



Guide to

Raising Your Puppy

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Bonding with your puppy

One of the most important things you can do when you first adopt your puppy is work on building a strong attachment bond. This simply means teaching your puppy they can trust and rely on you to keep them safe and care for them throughout their life.

Puppies with a solid and stable attachment to their owners tend to have lower stress levels and are likely to be more interested in exploring the world around them. This means they are likely to be more social with both other dogs and people, more confident, and are less likely to develop behavioural problems such as fear based aggression, anxiety, and other stress related conditions.

The good news is that building a strong attachment bond is actually quite easy to do. The main way to do this, is by being really attentive to your puppy's needs, spending time with them, and responding if they are distressed. A few things to remember are:

- You should always reassure your puppy if they are scared or distressed.
- Cuddling, stroking, petting, and just spending time just enjoying the company of your puppy is a really important way to build up your relationship.
- Avoid forcing your puppy to do things they are scared of, as this will damage their trust in you.
- Positive reinforcement based training is a brilliant way to bond with your puppy.
- It is important to be as consistent as possible in the way you interact with your puppy, so they always know what to expect from you.

Developmental Stages

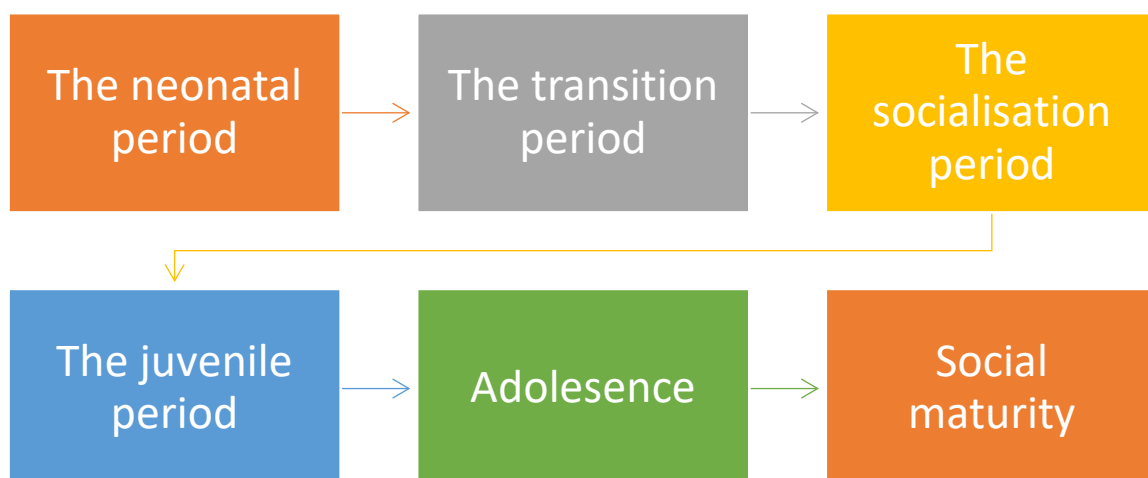
Like humans, puppies have some key developmental stages that it is good to understand and prepare for. The first four are:

The neonatal period – between 0 and 2 weeks of age. Puppies at this age cannot see or hear things, so have to rely on odours and touch to understand the world.

The transition period – between 2 and 3 weeks of age. During this period, puppy's ear canals open, and the visual system starts to mature, and puppies become better able to understand the world around them. At this age, they will start taking part in some social play with their littermates.

The socialisation period – between 3 and 12 weeks of age. During this period, puppies have a reduced fear response to new things, providing they are with their mum. It is important to use this period to introduce puppies to lots of new things such as human touch and handling, other dogs, and other species.

The juvenile period – between 12 weeks and sexual maturity, which is usually around 8-12 months. This is a great time to continue the socialisation process that should have been started by the breeder.



Socialisation

Socialisation refers to **controlled, fear-free** introductions to all the animals, objects, and experiences a puppy will experience throughout the course of their life. This should take place during the **socialisation period** and the **juvenile period**. This will help your dog feel more confident around all these aspects of daily life, and will help them be able to form social bonds more easily with new people, children, and even other species. This will help prevent aggression and anxiety in future. Socialisation includes introducing puppies to things such as:

- People
- Children
- Textures/surfaces – pavements, gravel, sand, flooring.
- Different clothing – hats, sunglasses, coats, skirts.
- Wearing a collar and harness
- Walking on the lead
- Locations
- Going to the vets
- Being groomed, and trips to the groomers
- Other animals (especially those you live with)
- Cars and car journeys
- Anything else that is going to be a part of your puppy's life

While working on socialisation with your puppy, it is important to ensure you do not progress too quickly and scare your puppy. If your puppy is scared by something you are introducing to them, this risks having the opposite effect, and teaching your puppy that those things are scary.

