

PERKS COURT
— Doodles —

Puppy Guide

Helping Your Goldendoodle Get Off to a Great Start

A friendly guide for the first days, weeks, and beyond.

From Our Home To Yours

INSIDE YOUR PUPPY GUIDE

A simple map to the parts you may want to come back to most often.

GETTING SETTLED

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Training Basics

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Welcome to the Perks Court Family!

The day you've been waiting for is finally here. You've chosen your puppy!

There is so much excitement that comes with bringing home a new puppy, but let's be honest: there can also be sleepless nights, potty accidents, puppy teeth, chewed-up things that definitely weren't puppy toys, and moments when you wonder what you've gotten yourself into!

That's puppyhood.

The good news is that it doesn't last forever, and the time and patience you invest now will help shape the dog who will be part of your family for many years to come.

I've had the privilege of caring for your puppy during the first eight weeks of his or her life. During that time, we've worked to provide a loving start and a foundation of positive, age-appropriate experiences.

Now it's your turn to build on that foundation.

I Had the First 8 Weeks. Now You Have the Next 8.

The first 16 weeks of a puppy's life are an incredibly important time for learning about the world. That doesn't mean your puppy needs to experience everything as quickly as possible. More isn't always better.

What matters is providing safe, positive, age-appropriate experiences while paying attention to how your individual puppy responds.

New things are okay. My people will keep me safe. I can handle this.

Some puppies will march confidently into a new situation. Others may want to hang back and watch first. That's okay. Your puppy is an individual, and part of your job is learning to read the puppy in front of you.

For now, your first job is simple: Help your puppy feel safe and comfortable at home.

Before Puppy Comes Home

A little preparation can make those first few days much easier for both of you. Decide where your puppy will sleep, where the crate will be located, which door you'll use for potty trips, and where food and water will be kept. You don't need to give your puppy access to the entire house right away. A smaller, manageable area makes supervision and potty training much easier.

A Few Things to Have Ready

- 36-inch crate, approximately 24" x 36", with an adjustable divider
- Puppy exercise pen and/or baby gate
- Food and water bowls
- Purina Puppy Chow Tender & Crunchy (Beef and Brown Rice)
- An appropriately sized collar or harness designed for leash attachment
- A selection of safe, puppy-appropriate toys and chews for play and enrichment
- Enzymatic cleaner for potty accidents
- A safe way to transport your puppy in the car
- Lots of patience, and maybe some coffee!

PERKS COURT DOODLE TIP: PREPARE FOR THE RIDE HOME

Most puppies do just fine on the ride home, but some may become carsick, especially during their first longer trip. Bring an old towel or washable blanket and a few cleanup supplies, just in case. Hopefully you won't need them. If you do, you'll be very glad they're there!

Establishing Care With Your Veterinarian

I recommend scheduling your puppy's first appointment with your veterinarian soon after coming home.

This first visit gives your veterinarian an opportunity to examine your puppy and establish a healthy baseline while puppy is feeling well. It also gives you a chance to establish care with the practice and review the health and vaccination records provided in your puppy packet.

If possible, schedule this appointment before Puppy Pick Day. Veterinary offices can book up quickly, and it's one less thing to arrange during those busy first days at home.

Bringing Puppy Home: The First 72 Hours

Your puppy's world has just changed dramatically. In a single day, your puppy leaves littermates, familiar people, smells, and surroundings and suddenly finds himself or herself in a new car, new house, new yard, new routine, and new family.

Your puppy may be playful and confident from the moment you arrive home, or may be quieter, sleepier, clingier, less interested in food, or a little unsure. Give your puppy time.

Keep the first few days calm, predictable, and relatively uneventful. Let your puppy explore gradually, learn where to potty, get acquainted with immediate family members, eat, play a little, and most importantly, sleep.

Eat. Drink. Potty. Sleep. Play. Feel safe. Repeat.

Young puppies sleep a lot. Really, a lot. Don't worry if much of those first few days seems to be spent sleeping. Growing and processing an entirely new world is hard work.

A familiar start helps

One of the easiest ways to help your puppy transition is to remember that everything doesn't need to change at once.

Throughout this guide, you will see little "What Your Puppy Is Used To" notes. These point out routines, sounds, experiences, words, and other things your puppy has already encountered here at Perks Court Doodles.

When possible, keeping a few familiar pieces of puppy's old routine can make the transition into your home a little easier.

Feeding

WHAT YOUR PUPPY IS USED TO: FEEDING

Your puppy has been free-fed with littermates since beginning kibble. Dry kibble has been available throughout the day and night so the puppies can eat when hungry and walk away when satisfied.

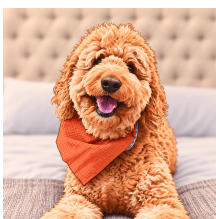
*Your puppy is currently eating **Purina Puppy Chow Tender & Crunchy (Beef and Brown Rice).***

Should I Continue Free-Feeding?

If your puppy will be the only pet in your home, or you can safely leave puppy food available without another pet eating it, you may choose to continue this familiar routine during the initial transition home.

In my experience raising puppies, young puppies typically do a pretty good job of self-regulating their food intake. That doesn't mean we stop paying attention. Keep a general eye on how much your puppy is eating, along with body condition, energy, and overall behavior.

