

IS THIS NORMAL?

The Puppy Blues Survival Plan



Nibble & Nap

NIBBLE & NAP

Is This Normal?

The Puppy Blues Survival Plan

The Month-by-Month Puppy Guide That Tells You What to Expect and Exactly What to Do



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INTRODUCTION

You're Not a Bad Dog Mom

It's 2 a.m. Your puppy is crying in the crate. Your hands are covered in tiny scratches. There's a fresh puddle on the rug you cleaned an hour ago. And somewhere between the exhaustion and the guilt, a thought sneaks in that you'd never say out loud:

What did I get myself into?

If that sounds familiar, take a breath. You are not a bad dog mom. You are not ruining your puppy. And you are definitely not the only one who feels this way.

● What the puppy blues really are

The "puppy blues" is the name many owners give to the wave of stress, doubt and sometimes regret that can hit in the first weeks with a new puppy. You expected cuddles and cute photos. Instead you got sharp teeth, broken sleep and a tiny creature who seems to need you every single minute.

It can show up as:

- Feeling overwhelmed by how much attention your puppy needs
- Worrying constantly that you're doing something wrong
- Missing your old routine, your free evenings, your sleep
- Feeling guilty because you don't feel the "instant love" you expected
- Wondering, quietly, if you made a mistake



Is this normal?

Yes. These feelings are common, especially with a first puppy. They don't mean you don't love your dog. They mean you're tired and you're doing something hard. For most people they ease as the puppy grows and a routine settles in. If the low mood feels heavy or doesn't lift, talk to someone you trust or a health professional. Looking after yourself is part of looking after your puppy.

● Why it feels so hard

Most of the stress doesn't come from your puppy. It comes from **not knowing**.

Is this much biting normal? Should he still be having accidents at 14 weeks? Is it okay to let him cry at night? One video says one thing, a friend says the opposite, the forum says both are wrong. Every decision feels like a test you might fail, and every mistake feels permanent.

Here's the truth: most of what your puppy is doing right now is **normal puppy behavior happening at a normal age**. Biting, chewing, accidents, crying, zoomies, "selective hearing" — these are stages, not character flaws. What makes the difference is not being perfect. It's knowing what to expect and having a simple plan for each stage.

That's exactly what this book gives you.

● How this plan works

This is not a book of tricks. It's a **month-by-month plan** that follows your puppy as they grow. Every chapter answers three questions:

- 1 **What's normal right now?** So you can stop worrying about what isn't a problem.
- 2 **What do I do this week?** A short list of simple, realistic actions.
- 3 **What should I avoid?** The common mistakes that make things harder.

Each chapter ends with a checklist. Tick the boxes, move on, and don't try to do everything at once.

The book follows your puppy's age:

- **Part 1 — Survival Mode (weeks 8-10):** the first days home, a daily rhythm, biting, potty training, nights and the crate, and how to look after yourself.
- **Part 2 — Building Foundations (weeks 10-16):** socialization, first skills, short time alone, calm vet visits.
- **Part 3 — The Testing Phase (months 4-6):** teething, leash walking, jumping, and the moment you feel your puppy "forgot everything".
- **Part 4 — Teen Dog Preview (months 7-12):** what changes in adolescence and how to keep your progress.

At the end you'll find a quick "Is This Normal?" table by age and a first-year checklist you can stick on the fridge.

● **Already a few months in?**

Good news: you haven't missed your chance. Start with the chapter that matches your puppy's age today, then skim the earlier chapters for anything you skipped. Puppies keep learning every day, and it's never too late to make things easier for both of you.

● **Three promises before we start**

We can't promise a perfect puppy. No honest book can. But we can promise this:

- **No harsh methods.** Everything here uses calm, kind, reward-based training.
- **No guilt.** You will make mistakes. Everyone does. The plan works anyway.
- **Clear steps.** You'll always know what to focus on this week.

A quick note: this book is a training and lifestyle guide, not veterinary advice. For anything related to your puppy's health, diet, vaccines or medication, always follow your vet. And if your puppy's behavior ever feels dangerous or truly out of the ordinary, the last chapter explains when and how to get professional help.

Ready? Let's turn that little land shark into your best friend — one week at a time.