To ensure things are introduced properly and you do not scare your puppy, the key is to work really slowly and gradually. For example, if you want to socialise your puppy with other dogs, start with just something that smells of another dog, then move onto seeing one other calmer dog in the garden; do not just throw them

straight in at the deep end by taking them down a busy dog park. During this process, always remember to use food and praise to reward your puppy when they are doing well. Some example training plans might be:

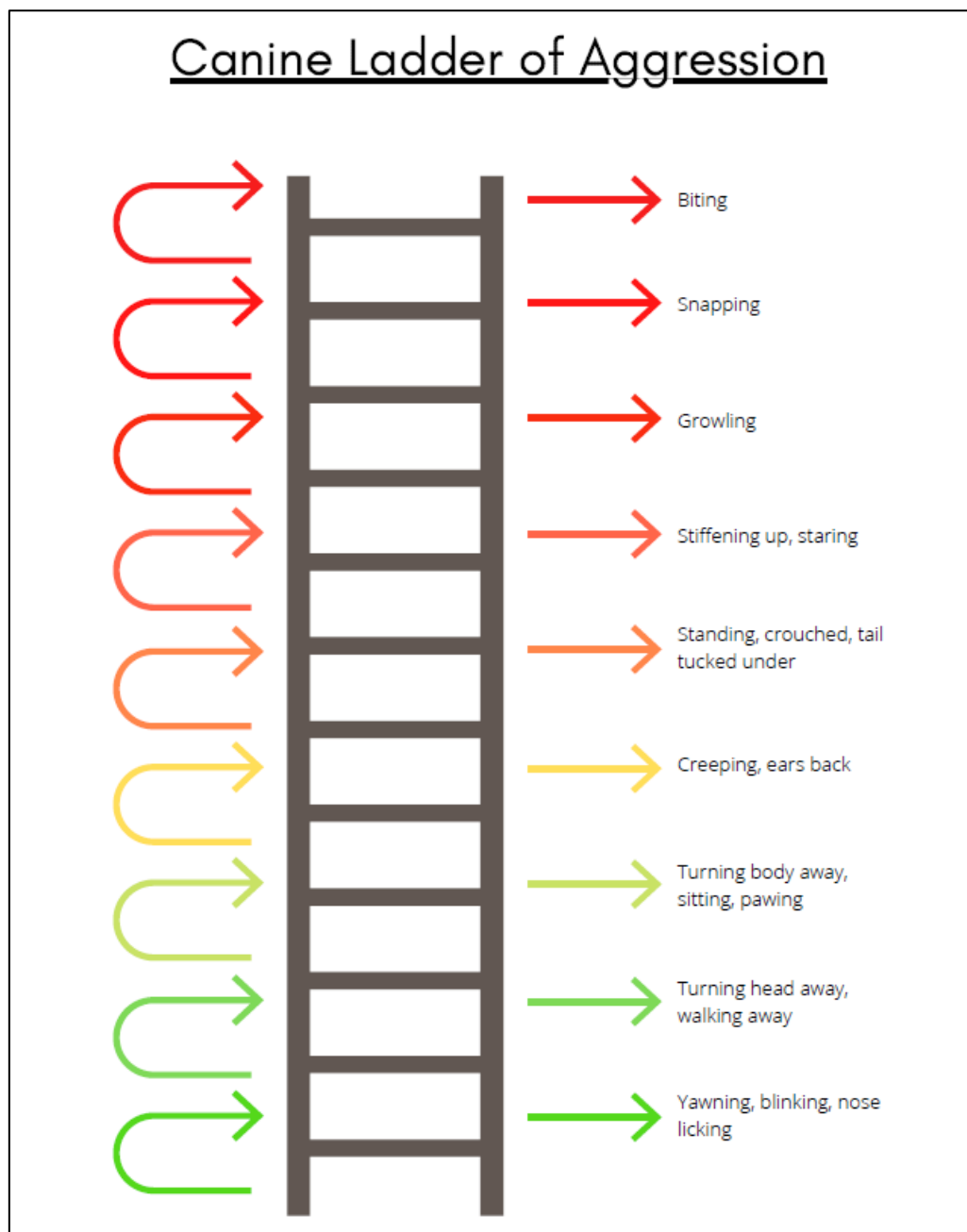


For this to work, it is essential all introductions are voluntary, and if your puppy is becoming stressed or scared, they need to be given the option to move away. Keep a close eye on their body language, as **yawning, lip licking, pupils dilating, ears going back, crouching down, tense body language, and turning their head or body away,** are all low-level signs a dog may be uncomfortable.