Appetite can change from day to day as puppies grow. Some days your puppy may sleep more and eat a little less. Other days, it may seem like puppy suddenly needs a little more. Look at the overall pattern rather than expecting the exact same amount of food to disappear every day.



ZIGGY SAYS: KNOW YOUR DOG!

Not every dog is a candidate for free-feeding! Our Goldendoodle, Ziggy, is the perfect example. If we free-fed Ziggy, I'm fairly certain he would consider the entire bag one serving.

As puppies mature, their eating habits can change. Pay attention to the dog in front of you and adjust the feeding routine as needed.

What If I Have Other Pets or Prefer Scheduled Meals?

If another pet will eat your puppy's food, or if you prefer scheduled feeding, use the daily feeding recommendation on the puppy-food bag as a starting point.

Remember that the amount listed is generally the total amount for the entire day, not the amount for each meal.

For a young puppy, divide the daily amount into 3 to 4 smaller meals. Continue to monitor growth and body condition, and ask your veterinarian if you're unsure whether an adjustment is needed.

Changing Puppy Food

New family + new house + new routine + new food = potentially one unhappy puppy tummy!

Days	Current Food	New Food
Days 1-2	75%	25%
Days 3-4	50%	50%
Days 5-6	25%	75%
Day 7+	0%	100%

Check the transition instructions on the new food first, since recommendations may vary. Some puppies have more sensitive stomachs than others. If digestive upset develops, slow the transition and contact your veterinarian if you're concerned.

The First Night

WHAT YOUR PUPPY IS USED TO: BEDTIME

Until now, your puppy has slept with littermates nearby, surrounded by familiar smells, sounds, and routines. At Perks Court Doodles, I also play soft instrumental lullabies on Alexa at bedtime. The quiet music helps signal that the busy part of the day is over and it's time to settle down.

Where Should Puppy Sleep?

For those first nights, I recommend placing the crate in your bedroom, close to your bed. Your presence can help puppy feel more secure while adjusting to sleeping away from littermates for the first time.

Don't forget the blanket from your puppy's Go-Home Bag. It carries familiar scents from Mom and the littermates and can provide another little piece of home.

You can also play quiet instrumental lullabies or similar peaceful music. You don't have to use Alexa or find the exact same playlist. It's the familiar type of sound and calm bedtime routine that matter.

YOUR PERKS COURT BEDTIME ROUTINE

Potty → Scented Blanket → Lullabies → Crate Near You → Goodnight

What If Puppy Cries?

Some crying or protesting can be expected. Remember, being alone in a closed crate is different from anything your puppy has experienced before.

If puppy wakes during the night and becomes restless, begins whining, or suddenly can't settle, consider potty first.

Take puppy outside quietly, give an opportunity to potty, praise calmly for success, and head right back to bed.

Keep nighttime boring.

No 2:00 a.m. puppy party. No tour of the house. No 'Well, since we're both awake...' play session.

For tonight, don't expect perfection. You're both learning.

Your puppy's daily rhythm

Puppies thrive on consistency, need a tremendous amount of sleep, and rarely care what you had planned for the day!

Wake → Potty → Eat/Drink → Potty → Play/Explore → Potty → Sleep → Repeat

Let Sleeping Puppies Sleep

Young puppies commonly spend a huge portion of the day asleep, often around 16 to 18 hours in a 24-hour period, and some may need closer to 18 to 20 hours.

Don't get too hung up on the exact number. The important thing is giving your puppy plenty of opportunities for uninterrupted rest.

It's easy to assume that a puppy running around, biting everything, grabbing clothes, barking, jumping, or generally acting like a tiny maniac needs more exercise. Sometimes what that puppy actually needs is a nap.

IS MY PUPPY OVERTIRED?

Wild biting • Zoomies • Barking • Grabbing clothes • Unable to settle • Puppy mayhem
→ Potty first → Then consider a nap.

Play, Explore, Then Rest

Your puppy doesn't need to be entertained every waking minute. Short periods of play, exploring, training, chewing something appropriate, and simply experiencing family life are valuable. Then give puppy another opportunity to settle and sleep.

Potty Training

When in doubt, take out!

Potty training is less about waiting for your puppy to tell you it's time and more about giving puppy lots of opportunities to get it right.

Young puppies have small bladders and are still learning both physical control and the rules of their new home. Accidents will happen. They're learning.

Take Puppy Out

- Immediately after waking
- After eating
- After drinking a good amount
- After active play
- After coming out of the crate
- Before going into the crate for a nap
- Before bedtime
- Whenever you catch yourself wondering, *"Does puppy need to go out?"*

Learn Your Puppy's 'I Have to Go!' Signals

Your puppy may not know how to clearly ask to go outside yet, but that doesn't mean there aren't clues.

- Suddenly sniffing the floor with purpose
- Walking or turning in circles
- Wandering away from play or from the family
- Heading toward a corner, another room, or a more private area
- Suddenly becoming restless
- Pausing or disengaging in the middle of play
- Going toward the door you regularly use for potty trips
- Whining, pacing, or becoming unusually fidgety

Every puppy is a little different. As you get to know yours, you may begin to recognize a particular look or behavior that means, 'I need to go!' When you see the signs, don't wait to find out if you guessed correctly. Take puppy outside.

Potty Bells: Giving Your Puppy a Voice

Your puppy may not arrive home knowing how to clearly tell you, 'I need to go outside!' That's why you'll find a set of sleigh bells in your puppy's Go-Home Bag, along with a simple How to Bell Train Your Puppy instruction card.