PART

1

Survival Mode

Weeks 8-10

The first two weeks are the hardest, and also the shortest. Your only goals right now: keep everyone safe, build a simple routine, and get a bit of sleep. Training comes later. Calm comes first.

1 The First 72 Hours

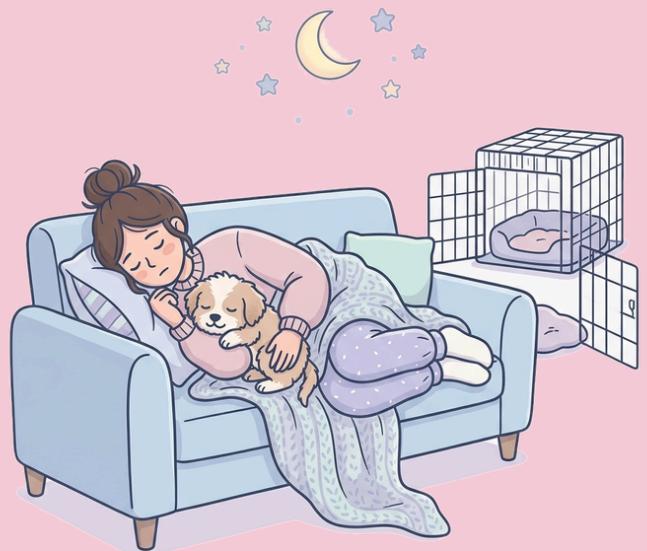
2 Your Daily Rhythm

3 Land Shark 101

4 Potty Training Without Tears

5 Nights and the Crate

6 And What About You?



CHAPTER 1

The First 72 Hours

Your puppy has just left everything they knew: their mother, their littermates, the smells and sounds of their first home. Everything is new and a little scary. The first three days are about one thing: helping your puppy feel safe.

**Is this normal?**

Yes, if your puppy is clingy, cries when you leave the room, sleeps a lot, eats less than expected, or has accidents everywhere. Some puppies are bold from day one, others need a few days to come out of their shell. Both are normal. If your puppy stops eating for more than a day, has diarrhea, vomits or seems lethargic, call your vet.

● Set up a puppy zone before anything else

Your puppy doesn't need the whole house. A big house is overwhelming and full of places to have accidents and chew things. Start small:

- **A puppy zone:** one room or a corner closed with a baby gate or a playpen. Easy-to-clean floor if possible.
- **A bed or crate** in a quiet part of that zone.
- **Water**, always available.
- **Two or three chew toys** of different textures.
- **A potty spot** chosen in advance: the same patch of grass outside, or a pad in a fixed corner if you live in an apartment.

Puppy-proof at your puppy's eye level. Get down on the floor and look: cables, shoes, plants, small objects, anything that could be chewed or swallowed goes up or away.

● Day 1: arrive, explore, rest

- 1 Go straight to the potty spot** when you get home. Wait a few minutes. If they go, praise softly and give a tiny treat.
- 2 Let them explore the puppy zone** at their own pace. No crowd of visitors, no tour of the whole house.

- 3 **Offer a small meal** of the same food they were eating before. Ask the breeder or shelter what and how much. Any food change should be gradual, and your vet can advise.
- 4 **Lots of naps.** When your puppy gets sleepy, guide them to their bed or crate. Puppies need a lot of sleep, and an overtired puppy bites and cries more.

• Days 2 and 3: start the rhythm

- **Same potty spot, same words.** Pick a short cue like "go potty" and use it every time.
- **Short, gentle handling.** Touch paws, ears and mouth for a second, then give a treat. This makes vet visits and grooming easier later.
- **Short absences.** Step out of the room for a few seconds and come back calmly. This is the first, tiny step toward being alone.
- **Meet the family slowly.** Children sit on the floor and let the puppy come to them. No picking up, no chasing.
- **Book the first vet visit** if you haven't already, and bring any papers from the breeder or shelter.

“Calm comes first. Training comes later.”