If you see your dog displaying any of these signs, simply remove them from the situation, and go back to something easier. There is no rush with socialisation, and it is much better to take things too slowly than to rush.

The Ladder of Aggression

One really useful resource for understanding fear in dogs is the canine **Ladder of Aggression**. The ladder shows how mild signs of fear can gradually progress to more overt aggression in the face of a potential threat. That is why it is important to spot those early signs on the green section of the ladder and intervene.



Reproduced from Kendal Shepherd's Ladder of Aggression

Training Methods

There are various ways to approach dog training, and with so much conflicting information from friends, family, tv shows, books, and social media it is sometimes hard to work out what is best to do for your dog.

The biggest question faced by many dog owners is whether to use a reward based approach, a punishment based approach, or a mix of both. There are pros and cons to all of these approaches, so to help you make a more informed decision, we have outlined some of the information below.

Reward Based Training:

- Motivates the dog to offer the behaviours you want
- Makes training enjoyable for your dog
- Progressively works towards desirable behaviours, while making unwanted behaviours less likely
- Can be a time consuming process
- Ultimately, good behaviours do not have to be rewarded every time
- Can require some practice from the owner
- Low risk of adverse consequences

Punishment Based Training:

- Can be quick and effective if used well
- Needs extremely good timing
- Unwanted behaviours need to be punished every single time they occur
- For this reason, difficult to implement successfully in the average household
- Risk of negative long term consequences

To summarise, there are definite advantages of punishment in the short term, as it can be quick and effective. However, practically it can be difficult to implement in the average household because the

unwanted behaviour will need to be punished every time it occurs, and it has risks of negative longer term consequences. There has been a lot of research into the consequences of heavy punishment in dogs, some of the key points are summarised below.

Potential Consequences of Punishment Based Training:

- Dogs are likely to become more vigilant and find it harder to settle.
- Dogs may try to avoid their owners – this can mean poorer recall and spending less time with their owners around the house.
- Stress levels are likely to be higher – this increases the risk of stress related disease and the development of some unwanted behaviours such as excessive barking.
- Dogs that are heavily punished are likely to be less securely bonded to their owners.
- Dogs are more likely to display aggressive or fearful behaviours.

This is why Animal Behaviour Kent, and the majority of dog trainers, dog behaviourists, and veterinarians now recommend the exclusive use of positive reinforcement based training in dogs.

Remember, dogs do not understand that things are right or wrong in the same way that humans do. So, the only reason punishment works is because they find being punished scary, but the downside of creating this fear is it will be likely to harm the relationship you have with your dog.

Whereas positive reinforcement training will improve the relationship you have with your dog, and make training a fun experience for you both. As well as reducing the risk of these long term consequences, dogs trained with positive reinforcement exclusively are generally more obedient!

Dominance Theory

One commonly discussed concept in relation to dogs is something called dominance. Many old fashioned dog training methods emphasise the importance of showing the dog that you are dominant over them. Some suggest this will lead to the dog being better behaved, calmer, less aggressive, less anxious, and many other benefits. This is actually not true. The concept of dominance is actually very misunderstood, and explained in more detail below. However the main point of this chapter is that dogs do not need to be dominated, there is no evidence dominance theory works, and dogs will simply not understand if their owners start implementing dominance reduction techniques such as walking through the door first, alpha rolls, or strong punishment.

What Is Dominance?

In conflict situations, often one animal will defer to another animal in order to avoid a fight. The animal that does not defer might then be labelled the dominant animal because they have first access to the valued resource. These interactions do not always form a consistent hierarchy however because different animals may defer over different objects. For example, one animal may easily give up food, however, be very protective of his sleeping spot.

While these deference behaviours are common in some animals, such as captive wolves, this is seen much less commonly in the domestic dog. The reason this is more common in captive wolves is because they are often living in very restricted environment with limited resources, and therefore a system of who has access to which resource becomes more apparent. Dogs have spent a long time evolving differently to wolves, and have developed extremely good cooperative social skills, which means these types of conflict situations are much less likely to become apparent and dominance hierarchies are rarely observed. This is especially true within a typical human household where resources are plentiful.