Bells give your puppy a voice.

At first, you'll be watching for puppy's body-language clues. With consistency, the bells can give your puppy a much clearer way to communicate that need to you.

PERKS COURT DOODLE TIP

Especially while puppy is learning, treat every ring as communication, even if you think it happened accidentally or during play. Praise your puppy and offer a potty trip.

Your puppy is learning: 'When I ring these bells, my people listen.'

Make Success a Big Deal

Take puppy to the area where you want him or her to potty. When puppy goes: Yes! Praise. Reward. You can also begin pairing pottying with a consistent cue such as "Go potty."

The Second Pee Is Real!

Puppies may potty a little, become distracted, and start exploring before they've completely emptied their bladder.

Don't immediately head back inside after the first pee.

Give puppy another few minutes. In those early weeks, you may be surprised how often you get a second one. That extra few minutes outside can save you from an accident five minutes after coming back in.

SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS

Keep shoes, jacket, flashlight, treats, and poop bags near the door you use for potty trips. Those few seconds spent searching in the middle of the night can mean the difference between praising outside and mopping inside!

Try the 30-Minute Reminder

During the first several days, try setting a 30-minute reminder while puppy is awake to remind you to offer a potty break.

This is not a statement about how long puppy can hold it. It's simply a tool to help prevent you from losing track of time. As puppy becomes more reliable, gradually increase the interval.

What If I Catch an Accident?

Calmly interrupt and take puppy outside to finish. If puppy finishes outside, praise and reward.

If you discover an accident afterward, simply clean it thoroughly with an enzymatic cleaner.

Think of an accident as information: we probably waited a little too long this time.

ROLL UP THE RUGS!

Consider temporarily picking up area rugs where puppy spends time, especially rugs near the potty door. Some puppies are drawn to the soft texture and may decide it feels like a perfectly reasonable bathroom.

Creating a Positive Relationship With the Crate

WHAT YOUR PUPPY IS USED TO: CRATES

Beginning at around five weeks old, I provide open crates in the puppies' living area. They are free to go in and out, and many puppies begin choosing a crate on their own when they want a quiet place to rest. The crate itself isn't completely unfamiliar. What is new is being alone in one with the door closed.

What Size Crate?

For our puppies, I generally recommend a 36-inch crate, approximately 24" x 36", with an adjustable divider.

The divider allows you to give your puppy an appropriately sized sleeping area now and gradually increase the available space as puppy grows.

Your puppy should have enough room to stand comfortably, turn around, and lie down, but during potty training you don't want so much extra room that one end can easily become the bathroom while the other remains the bedroom.

PERKS COURT DOODLE TIP

*Look for a **36-inch crate** that includes the divider. It's the size I typically recommend when Perks Court families ask what to purchase before bringing puppy home.*

Make the Crate a Good Place

Continue building on the positive crate exposure your puppy has already had. Toss a treat or piece of kibble inside and allow puppy to enter voluntarily. Offer a safe chew or special toy there. Praise calm behavior. Practice short periods with the door closed while you're nearby before expecting longer stretches alone.

The crate should never be used as punishment.

We want puppy to learn: *'This is my safe place to rest.'* Not: *'This is where I go when my people are mad at me.'*

Crate + Potty Training Go Hand in Hand

The crate can be a valuable potty-training tool because most puppies naturally prefer not to soil the area where they sleep.

Take puppy outside immediately after coming out of the crate, and always offer a potty opportunity before a longer crate period.

How Long Can Puppy Stay in the Crate?

Young puppies need frequent potty breaks and shouldn't be expected to spend long stretches confined during the day.

How long your puppy can comfortably remain crated depends on age, whether puppy is awake or sleeping, recent food and water intake, activity, and the individual puppy.

Watch the puppy, not just the clock.

Overnight is different. Puppies often sleep for longer stretches than they could comfortably remain crated while awake during the day. If puppy wakes and becomes restless, whines, or suddenly can't settle: potty first, keep it boring, back to bed.

Puppy Behavior 101

Puppies are adorable. Puppies are also tiny creatures with sharp teeth, questionable judgment, very little impulse control, and an impressive ability to locate the one thing in the room you forgot to puppy-proof.

A lot of behavior that feels frustrating is simply normal puppy behavior that needs guidance, management, and time.

Those Puppy Teeth!

Puppies explore with their mouths. They bite hands, grab sleeves, attack pant legs, chew things they shouldn't, and occasionally make you wonder whether you accidentally brought home a baby piranha.

Keep appropriate toys and chews within reach so you can redirect puppy onto something that is okay to bite.

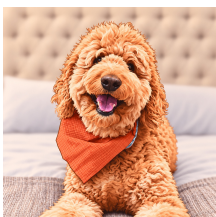
If puppy becomes increasingly wild and mouthy, remember: potty first, then consider a nap. An overtired puppy can be an especially bitey puppy.

The Puppy Crazies!

There's actually a name for those sudden bursts of running, spinning, bouncing, and general silliness: FRAPs, or Frenetic Random Activity Periods.

Around here, I just call them the puppy crazies.

They're normal. In my experience, they often appear in the evening or near bedtime, especially after a busy day. Sometimes puppy needs an appropriate opportunity to move and play. And sometimes the little maniac racing through your living room is actually overtired.