What to avoid in the first 72 hours

- ✗ **Too many guests and outings.** Everyone wants to meet the puppy. Ask them to wait a week.
- ✗ **Free run of the house.** It leads to accidents and chewed furniture, and sets bad habits early.
- ✗ **Scolding accidents.** Your puppy doesn't understand yet. Just clean up and take them out more often.
- ✗ **Changing food suddenly.** It can upset their stomach.
- ✗ **Comparing your puppy to others.** Every puppy settles at their own speed.

 Your first-72-hours checklist

- ☐ Puppy zone set up and puppy-proofed
- ☐ Bed or crate in a quiet spot
- ☐ Potty spot chosen and cue word decided
- ☐ Same food as before, schedule from the breeder or shelter
- ☐ First vet visit booked
- ☐ Family rules agreed: no chasing, no rough play, gentle handling
- ☐ Visitors postponed to next week

CHAPTER 2

Your Daily Rhythm

If you remember one thing from this book, make it this: **most puppy problems are tiredness problems.** An overtired puppy bites harder, cries more, has more accidents and "forgets" everything. A puppy with a predictable rhythm is calmer, easier to potty train, and easier to live with.

**Is this normal?**

Yes, if your puppy sleeps most of the day and then explodes into "zoomies" for ten minutes. Young puppies need far more sleep than most people expect, often well over half the day. Zoomies are usually a sign of excess energy or overtiredness, not bad behavior.

• The puppy cycle: sleep, potty, play, potty, sleep

Your puppy's day is a loop that repeats again and again:

- 1 **Wake up** → straight to the potty spot.
- 2 **Play and learn** for a short time: a game, a chew, a two-minute training session.
- 3 **Potty again.**
- 4 **Calm down** with a chew or a lick mat.
- 5 **Nap** in the crate or bed.

At 8-10 weeks, the awake part of each cycle is short, often under an hour. When your puppy starts biting everything, getting frantic or ignoring you, it's usually not defiance. It's a sign they needed a nap ten minutes ago.

• A sample day at 8-10 weeks

Use this as a starting point, not a rule. Adjust the times to your family and your puppy.

☾ Sleep

💧 Potty

⚖️ Play & learn

🍲 Meal

7:00

💧 Wake up, potty spot right away

7:15

🍲 Breakfast, then potty

7:30

⚖️ Short play and a tiny training game

8:00

☾ Calm chew, then nap

10:00

⚖️ Wake up, potty, play

11:00

☾ Nap

12:30

🍲 Wake up, potty, lunch, potty

13:15

⚖️ Play, short handling practice

14:00

☾ Nap

16:00

⚖️ Wake up, potty, play, short outing to see the world

17:00

☾ Nap

18:30

🍲 Wake up, potty, dinner, potty

19:15

⚖️ Family time, calm play, chew

20:30

☾ Nap or quiet time

22:30

☾ Last potty, then bed in the crate

Night

💧 One or two quick, boring potty trips if needed

Meal times and portions depend on your puppy's food and size: follow the food label and your vet.

• How to tell when your puppy needs a nap

Watch for these signs:

- Biting gets harder and faster

- Running in circles, barking at you, "zoomies"
- Ignoring cues they knew five minutes ago
- Yawning, rubbing their face, flopping down

When you see them, don't try to play it out. Take your puppy to potty, give a chew, and guide them to the crate or bed for a nap.

● **Working from home or out all day?**

- **Working from home:** follow the same cycle, but your puppy naps in the crate or playpen while you work. You don't need to entertain them all day. In fact, you shouldn't.
- **Out for the day:** young puppies can't hold their bladder for long. Plan for someone, a family member, neighbor or dog walker, to come for potty breaks and a short play. Chapter 9 explains how to build time alone gradually.

"Most puppy problems are tiredness problems."

What to avoid

- ✗ **Playing until the puppy is "tired".** More play usually means an overtired, wilder puppy.
- ✗ **Long walks or intense exercise.** Short, gentle activity is enough at this age.
- ✗ **No schedule at all.** A random day makes potty training and sleep much harder.
- ✗ **Waking a sleeping puppy to play or show them to friends.** Sleep is part of their development.