Training Skills

This section covers some of the basic training skills you can work on with your puppy. Some of these skills are more essential than others, for example whether or not you are planning to let your puppy off the lead, it is good to work on recall to ensure you can get them back in an emergency. Skills like sit and lie down are less fundamental but can still be fun things for you and your puppy to work on.

Good work

During training, it is important to have a way to let your dog know when they have done something right. This can be a specific verbal cue such as “good” or “well done” or it can be a sound such as a clicker. To teach your dog what this means, you will need to spend some time pairing your chosen cue with something good happening – the dog getting a treat.

1. Decide on the cue you want to use, e.g., “good”.
2. Practice saying “good” and then immediately after putting a treat down for your dog.
3. Practice this over a few sessions, until you start to see your puppy looking for their treat after you say the word “good”.
4. Once you have reached this stage, you can start using your chosen cue to reward your dog when they do something well, always just before giving them a treat.

Look at me

Another useful skill to teach your puppy is a cue for checking in with you. This is useful way to get their attention during a number of training activities and real-life situations.

1. To teach this, decide on the cue you want to use to get your dog’s attention, e.g., “look”.
2. Starting in a quiet environment, say the word “look”, and then reward your puppy with a treat if they look at you.

3. Practice this a few times until your puppy starts automatically looking at you when they hear the word “look”.
4. You can then start advancing this by practicing in lots of different contexts. For example, in the park, on the lead, in a café, in all the different rooms in the house, and anywhere else your puppy regularly goes.

Recall

Recall refers to your puppy’s ability to come back when called. This is a really useful skill for both around the house and on walks.

1. Decide on a word that you will use when you want to call your puppy back. This needs to be something different from their name so they can specifically associate it with recall. Some common ones are “come” or “here”.
2. Practicing using this word around the house to call your puppy. It is fine to be in the same room to start with. Call the word “here” and then reward your puppy with a high value treat as soon as they come over to you.
3. Once you have done this several times, you can start increasing the distance between you and your puppy. For example, you might try going into another room, upstairs, or the garden and then calling your puppy, again rewarding them with a treat straight away if they come to you when called.
4. After practicing this lots around the house, you can begin trying this outdoors. When your first attempt to let your puppy off the lead outdoors, one useful tool can be a long 10m training line, which you can clip on to your puppy’s harness and allow it to trail behind them. This will allow you to intervene easily if things go wrong.
5. On the first few sessions outdoors look for a quiet place with only a few distractions. This will allow your puppy to really master recall outdoors before you start practicing in a busier place.

6. Once your puppy is good at this, you can start to look for places with some more distractions. For example, some other dogs playing off lead, or some people walking nearby.
7. Work very gradually as you build up the level of distractions. Remember, every time you add a new distraction, go to a new location, or call your puppy from a further distance they are more likely to go wrong.
8. An example of your first few sessions may be:
 - a. Session 1: Empty park.
 - b. Session 2: Quiet park with a few people walking near.
 - c. Session 3: Quiet park, practice recall at a longer distance.
 - d. Session 4: Practice in the park with a few other dogs off lead but further away.
 - e. Session 5: Practice in the park with a few other dogs off lead but further away.
9. The more gradually you add these extra things in, the more likely it is that your puppy will be able to cope with the additional distraction, which will set you up for a better recall longer term.

Sit

Teaching sit is not essential; but it can be a fun thing to teach your puppy if you enjoy training.

1. Start by finding a great high value treat and wave it under your dog's nose to get their attention.
2. Once your puppy is focused on the treat, slowly move the treat up and over their head.
3. If this is done right, it will generally result in the puppy automatically sitting. If they do sit, immediately give them the treat as a reward.
4. Practice this a few times until your puppy realises it is their bum hitting the floor that gets them the treat.
5. Once your puppy has mastered this, start saying the word "sit" just before you start luring the treat over their head.

6. Eventually your puppy will start to associate the word “sit” with putting their bum on the floor for a treat.
7. When you reach this point, you can stop luring your puppy into the sit position, and simply say “sit” and reward them with a treat for sitting by themselves.
8. To really strengthen this skill, practice in lots of different locations.

Lie Down

This can be taught in a similar way to sit by using a lure method. Down is a great way to encourage your puppy to calm down and take a break if they have become overexcited.