ZIGGY NEVER GOT THE MEMO

Most of those intense puppy crazies settle as dogs mature, but don't be surprised if the occasional zoomies never disappear completely. Ziggy is 12 years old, and when that cool fall weather arrives, he can still tear around like somebody flipped the puppy switch back on!

Management Isn't Cheating

Use baby gates, a puppy pen, the crate, closed doors, and supervision to make good choices easier while your puppy is learning.

If puppy repeatedly steals the kids' stuffed animals, shutting the bedroom door isn't failing to train your puppy. It's preventing puppy from practicing a behavior you don't want while you're teaching what belongs to puppy instead.

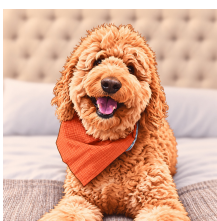
Management helps prevent bad habits from becoming well-practiced habits.

Chewing

Chewing is normal and necessary puppy behavior, especially during teething. Your job isn't to convince puppy never to chew. Your job is to teach puppy what to chew.

Rotate safe toys and chews to keep them interesting, and regularly inspect them for damage.

If something begins breaking apart, unraveling, or creating pieces puppy could swallow: It's done. Throw it away.



ZANY ZIGGY ANTICS: THE REMOTE INCIDENT

Ziggy taught us firsthand that TV remotes apparently belong on the puppy-interest list. We lost more than one during his younger years.

It's much easier to move something out of reach than convince a puppy that your expensive object isn't an excellent chew toy.

Confidence, Socialization & New Experiences

Socialization Doesn't Mean "Meet Everyone"

Socialization is much bigger than introducing your puppy to lots of people and dogs. It's helping puppy learn: 'The world contains lots of different things, and I can handle them.'

People, sounds, surfaces, places, objects, movement, handling, grooming, car rides, appropriate animals, and everyday life can all be part of socialization.

WHAT YOUR PUPPY IS USED TO: NEW EXPERIENCES

Your puppy's introduction to the world began here. We've provided age-appropriate exposure to different sounds, surfaces, household activity, handling, grooming, people, objects, and other experiences while watching how each puppy responds.

Your job isn't to start socialization. It's to continue it.

Quality Over Quantity

Ten calm, positive experiences are more valuable than fifty overwhelming ones.

Give puppy time to observe. Let puppy sniff. Let puppy think. Allow distance when needed. Reward curiosity and confidence.

Don't force interaction just to check something off a socialization list.

A puppy doesn't have to touch, greet, or participate in everything to learn from an experience. Sometimes sitting at a comfortable distance and simply watching the world go by is excellent socialization.

Learn to Read the Puppy in Front of You

Your puppy is communicating with you all the time, even without words. Body language can tell you when puppy is curious, comfortable, uncertain, overstimulated, frightened, tired, or ready for a little more space.

There are so many canine body-language signals that we could write an entire book about them. Dogs communicate through their whole bodies: posture, tails, ears, mouths, eyes, movement, and even behaviors you might not immediately think of as communication.

Lip licking, changes in eye movement, turning away, yawning, and even sneezing can sometimes be part of that conversation. Context matters, and one signal by itself doesn't always mean one specific thing.

It's pretty amazing how much our dogs are communicating with us and with the world around them once we begin learning how to notice it. It's absolutely worth exploring further.

If Puppy Says "I'm Not Sure"

If your puppy seems unsure about something, don't immediately pull puppy toward it or insist on interaction.

Give a little more distance. Allow time to observe. Pair the experience with something puppy enjoys. If puppy relaxes and chooses to investigate, great. If not, it's okay to try again another day.

We aren't raising a puppy who has experienced everything. We're raising a puppy who learns that new things can be safe.

Handling & Grooming: Start Now, Thank Yourself Later

Your Goldendoodle's coat will require regular care throughout life, but grooming is about much more than keeping that beautiful coat looking good.

Your puppy will need to be comfortable having paws touched, ears examined, teeth and mouth handled, nails trimmed, body brushed and combed, and face and tail handled.

The easiest time to make all of that feel normal? Right now.

WHAT YOUR PUPPY IS USED TO: HANDLING & GROOMING

Your puppy's grooming education has already begun at Perks Court Doodles. From an early age, the puppies experience gentle, age-appropriate handling of their paws, ears, mouth, face, body, and tail, along with brushing, nail care, baths, and gradual exposure to drying.

The goal isn't to make an eight-week-old puppy perfectly groomed. The goal is to make being handled feel like a normal part of life.

A Little Every Day Goes a Long Way

You don't need a formal grooming session every day. While puppy is relaxed, spend a minute or two gently touching paws and toes, looking inside ears, lifting lips, touching the muzzle and face, handling the tail, and running your hands over the body.

Pair handling with praise, treats, play, or another positive experience. Keep sessions short and stop before puppy becomes frustrated whenever possible.

Practice when nothing is wrong.

Brushing: The Brush Isn't Enough

Goldendoodle coats can look beautifully fluffy on the surface while tangles and mats are forming closer to the skin.

You'll eventually want both a slicker brush and a metal comb. Use the brush to work through the coat, then use the comb to check your work. The comb should be able to pass through the coat all the way down toward the skin, not just skim across the fluffy surface.

Pay special attention behind the ears, under the collar, armpits, chest, legs, belly, tail, and around the rear.