 Your daily rhythm checklist

- ☐ Daily schedule written down and stuck on the fridge
- ☐ Potty break after every wake-up, meal and play session
- ☐ Naps in the crate or bed several times a day
- ☐ Chews or lick mats ready for calm-down time
- ☐ Signs of overtiredness known by the whole family
- ☐ Plan for potty breaks if no one is home

CHAPTER 3

Land Shark 101

Puppy biting is the number one reason new owners feel at the end of their rope. Your hands, your sleeves, your ankles, the kids' toes: nothing is safe. The good news is that biting is normal, it has a purpose, and it gets better with the right approach.



Is this normal?

Yes. Puppies explore the world with their mouths, play-fight with their littermates, and bite more when they're tired or overexcited. Puppy teeth are needle-sharp, so even gentle play can hurt or scratch. What's *not* typical: stiff body, freezing, growling while guarding food or toys, or biting that seems fearful or frozen rather than playful. If you see that, read Chapter 17 and talk to a professional.

Why your puppy bites

- **Play:** biting is how puppies play with other puppies.
- **Exploring:** the mouth is how they learn what things are.
- **Teething:** their gums can be sore, especially from around 3-4 months.
- **Overtiredness:** the most common trigger of all (see Chapter 2).
- **Attention:** if biting makes you squeal, move or play, it works.

In the litter, puppies learn that biting too hard ends the game. Your job is to keep teaching that lesson, gently and consistently.

What to do this week

- 1 **Always have a toy in your hand.** When your puppy goes for your hands, offer a tug toy or chew instead. Praise when they bite the toy.

- 2 Make hands boring.** If teeth touch skin, calmly stop moving, say a short word like "oops", and turn away or remove your hand for a few seconds. Then offer the toy again.
- 3 End the game if it keeps happening.** Calmly step over the baby gate or put the puppy in their pen with a chew for a minute or two. No yelling, no drama.
- 4 Check the clock.** If the biting is getting wilder, it's probably nap time. Potty, chew, crate.
- 5 Give legal things to chew.** Several textures: soft rubber, rope, frozen chew toys for sore gums.
- 6 Reward calm.** When your puppy lies down quietly or licks instead of biting, say "good" and give a treat.

● Biting and children

Children are the favorite target because they move fast, squeal and wave their hands, which looks like a game to a puppy.

- Children play with the puppy only with a toy between them, and only with an adult present.
- Teach kids to "be a tree": stand still, arms folded, look away if the puppy gets mouthy.
- No running games or chasing until biting is under control.
- Short sessions. Puppies and kids both get overexcited fast.

"Most biting storms are just overtired puppies."

What to avoid

- ✗ **Hitting, holding the mouth shut, or "alpha rolls".** These can make a puppy fearful and bite more, not less.
- ✗ **Rough play with hands.** It teaches that hands are toys.
- ✗ **Pulling your hand away fast.** Quick movement can turn it into a chasing game. Freeze first, then move away calmly.
- ✗ **Long sessions without naps.** Most biting storms are overtired puppies.

● When will it stop?

Most puppies bite much less once their adult teeth are in and they've learned that hands mean "game over". That usually takes months, not days, but you should see steady improvement week by week if you stay consistent. The bonus guide *Land Shark Rescue* goes deeper into specific situations.

✓ Your biting checklist

- ☐ Toys within reach in every room
- ☐ The whole family uses the same word and the same reaction
- ☐ Pen or gate ready for calm time-outs
- ☐ Naps on schedule to avoid overtired biting
- ☐ Chews of different textures, including a cold one for teething
- ☐ Rules for kids explained and practiced

CHAPTER 4

Potty Training Without Tears

Accidents are frustrating, smelly and endless, or at least they feel endless. But potty training is mostly a numbers game: the more often your puppy goes in the right place and gets rewarded, the faster the habit forms.



Is this normal?

Yes, if your 8-12-week-old puppy has several accidents a day, pees right after coming inside, or seems to "get it" one day and forget the next. Young puppies have small bladders and little control. Talk to your vet if your puppy pees very often in small amounts, strains, has blood in the urine, or has diarrhea for more than a day: these can be health issues, not training issues.

