow them access to anything you do not want licked, chewed, played with or possibly toileted on! Baby gates and puppy pens are invaluable here, and use physical barriers to stop access to anything that could be dangerous such as plug sockets or wires.

Sleep is important too. Puppies sleep a lot, and a puppy who is overtired can become much harder to settle. Most of the time, when the question is ‘why is my puppy doing...?’ the answer is likely ‘because they need to sleep’.




Rest
helps
them grow 



2. Toilet training: right place, right time



Toilet training is largely about creating good habits. Young puppies have very small bladders and limited bladder control, so your job is to make sure they are in the right place at the right time as often as possible.

Give your puppy regular opportunities to toilet, particularly:

-  As soon as they wake up
-  After eating or drinking
-  During and after periods of play or activity
-  When you return after being away
-  Before you leave the house
-  Before bedtime
-  Frequently while they are awake – often around every 20–30 minutes initially, and more frequently during active play

Take puppy to an appropriate outdoor toilet area and quietly mooch around for a few minutes. There is no need to nag them, stare at them or repeatedly tell them to pee. When they go, calmly tell them what a good puppy they are and head back inside.

An accident is not a behaviour problem. It means puppy needed to go and we didn't get them to the right place in time.

Never punish a puppy for toileting indoors. They are not doing it to spite you or annoy you. Quietly clean it up with an enzymatic cleaner so that you remove as much scent as possible.





3. Night-time: help puppy feel safe



Ultimately, it doesn't matter where you want your puppy to sleep. What matters at first is that they are not suddenly expected to spend the night alone.

Your puppy has spent their life sleeping with their mum and littermates. They have arrived somewhere completely new, and they have never had to sleep alone before. For the first few weeks – and potentially longer – stay close.

That might mean a puppy pen or crate beside your bed, sleeping on the sofa beside their pen, or another safe arrangement that allows puppy to know you are there. If they wake and need the toilet, you are also right there to get them outside quickly.

Don't rush independence. First teach your puppy that they are safe. Confidence and independence can then grow from that secure foundation.

There is no need to leave a distressed puppy to cry simply because someone told you that you must. Responding to your puppy does not mean you can never teach them to sleep independently. It means you can build that independence gradually, when puppy is ready.



4. Puppy biting



Puppy biting is completely normal. Puppies use their mouths to explore the world, to play and to communicate. It does not mean your puppy is aggressive.

When puppy bites your hands, clothes or furniture, try not to shout or punish. Instead, calmly remove yourself or stop the interaction and give them something more appropriate to chew. Be consistent, and make sure everyone in the household responds in the same way.



5. Chewing and calming activities

Chewing and licking are normal puppy activities and can be useful ways to help a puppy settle. Provide safe, appropriate items for your individual puppy and supervise anything that could be shredded or swallowed.



Age- and size-appropriate chews



Food toys such as a Kong-style toy



LickiMats or similar licking activities



Simple food scatters or sniffing activities

Around 12–16 weeks, many puppies go through a particularly chewy phase as they lose their baby teeth. This is temporary and will improve with management, appropriate outlets and time.





6. Playing with your puppy



Play is an important part of your puppy's development. It helps them learn about their world, builds your bond and can be a great outlet for their energy.

Have a variety of toys available and rotate through them to keep up the novelty value. Find what types of toy your puppy prefers and how they like to play. Some puppies benefit from starting interactive play from the other side of a puppy pen or baby gate while they learn that the toy – rather than human skin – is the fun thing to grab.



Teaching 'get it' and 'out'

When puppy grabs the toy, introduce a cue such as 'get it'. When you want them to release it, stop moving the toy and make it boring. Wait for puppy to let go, then mark it with your chosen release word such as 'out' or 'thank you' – and immediately restart the game.

Letting go does not have to mean the fun is over. If the game starts again, puppy learns that releasing the toy is part of the game.





7. Learning to be alone



A brand-new puppy should not be expected to cope with being left alone for meaningful periods. They are completely dependent on you and have not yet learned that they can be safe on their own.

Think about this before puppy arrives if you can. You may need annual leave, help from family and friends, a suitable pet sitter, carefully chosen daycare later on, or changes to work/shift patterns.

Don't ask a puppy to cope with a skill you haven't taught them yet.

Once puppy is settled, you can begin teaching short periods of independence gradually. The aim is not to see how long they can endure being alone; it is to build confidence. If at any point puppy starts vocalizing, then you have gone too fast and need to reset. This is a skill that we really need puppy to have for life, so it is better to build the skill on solid foundations rather than trying to rush this process.



*Independence
builds confidence* ♥



8. Zoomies!



Zoomies are those sudden bursts of frantic energy where your puppy races around, often in wild circles. They are completely normal and usually a sign of a happy, healthy puppy.

Zoomies often happen after walks, meals and in the evening. You will soon learn when your puppy is most likely to zoom. Plan for it rather than being surprised by it.

Give your puppy space to zoom safely. It is usually best to let them get it out of their system, as long as they are safe and not likely to knock themselves (or you!) over!

As puppies mature, zoomies often become less frequent as they learn to regulate themselves and the world becomes less novel and exciting. Some dogs keep the occasional spectacular one – and honestly, they can be brilliant to watch!



9. Socialisation



You will hear that socialisation is important – and it is. But socialisation is not a frantic tick-box exercise where you have to expose your puppy to everything imaginable before a particular birthday.

Good socialisation = calm, controlled, confidence-building exposure to the things your puppy is likely to encounter in life. Watching is socialisation too, and often woefully underused. Carry your puppy, use a sling where appropriate, or allow them to observe safely from the car or other suitable position.

Puppies are people magnets. However, they are not public property. You do not have to let every stranger touch your puppy. Advocate for them and allow them to choose whether they want to approach someone.

In the same vein, we do not want puppy to interact with every dog they see. Some dogs just don't like puppies, others may be too big/bouncy/rough and could scare puppy. The majority of dogs should be calmly observed with the reward coming from you when they look/move away. Interactions should be carefully selected, considering age, size, confidence and play style.





10. Living with a resident dog



With the right management, many puppies live happily with their resident dogs. Give everyone time to adjust and make sure your resident dog has their own space where they can retreat if they need to.

Supervise interactions, keep things calm and positive, and avoid forcing them to be best friends. Let the relationship develop at its own pace.

In the early days, manage resources carefully:



Feed dogs separately.



Give high-value chews separately.



Manage favourite toys rather than allowing dogs to compete over them.



Make sure both dogs have places where they can rest without being disturbed.



Continue giving your resident dog one-to-one time with you.

A peaceful home is built on management, respect and time.





11. Children and dogs



Many children and puppies form wonderful friendships. However, it is important to teach children how to behave around dogs and to supervise all interactions.

A helpful introductory video to watch is:



Woodgreen Pets Charity – Children and Dogs



12. A few final practical reminders

-  Be realistic about what you can achieve in the first few weeks.
-  Management first. Training second.
-  Make sure everyone in the household is using the same basic rules and management strategies.
-  It is normal for some days to feel hard.
-  Ask for help if you need it.
-  Enjoy the process – it goes quickly!

**You do not have to teach everything immediately.
Small, consistent steps make a big difference.**





You've got this!

Support for you and your puppy



1:1 Training

Tailored support
for you and
your dog.



Group Classes

Fun, friendly
classes for
all stages.



Ongoing Support

Because you're
never alone
on this journey.

Ready to book? Contact me at:



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Happier dogs. Brighter lives. ♥