Bath Time

WHAT YOUR PUPPY IS USED TO: BATHING & DRYING

Your puppy has already been introduced to bath time using a tear-free puppy formula. Drying begins with a regular household blow dryer with no heat so puppies can get used to the sound and sensation of moving air. Puppies who tolerate that well can then be gradually introduced to a high-velocity grooming dryer.

Goldendoodles generally don't need constant bathing. For many dogs, about once a month or when genuinely dirty is a reasonable starting point. Coat, skin, lifestyle, and your veterinarian or groomer's recommendations may affect how often your individual dog should be bathed.

Use a gentle shampoo made specifically for dogs.

Whenever possible: brush and comb BEFORE the bath.

Water can tighten existing tangles and make mats more difficult to remove. Afterward, dry the coat thoroughly while continuing to work through it with your brush and comb.

When Should My Puppy Visit the Groomer?

Don't wait until your Goldendoodle desperately needs a haircut to introduce professional grooming.

I recommend establishing a relationship with a groomer before your puppy needs a full haircut. Ask whether your groomer offers a puppy-introduction appointment. The goal of those early visits isn't a dramatic haircut. It's practice.

Puppies are still completing their initial vaccination series during these early months, so ask your groomer about their vaccination requirements before scheduling. Many puppies are still completing their initial vaccination series at this age, often through about 16 to 20 weeks, depending on the vaccine plan and individual risk. Your veterinarian should guide you on your puppy's individual vaccination schedule and when it's appropriate to visit different environments.

When Should My Puppy Get the First Full Haircut?

For most of our Goldendoodles, the first full haircut will usually fall somewhere around 4 to 6 months old, depending on coat growth, coat condition, your preferred look, and your groomer's recommendation.

If you've been brushing, combing, handling, bathing, drying, and introducing professional grooming along the way, that first haircut won't also be puppy's first encounter with every part of the grooming process.

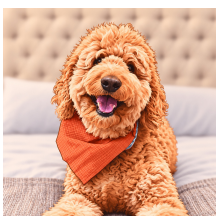
That's the goal.

A Quick Word About Mats

Mats aren't just cosmetic. Tight matting can pull on the skin and become uncomfortable.

If you find a small tangle, work gently with your brush and comb. If it's tight, close to the skin, or you aren't able to remove it comfortably, don't keep fighting with it. Ask your groomer for help.

Comfort comes before hairstyle.



A LESSON FROM ZIGGY: PUT DOWN THE SCISSORS!

Never use scissors to cut a mat that is close to your dog's skin.

This one comes from personal experience. Years ago, Ziggy had a mat on his back leg that I decided I could carefully cut out myself. What I didn't realize was how easily his loose skin could pull up into the mat.

I accidentally cut him. I still grimace when I think about it.

A mat can pull loose skin up into itself, making it very difficult to tell where the mat ends and your dog's skin begins. What looks like a safe place to cut may not be safe at all.

If a mat is tight, close to the skin, or can't be worked out gently with your grooming tools, leave it for your groomer.

I'd much rather see your Goldendoodle sporting an unexpectedly short haircut than an accidental injury.

Training: Building Good Habits Together

I've raised a lot of puppies and have learned plenty along the way, but I'm not a professional dog trainer, and this guide isn't intended to replace one.

What I can share are some simple foundations that I've found helpful, along with the things your puppy has already begun learning here at Perks Court.

Puppy kindergarten and positive-reinforcement training are wonderful ways to continue building skills, confidence, and communication together.

WHAT YOUR PUPPY IS USED TO: LEARNING

Your puppy has already begun discovering that paying attention to people can lead to good things. We use positive reinforcement and begin introducing simple communication skills, including the marker word 'Yes!' and our special 'Pup, pup, pup, pup!' recall.

"Yes!" Means You Got It Right

I use "Yes!" as a marker word. It allows you to tell your puppy the exact moment: "That! That's what I wanted!"

Say it clearly and happily when puppy makes the choice you want, then follow with praise, a treat, play, or another reward.

The closer your 'Yes!' is to the behavior you liked, the easier it is for puppy to understand what earned the reward.

The Perks Court Special Recall

Your puppy already knows something pretty special. I use a quick, happy "Pup, pup, pup, pup!" as a special recall with the puppies.

RUN TO ME! GOOD THINGS ARE HAPPENING!

This is not the same as your everyday "Come" cue. Think of it as something valuable that you want to protect for those moments when you really need your puppy to get to you.

KEEP IT VALUABLE!

Don't use the special recall over and over just because it's fun to watch puppy come flying toward you. Every time you use it, you want to reinforce the idea that responding is absolutely worth it. When puppy reaches you: celebrate, praise, and reward generously.

What Is "The Good Stuff"?

High-value treats are the rewards your puppy finds especially exciting. Freeze-dried dog treats can be great options. Freeze-dried beef liver is one example, and my pack has yet to meet much in the freeze-dried department that they considered unworthy.

Keep a few high-value treats somewhere easy to reach, especially near exterior doors, so you're prepared if you ever truly need that special recall.

DON'T CHASE!

If your puppy gets loose, your instinct may be to run toward puppy. Unfortunately, many puppies interpret that as "BEST. GAME. EVER." Instead, use your special "Pup, pup, pup, pup!" recall enthusiastically. When safe to do so, move or run in the direction you want your puppy to follow while keeping your eyes fixed on your puppy. When puppy reaches you: praise, celebrate, and bring out The Good Stuff.