• The five moments to take your puppy out

Take your puppy to the potty spot:

- 1 **Right after waking up**, from naps and in the morning.
- 2 **Shortly after eating or drinking.**
- 3 **During and after play** — excitement fills bladders fast.
- 4 **Before going in the crate** and before bed.
- 5 **Every 1-2 hours** in between at the start, even if nothing "seems" to be happening.

A rough guide some trainers use: a puppy can hold it for about as many hours as their age in months, plus one, and less when awake and active. Use it only to plan, not as a rule.

• How to do a perfect potty trip

- 1 **Carry or leash your puppy** straight to the same spot. No stopping to play on the way.
- 2 **Stand still and be boring.** Say your cue once ("go potty"), then wait quietly for up to 3-5 minutes.
- 3 **The moment they finish,** praise softly and give a tiny treat right there, within a second or two. Not when you're back inside.
- 4 **Then playtime** as a bonus: a little sniff or a game.
- 5 **Nothing happened?** Back inside, puppy in the crate or under close supervision for 10-15 minutes, then try again.

• Supervision: the secret nobody likes

Most accidents happen when no one is watching. When your puppy is loose in the house:

- Keep them in the same room as you, gates closed.
- Watch for signs: sniffing the floor, circling, walking away suddenly.
- Can't watch? Puppy goes in the crate or pen with a chew.

• When accidents happen

- **Caught in the act?** Calmly interrupt (a soft "oops") and take them outside to finish. Praise if they do.
- **Found it later?** Say nothing. Clean it up. Your puppy can't connect a past accident with your reaction.
- **Clean with an enzyme cleaner** made for pet messes. Normal cleaners can leave a smell that brings them back to the same spot.
- **Write it down.** Note time and situation. Patterns tell you when to add extra trips.

• Apartment or pads?

Pads can help if you live high up or can't get outside quickly. Keep the pad in one fixed spot and treat it exactly like the outdoor spot: cue, reward, praise. If your goal is outside only, move gradually to outdoor trips as your puppy gets older and can hold it longer.

“Every trip to the right spot builds the right habit.”

What to avoid

- ✗ **Punishing accidents.** Rubbing noses in it or yelling teaches your puppy to hide when they need to go, which makes training harder.
- ✗ **Rewarding late.** The treat must come right after they finish, outside.
- ✗ **Too much freedom too soon.** Every unsupervised room is a new bathroom.
- ✗ **Cleaning with ammonia-based products.** The smell can attract them back.

✓ Your potty checklist

- ☐ One potty spot and one cue word
- ☐ Trips after sleep, food, play, and every 1-2 hours
- ☐ Tiny treats ready by the door
- ☐ Enzyme cleaner at home
- ☐ Accident log for the first two weeks
- ☐ Crate or pen when you can't supervise

CHAPTER 5

Nights and the Crate

Few things wear you down like broken sleep. The crying, the whining, the 3 a.m. potty trips. The aim of this chapter is simple: help your puppy feel safe at night, so you can both sleep longer, a little more each week.



Is this normal?

Yes, if your puppy cries the first nights, wakes once or twice to pee, or settles only when they can see or hear you. They've never slept alone before. Most puppies cry less within days to a couple of weeks with a consistent routine. Crying that goes on for a long time every time you leave, with drooling, panting or trying to escape, may be stronger anxiety: go slowly and see Chapter 9.

• Why a crate (and how to make it a happy place)

Used well, a crate is your puppy's bedroom: a small, cozy, safe den. It helps with potty training, because most puppies avoid soiling where they sleep, and keeps them safe when you can't watch them.

- **Right size:** room to stand, turn around and lie stretched out. Not much more, or one end becomes the bathroom. Many crates come with a divider for growing puppies.
- **Make it cozy:** a soft bed or blanket, and cover part of it with a light blanket so it feels like a den.
- **Make it great:** feed meals in the crate, drop treats in when your puppy isn't looking, give special chews only there.
- **Never as punishment.** The crate must always mean good things.

• Crate practice during the day

Nights get easier when the crate is already familiar:

- 1 Toss a treat in, let your puppy go in and come out freely. Repeat.
- 2 Give a meal or a chew inside with the door open.
- 3 Close the door for a few seconds while they eat or chew, then open it.
- 4 Gradually increase the time, staying in the room at first.
- 5 Use the crate for daytime naps (Chapter 2).