1. As with sit, start by finding a great high value treat and wave it under your dog’s nose to get their attention.
2. Once your puppy is focused on the treat, slowly move the treat down to the floor, and drag it along the floor towards you.
3. This can sometimes take a few attempts, but it should encourage your puppy to lie down in an attempt to follow the treat dragging towards you.
4. If your puppy lies down, immediately give them the treat.
5. Practice this a few times until your puppy has mastered the lying down to get the treat.
6. At this point you can start using the “down” cue. To do this, just before you start luring your puppy with the treat, say the word “down”. This will encourage them to start associating hearing the word “down” with lying down for a treat.
7. Keep practicing this until your puppy starts lying down automatically in anticipation of a treat when you say “down”.
8. To really strengthen this skill, practice in lots of different locations.

Go to Bed

Being able to ask your dog to go to bed is a great way to control them around the house, especially if you need to temporarily get them out of the way, for example, while cooking or letting guests in.

1. To begin, simply give the cue 'bed', and then throw a treat into your dog's bed. Repeat this regularly throughout the day. Make sure your dog sees the treat flying into the bed each time you do this.
2. Repeat this until your dog starts automatically jumping into their bed when they hear the word "bed" in anticipation of the treat appearing there.
3. Once your dog gets good at this, you can start building up the time they stay in the bed after you have given the cue – begin by saying bed, then waiting 5 seconds before you throw in the treat. This will start to teach your dog that waiting in bed can also earn treats.
4. Continue practicing waiting 5 seconds for a treat until your dog perfectly waits every time. Then start building up the time even more, 10 seconds then treat, 20 seconds then treat, 30 seconds then treat, 45 seconds then treat, and so on.
5. You can also switch up the reward you use; puzzle toys, chews, or Kongs are all good for encouraging your dog to stay in their bed a bit longer.

Toilet Training

One of the most important things to teach your puppy is where they should go to the toilet. The good news is, with some consistent training, this can be achieved fairly quickly for most puppies.

The first thing to do with toilet training is to reward your puppy whenever they go to the toilet outside. To do this, keep some treats by the back door, and keep a close eye on your puppy when you take them out. If you see them going to the toilet, the second they finish, immediately give them praise and reward them with the treat.

It is also key to look out for any clues your puppy may need the toilet. Fortunately, there are lots of potential clues to look out for, if your puppy has:

- Just woken up
- Recently eaten
- Just a had a drink
- Just been playing excitedly
- Just been spooked by something
- Started whining or pacing around
- Started sniffing the floor
- Simply has not been to the toilet for a while

If you see any of these signs, it is best to take your puppy outside as a precaution. It can be a bit inconvenient now, but it will pay off in the future.

It is important to remember, there will always be a few accidents to start with, and that is nothing to worry about. Avoid telling your puppy off or making a big deal about it, and simply clean it up as soon as possible. When you are cleaning up an accident, avoiding using bleach based cleaners, as the ammonia in bleach can encourage dogs to want to pee in the same place again. Instead look for a specialist dog stain and odour remover as this fully remove the smell of the accident.

Puppy Biting

Puppy biting refers to the overexcited, and often painful mouthing and nipping behaviour displayed by many young puppies. It is a regular occurrence and can vary from gentle mouthing to quite hard biting and latching on to hands, feet, or clothes. It is an extremely common behaviour that the vast majority of puppies display at some point.

There are several causes for puppy biting. The first is, for puppies are can be teething up until they reach around six months. This can be a painful experience at times and lead to them desperately searching for some relief on the nearest object which may be their toy or a chew, but seemingly more often an item of furniture, or someone's hand. Mouthing also provides puppies with a way of exploring the world, and can provide an outlet if they are fearful, tired, or overexcited.

Can you punish puppy biting?

Avoid punishing the biting. While it can seem the most obvious response to stop the behaviour, punishing puppy biting is rarely effective. One of the biggest problems with using punishment in this scenario is the puppy may interpret the punishment, whether it is a sharp loud "no" or a tap on the nose, as you joining and playing the game with them; which in turn risks reinforcing the behaviour as the puppy can learn biting equals a fun game.

What can you do?

If your puppy starts to bite, the best first step is to ignore. Try to keep really still, and move your hands, or legs away slowly, so you are not encouraging your puppy to chase. This will teach your puppy that biting something inappropriate, e.g. your hands, does not lead to any games that might be considered reinforcement.