Teaching the Everyday Come

Your puppy also needs an everyday recall word, usually "Come." Begin when success is easy. When puppy is already moving toward you, happily say "Come!" then mark and reward when puppy reaches you.

Try to use a similar upbeat pitch, tone, and pace each time. Your voice becomes part of the cue puppy learns.

NEVER PUNISH YOUR PUPPY FOR COMING TO YOU

Even if you called more than once. Even if puppy took the scenic route. Even if you're frustrated. When puppy finally gets to you, reward the decision to come. You can work on response speed separately. What you don't want to teach is: 'Getting to my person makes my person angry.'

Name Recognition

Say puppy's name once. Puppy looks toward you? Yes! Reward.

Your puppy's name should mean: 'Pay attention, something relevant is happening.' Try not to turn it into background noise by repeating it endlessly.

Sit, Leave It, and Drop It

Sit is a useful early skill because it gives puppy an easy behavior to offer instead of jumping, bouncing, or grabbing. Reward puppy when that little bottom hits the floor, including spontaneous sits.

"Leave it" means: don't take that. Reward puppy for disengaging and turning attention back toward you.

"Drop it" means: it's already in your mouth, please let it go. Teach puppy that giving something up can lead to something good by using trades and rewards.

Your Puppy's First Collar

WHAT YOUR PUPPY IS USED TO: WEARING A COLLAR

Your puppy has been introduced to wearing a lightweight breakaway collar before going home. This helps puppy begin getting used to the sensation of having something around the neck.

The breakaway collar is not intended for leash attachment.

Your puppy will go home wearing a puppy breakaway collar. I use a breakaway collar because it is designed to release if it becomes caught on something rather than tightening around the puppy's neck.

Because it is designed to break away when pulled, it should not be used for leash walking.

Your Puppy's First Leash Experiences

Your puppy has not been introduced to leash walking yet, so there are no expectations here. Feeling leash pressure and learning to move with a person will be completely new skills. Puppy may stop, sit, pull backward, bite the leash, bounce around, or simply look confused.

Your puppy will also go home with a short 4-foot leash, but you'll need an appropriately sized collar or harness designed for leash attachment before beginning leash practice.

Start with very short, positive practice in a safe environment. Encourage puppy to follow you with your voice, praise, and rewards rather than expecting a walk. Loose-leash walking comes later. For now, you're simply making the leash a positive new experience.

Everyone Use the Same Language

Puppies learn faster when the humans aren't speaking five different languages. Decide what words your family will use for common behaviors and try to stick with them.

If one person says "Down" for lie down while another uses "Down" to mean get off the couch, puppy has to figure out what on earth these humans are talking about.

Pick your words and be consistent.

Puppy Kindergarten

A good puppy class can be a wonderful next step. Puppy kindergarten isn't only about learning Sit. It gives you practice communicating with your puppy and provides puppy with age-appropriate learning opportunities.

Look for a trainer or class that uses positive, reward-based methods and makes puppy's emotional well-being part of the learning process. Ask your veterinarian about appropriate timing based on your puppy's vaccination status and local disease risk.

When to Ask for Professional Help

You don't need to wait until you're completely overwhelmed to ask for help. If you're struggling with a behavior, seeing fear or anxiety that concerns you, noticing guarding or aggression, or simply feel like you and puppy aren't understanding each other, reach out to a qualified professional early.

I'm always happy to share what I've experienced with our puppies and Goldendoodles, but I'll also tell you when something is better addressed by your veterinarian or a professional trainer.

Health & Veterinary Care

Get to Know Your Puppy's Normal

One of the most useful things you can do during those first weeks is simply pay attention to your puppy.

Learn what is normal for your puppy: eating, drinking, poop, pee, sleep, energy, movement, and behavior.

Puppies aren't exactly the same every day. What matters is learning your puppy's usual patterns so you're more likely to notice when something is significantly different.

Vaccinations & Exploring the World

Your puppy will go home with age-appropriate vaccinations and a record of the care received here. Your veterinarian will help you complete the remaining puppy vaccination series.

During this same period, your puppy is also in an important stage of learning about the world.

Talk with your veterinarian about how to balance safe, positive socialization with protection from infectious disease based on your puppy's vaccination status and the disease risk where you live.

Remember: socialization doesn't require puppy to walk everywhere. Puppy can experience new sights, sounds, people, places, and environments without being placed on every public surface.

Parasite Prevention

Your veterinarian can recommend an appropriate plan for heartworm, flea, tick, and other parasite prevention based on your puppy's age, weight, lifestyle, and where you live.

Because puppies grow quickly, make sure you're using products and doses appropriate for your puppy's current age and weight.

Loose Stool Happens

Let's talk about poop. You are about to become much more interested in it than you ever expected. A puppy's digestive system can be sensitive, and the transition to a new home brings plenty of change. An occasional soft stool can happen.

The important question isn't only "What does the poop look like?" Also ask: "How is my puppy acting?"

A puppy who has an occasional loose stool but is otherwise bright, playful, eating, drinking, and acting normally is a very different situation from a puppy who has diarrhea along with vomiting, significant lethargy, loss of appetite, pain, blood, or other concerning changes.

Loose Stool? Try a Little Pumpkin

For mild, occasional loose stool in a puppy who is otherwise acting completely normal, one simple thing I often suggest is adding a small amount of plain pureed pumpkin to the food.