• The bedtime routine

- **Calm last hour:** gentle play earlier in the evening, then quiet time. No wild games right before bed.
- **Water:** follow your vet's advice; many owners lift the bowl a little while before bedtime.
- **Last potty trip** just before bed.
- **Crate near your bed** for the first weeks. Being able to hear and smell you is very reassuring. You can move it gradually later.
- **A chew or a snuggle toy** in the crate. Some puppies like a t-shirt that smells like you.

• When your puppy cries at night

First ask: does my puppy need to pee?

- **If it's been a while,** assume yes. Take them out quietly, no talking, no play, lights low. Potty, praise softly, straight back to the crate.
- **If they just went,** wait a few moments. Many puppies settle on their own. A calm hand near the crate or a soft "shh" can help in the first nights.
- **Keep night trips boring.** Night is for sleeping, not for parties.

As your puppy grows, the gap between night trips gets longer. Some owners set an alarm before the usual wake-up time, then push it later by small steps over the weeks.

“Night is for sleeping, not for parties.”

What to avoid

- ✗ **Shutting the puppy far away** on the first night. Distance makes crying worse.
- ✗ **Making night trips exciting.** Play and attention teach them that waking up is fun.
- ✗ **Long crate stretches during the day** without breaks, play and potty.
- ✗ **Forcing a scared puppy in.** Go back to shorter, happier steps.

✓ Your nights checklist

- ☐ Crate the right size, cozy and partly covered
- ☐ Meals and special chews in the crate
- ☐ Daytime crate practice, a few minutes at a time
- ☐ Calm evening and last potty trip before bed
- ☐ Crate near your bed for the first weeks
- ☐ Night trips quiet, dark and boring

CHAPTER 6

And What About You?

Every puppy book talks about the puppy. Almost none talk about the person holding the leash at 3 a.m. But your energy, patience and mood shape every training session. Looking after yourself is not selfish. It's part of the plan.



Is this normal?

Yes, if you feel tired, irritable, tearful or even resentful toward your puppy some days. It's also normal to miss your old life, or to feel like everyone else's puppy is easier. These feelings usually fade as sleep improves and the routine settles. If you feel persistently low, anxious or hopeless, please reach out to someone you trust or a health professional. You deserve support too.

● Lower the bar (seriously)

You don't need a perfectly trained puppy by week 10. For now, "success" looks like this:

- Your puppy is safe and healthy.
- You have a routine that mostly works.
- Biting and accidents are slowly, not magically, getting better.
- You got some sleep.

That's it. Everything else can wait.

● Share the load

If you live with a partner, family or roommates, the puppy is a team project.

- **Split the night shifts.** Alternate nights or split the night in two.
- **Assign jobs:** one person handles breakfast and the morning potty, another the evening walk.

- **Agree on the same rules and words.** Puppies learn faster when everyone does the same thing. Write them on the fridge, next to the schedule.
- **Ask for help.** A friend or family member who can puppy-sit for an hour is gold. So is a trusted dog walker or sitter.

● Build small breaks into your day

Your puppy naps a lot. Use some of those naps for yourself, not only for chores.

- **A 20-minute rule:** at least one nap a day, you do something just for you.
- **The crate is your friend.** A puppy safe in the crate with a chew means you can shower, eat, or take a breath.
- **Get outside.** A short walk on your own clears your head.

● Stop the comparison spiral

Social media shows perfect puppies posing in perfect homes. It doesn't show the chewed shoes, the puddles or the crying. Every puppy is different: breed, age, background and personality all play a part. Compare your puppy only with how they were last week.

Keep a tiny progress note on your phone: "First night with only one wake-up", "Sat for a treat", "No accidents today". On hard days, read it.

● When it gets better

For most owners, things start to feel lighter as the puppy sleeps longer at night, has fewer accidents and bites less. That often happens over the first few months, not the first few days. Keep following the plan, one week at a time, and you'll look back on these weeks with a smile (and maybe a few scars).

"You're doing better than you think."

What to avoid

- ✗ **Doing everything alone** when there are people who can help.
- ✗ **Trying every method at once.** Pick this plan, stick to it, and give it time.
- ✗ **Being harsh with yourself.** A bad day doesn't undo your progress, for you or your puppy.