The next step is to have lots of dog toys around which you can use to redirect your puppy to if they are still trying to bite you. Continuing to keep your own movements slow and calm, try to

start making the dog toy seem like a really exciting thing to play with – try dragging it along the floor, or waving it in your hand to initiate a game of tug. The goal is to make the toy seem far more interesting than your hands or feet. If the puppy grabs on to the toy and start playing, get really excited, start playing along, make it a really good game. This will reinforce the puppy for playing with the toy, and importantly teach them that playing with toys equals play and attention from you but biting your hands and feet does not. Keep practicing this as much as possible, it can take a while, but you will get there eventually.

Managing Puppy Biting

It is not always possible to ready with a toy to distract your puppy, you may be trying to get on with something, and not have time to be redirecting the puppy to a toy. This is where having some management strategies can come in really useful. Not only will they get the puppy out of your way for a bit and encourage them to calm down, but they will also teach your puppy to self-regulate their excitement, a valuable life skill. A few really good management strategies are:

- Puzzle toys – these are games in which dogs have to open up compartments, flick switches, press buttons, to earn a treat. They are available to buy online, or in lots of pet stores, or you can create your own. You can have one of these set up already filled with food in the cupboard, and then if you notice your puppy becoming excited get the puzzle toy out and encourage the puppy to go and have an explore. They are great ways to keep dogs entertained and help with emotional regulation. One way of using these is to use some of your puppy's daily portion of kibble, as this will prevent them from becoming overweight from too many treats.
- Frozen Kongs – these are particularly great options for teething dogs, as the cold temperature will offer some pain relief. Kongs are toys that you can stuff with treats, biscuits, or paste, and the dog has to figure out how to get the food out.

Filling them up with something like a bit of liver paste or mashed up carrots will provide a great long-lasting activity that will keep your dog busy for a number of minutes and give them an appropriate outlet for those biting behaviours.

- Chews – similar to frozen kongs, puppy chews are a great way to give your puppy some relief from teething. If you find a healthy chew, this can become part of your puppy's diet, allowing them to have one a day. You may find they can be timed to particular time of day when your puppy gets particularly excited, such as the evening.

Adolescence

After the juvenile period, the next developmental milestone for puppies is adolescence. This generally takes place at some point between 8 and 24 months.

What can you expect?

- Higher excitement levels
- Puppies may be less able to settle down
- Increased risk taking
- Poor behaviour around other dogs
- Training may become more difficult
- Less responsive to cues
- More easily spooked

Although this can sound like a nightmare, it is important to remember adolescence is a very normal part of development in many species, including humans. Your dog will be experiencing structural changes to their brain, which means maintaining attention, managing excitement, and inhibiting their behaviour suddenly becomes a whole lot more difficult.

How can it be managed?

Try to resist the temptation to become frustrated with adolescent dogs, and instead it is fine to dial down your training a little bit to make things easier.

- You may find you need to go back to using a 10m training line when walking at the park.
- You might need to spend some time running through sit and lie down again.
- Try to predict and prevent things going wrong – make sure your house is fully teen proof.
- Keep a really close eye on your dog. Adolescent dogs are more easily overexcited and scared, so watch out and avoid

anything that might make him jump and undo the great socialisation work you have been doing.

- Remember regulating excitement is much harder for adolescent dogs, so try to ensure your walks are not overstimulating – although fetch is a great game, it is likely to result in a very hyped up teen by the end of it. Instead, while on walks, find places where your dog can spend lots of time exploring, sniffing, practicing training, and hanging out with just one or two friends.
- Games around the home are also a great way to entertain your adolescent dog, things like puzzle toys, Kongs, scent games in the garden, chews, and bones are all great ways to give them something calm to do. If you are using puzzles and kongs, make sure they are not too difficult, as this could become frustrating for your puppy, which is the opposite of the intended effect of these games.

More Resources

Hopefully you have found all the information provided in this guide helpful to better understand your puppy. If you want to learn more, there are lots of great resources out there. There are a few listed below:

- Animal Behaviour Kent – Our YouTube Channel
(<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1OXFnCOjltZ3w4YD3l0whA>)
- Companion Animal Psychology – Blog
(<https://www.companionanimalpsychology.com/>)
- Dog Training by Kikopup – YouTube Channel
(<https://www.youtube.com/user/kikopup>)
- Social, Civil, and Savvy: Training & Socializing Puppies to Become the Best Possible Dogs – Book
(<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/34637691-social-civil-and-savvy>)
- Doggie Language – Book
(<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/50999387-doggie-language>)
- Canine Enrichment for the Real World: Making It a Part of Your Dog's Daily Life – Book
(<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/48588210-canine-enrichment-for-the-real-world>)