MAKE SURE IT IS THE RIGHT PUMPKIN

Use 100% pure pumpkin puree, not pumpkin pie filling. Check the ingredient label for added sugar or spices.

For one of our young puppies, I suggest starting with about 1 teaspoon mixed into the regular food. If you are unsure whether pumpkin is appropriate for what you are seeing, check with your veterinarian.

FREEZER TIP

Freeze leftover pumpkin in an ice cube tray for convenient portions. Once frozen, pop the cubes out and store them in a clearly labeled freezer bag.

Pumpkin is for an occasional mild soft stool in a puppy who otherwise feels well, not to mask ongoing diarrhea or illness. If diarrhea is frequent or watery, persists or worsens, contains blood, is accompanied by vomiting, or puppy is lethargic, refusing food or water, painful, or otherwise not acting normally, contact your veterinarian.

Pumpkin can help a little tummy. It can't tell us why that tummy is upset.

When Should I Call My Veterinarian?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeated vomiting or diarrhea • Blood in vomit or stool • Refusing food or water with other changes • Significant lethargy or weakness • Difficulty breathing • Persistent coughing • A swollen or painful abdomen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeated straining to urinate or defecate • Signs of significant pain • Possible ingestion of medication, chemicals, toxic foods, plants, or foreign objects • A sudden or concerning behavior change • Anything that makes you think, "This is not my puppy's normal." |
|--|---|

Safety & Puppy-Proofing

Puppy-proofing requires a special skill: look at your house and temporarily forget everything you know about good judgment.

If it fits in a puppy's mouth, hangs within reach, smells interesting, moves, rolls, crinkles, dangles, or belongs to someone who would be devastated if it were destroyed, assume puppy may investigate it.

Common Puppy Magnets

- Electrical cords and chargers
- Medications and vitamins
- Cleaning products and chemicals
- Trash cans
- Children's toys and small objects
- Socks and underwear
- Hair ties and rubber bands
- Batteries
- Remote controls
- Shoes
- Houseplants
- Food left within reach
- Bags, purses, and backpacks
- Loose strings, yarn, ribbon, and fabric
- Toys beginning to break apart

Doors, Gates & Fences

Know where puppy is before opening an exterior door. Be especially careful with visitors, children going in and out, groceries, deliveries, and loading the car.

Walk the perimeter of your fenced yard and look for gaps underneath, loose boards, openings around gates, spaces beside the house, landscaping that creates a climbing opportunity, or anything a small puppy could squeeze through. Supervise even in a fenced yard.

Collar, Identification & Microchip

Your puppy goes home with a Fi Nano microchip.

A microchip is not GPS. It provides permanent identification that can be scanned if your puppy is found. Fi offers separate GPS collar products, but the implanted microchip itself does not track your puppy's location.

Why I Chose Fi Nano

One reason I chose Fi Nano is its dual-registration system. After you register the chip as your puppy's owner, Perks Court Doodles remains associated with the chip as the Fi Professional Partner.

If your dog is ever lost, stolen, surrendered, or otherwise separated from you and you cannot be reached, there is an additional contact connected with the chip.

Your puppy may leave my home, but I never want a Perks Court Doodle to be without someone looking out for him or her.

Register the microchip promptly and keep your contact information current throughout your dog's life.

Before You Share That Snack

KEEP THESE AWAY FROM YOUR PUPPY

Chocolate & caffeine • Grapes & raisins • Xylitol-containing products • Onions, garlic & chives • Alcohol • Raw yeast dough • Macadamia nuts

Xylitol deserves special attention because it can appear in products you might not think of as dangerous to dogs, including some sugar-free gum, candies, baked goods, toothpaste, medications, vitamins, and certain nut butters.

Not sure if puppy can have it? Check a reliable veterinary source before sharing an unfamiliar human food. If puppy has already eaten something potentially toxic, contact your veterinarian or veterinary poison-control resource promptly.

Essential Oils & Diffusers

Concentrated essential oils can be harmful through ingestion, skin exposure, and in some circumstances inhalation. Keep concentrated oils out of reach, do not apply them directly to puppy unless your veterinarian directs you to, prevent access to diffusers, and give puppy the ability to leave the area.

Ask your veterinarian when in doubt.

Medications, Purses & Backpacks

Visitors are an easy one to forget. Someone may set a purse or backpack on the floor without thinking. That bag may contain medication, gum, snacks, cosmetics, or other things an inquisitive puppy should never explore.

Give guest bags a safe place well out of puppy's reach.

Plants, Mushrooms & The Great Outdoors

Know what is growing in puppy-accessible areas. Mushrooms can appear overnight. Lawn chemicals, fertilizer, pesticides, mulch, compost, and plants can create risks.

Puppies will also put sticks, rocks, mulch, leaves, bugs, and dirt in their mouths, so supervision matters outside too.

Cars & Puppies

Use an appropriate method to keep your puppy safely contained or restrained while traveling, and don't allow puppy to interfere with the driver.

Short, positive trips can help puppy learn that getting into the car doesn't always mean something stressful is about to happen.

PARKED CARS BECOME DANGEROUS FAST

Never assume that because the outside temperature feels comfortable, your puppy will be safe waiting in a parked vehicle. Vehicle temperatures can rise rapidly, even on days that don't feel extremely hot. Cracking the windows doesn't make a warm vehicle safe.

PERKS COURT RULE:

If there's any question whether the car could become too warm, puppy doesn't wait in the car.

Watch the Recliner!

Recliners, rocking chairs, sofa mechanisms, adjustable beds, and other moving furniture can be dangerous for a tiny puppy underneath.

Before moving or closing anything with a mechanism: find the puppy first.

Your First Few Weeks Together

Don't Expect Perfection

Not from your puppy, and not from yourself.

Some days you'll feel like puppy is really getting it. The next day you may wonder whether puppy has forgotten everything you've ever taught.

Look for progress, not perfection.

Routine Helps

Puppies generally do well when life becomes somewhat predictable. Meals, potty trips, naps, play, training, and bedtime don't have to happen at precisely the same minute every day, but a general rhythm can help puppy begin to understand what happens next.

You're also learning each other. Before long, you'll start recognizing when puppy is hungry, tired, needs to potty, wants to play, or simply needs a break.

Keep New Experiences Coming

Continue introducing your puppy to the world gradually and positively.

New people. New sounds. New surfaces. Car rides. Grooming. Handling. Training. Different environments and everyday family life.

More isn't necessarily better. Positive is better.

Regression Happens

Your puppy may seem to master something and then suddenly struggle with it again. Potty accidents may reappear. Listening may temporarily become optional. Adolescence will eventually bring its own adventures.

That doesn't mean your training failed. Go back to the basics, increase supervision when necessary, reward the behaviors you want, and keep moving forward.

Give Yourself Some Grace

Your house may temporarily look different. Baby gates everywhere. A crate functioning as furniture. Rugs rolled up. Treat containers beside every door. Poop bags in your pockets. Serious conversations about poop with people you barely know.

Welcome to puppy ownership!

Enjoy the Puppy, Too

With everything there is to teach, clean, schedule, remember, and puppy-proof, it can be surprisingly easy to become focused on doing everything right.

Don't forget to simply enjoy your puppy.

Take pictures. Laugh at the silly things. Watch that little personality unfold. Let puppy stop and investigate the world sometimes. Celebrate the tiny victories. Notice how quickly those little legs get longer.

**Puppyhood can test your patience, but it can also be incredibly special.
You don't need to rush through it.**

Stay part of the Perks Court family

Sending your puppy home isn't the end of our relationship.

I absolutely love seeing our puppies grow up and hearing about the dogs they become.

Please keep in touch, send pictures, share the funny stories, and let me know how things are going.

If you share puppy adventures on Instagram, tag @PerksCourtDoodles so we can follow along too.

We'd Love to Hear About Your Experience

If you've enjoyed your experience with Perks Court Doodles, I would be so grateful if you would consider sharing it with others.

Reviews help future puppy families learn more about us from the people who have actually been through the experience.

A final note from me

Bringing home a puppy is the beginning of a pretty incredible relationship.

There will be accidents, chewed-up things, interrupted sleep, muddy paws, puppy teeth, training challenges, and moments when you wonder whether your puppy heard a single word you just said.

There will also be firsts you'll never forget.

The first time puppy comes running when called. The first night everyone sleeps through the night. The first time you realize it has been days since the last potty accident. The first time your puppy curls up beside you as if that spot has always belonged to him or her.

Give your puppy patience, consistency, positive experiences, guidance, and plenty of love.

You don't have to do everything perfectly. Just Keep learning together.

I've had the privilege of caring for your puppy during those first precious weeks. Now I get the joy of watching as you take it from here.

Welcome to the Perks Court family.

With love,

Darlene

Perks Court Doodles

The Perks Court Puppy Cheat Sheet

Put Me on the Fridge!

The main guide teaches the why. This page is your quick reminder.

Remember	Quick Rule
Potty	When in doubt, take out. After waking, eating, drinking, play, crate, and before bed. Watch for sniffing, circling, wandering away, or restlessness. Wait for the second pee.
Bells	Potty bells ringing? Take puppy out. The bells give your puppy a voice.
Sleep	Let sleeping puppies sleep. Wild biting and zoomies can mean puppy is overtired.
Supervision	If you cannot supervise, safely contain with crate, gate, pen, or closed door.
Training	Reward what you want to see again. Use "Yes!" to mark good choices.
Recall	"Pup, pup, pup, pup!" is valuable. Do not overuse it. Keep The Good Stuff by the door.
Safety	If puppy can reach it, assume it may eventually go in the mouth.
Confidence	New experiences should build confidence, not overwhelm.
Routine	Keep familiar things familiar at first. Potty → scented blanket → lullabies → quiet crate time.
Grooming	A little handling, brushing, and combing every day builds tomorrow's adult Goldendoodle.
Health	Know your puppy's normal. When something seems significantly different, call your veterinarian.

Upset Tummy?

For mild, occasional loose stool when puppy is otherwise acting normally: 100% pure pumpkin, never pumpkin pie filling. See the Loose Stool section for details.

Keep These Numbers Handy

Veterinarian: _____

Phone: _____

24-Hour Emergency Vet: _____

Phone: _____

Family Meeting!

Everyone in the home should agree on cues and house rules. Using the same words, expectations, and routines makes learning easier for puppy.

Come cue: _____ Down/Lie Down: _____

Off cue: _____ Crate/Kennel: _____

Potty cue: _____ Other family rule: _____

THE MOST IMPORTANT REMINDER

Your puppy is a baby. There will be accidents, puppy crazies, and mistakes. There will also be progress.

Be patient. Be consistent. Laugh often. Enjoy your puppy.