 Your self-care checklist

- ☐ Night shifts and daily jobs shared
- ☐ Same rules and words for the whole family
- ☐ At least one break a day just for you
- ☐ Progress note started on your phone
- ☐ Someone you can call for help or a puppy-sit
- ☐ A reminder: you're doing better than you think

PART

2

Building Foundations

Weeks 10-16

The chaos is starting to settle. Now comes one of the most important windows in your dog's whole life. What your puppy experiences in these weeks shapes how confident, calm and friendly they'll be as an adult. You don't need hours a day: a few short, happy minutes are enough.

7 The Socialization Window

8 First Skills That Make Life Easier

9 Learning to Be Alone

10 Calm Vet Visits and Grooming



CHAPTER 7

The Socialization Window

Socialization doesn't mean meeting as many dogs and people as possible. It means helping your puppy discover that the world, with its noises, people, surfaces and surprises, is safe and even fun.



Is this normal?

Yes, if your puppy is curious one moment and hides behind your legs the next. Short bursts of caution are normal. Pay attention if your puppy often trembles, freezes, can't take treats, or panics in new places: slow down and make experiences smaller and easier.

● Why now?

Puppies have a sensitive period, roughly in their first few months, when new things are easier to accept. Experiences in this window leave a strong mark. Later, the same new things can feel scarier. That's why this part of the plan matters so much, even before your puppy has finished all their vaccines.

About vaccines: talk to your vet about how to socialize safely before your puppy is fully protected. Many owners carry the puppy in their arms or in a stroller, choose clean places away from unknown dogs, and invite healthy, vaccinated adult dogs they know.

● The golden rule: quality, not quantity

- **Short:** a few minutes is enough.
- **From a distance:** let your puppy watch first, then get closer only if they're relaxed.
- **With treats:** something new appears → a treat appears.
- **Their choice:** never force your puppy to approach. Let them observe, sniff and retreat.
- **End on a good note:** leave before your puppy gets tired or worried.

● Your socialization list

Aim for a few new things each week. Tick them off as you go.

People

- ☐ Men, women, children (calm and supervised)
- ☐ People with hats, sunglasses, hoods, umbrellas
- ☐ People with beards, uniforms, backpacks
- ☐ People with canes, wheelchairs, strollers

Sounds (start quiet, play them low on a speaker while your puppy eats)

- ☐ Vacuum cleaner, hair dryer, washing machine
- ☐ Doorbell, knocking, phone ringing
- ☐ Traffic, sirens, thunder, fireworks recordings
- ☐ Babies crying, kids playing

Places and surfaces

- ☐ Car rides (short and pleasant)
- ☐ Grass, gravel, sand, wet surfaces, metal grates, stairs
- ☐ A quiet café terrace, a parking lot, a pet-friendly store

Handling and objects

- ☐ Brushing, collar and harness on and off
- ☐ Touching paws, ears, mouth, tail
- ☐ Bikes, skateboards, shopping carts from a distance

Other animals

- ☐ Calm, healthy, vaccinated adult dogs you know
- ☐ Cats, if they're part of your life (with an escape route for the cat)

“Quality, not quantity.”

What to avoid

- ✗ **Dog parks with unknown dogs.** Too much, too fast, and health risks for a young puppy.
- ✗ **Flooding:** forcing a scared puppy to face something "so they get used to it". It often makes fear worse.
- ✗ **Letting everyone grab and hold the puppy.** Ask people to wait for the puppy to come to them.
- ✗ **Waiting too long.** The window doesn't stay open forever. Start small, but start now.

✓ Your socialization checklist

- ☐ Vet consulted about safe socialization
- ☐ Two or three new experiences a week, short and happy
- ☐ Treats in your pocket on every outing
- ☐ List above printed and ticked as you go
- ☐ Signs of fear known, and a plan to back off

CHAPTER 8

First Skills That Make Life Easier

You don't need a show dog. You need a puppy who looks at you when you say their name, comes when called, sits instead of jumping, and drops the sock. These five skills make everyday life calmer, and they're easy to teach in two-minute sessions.

**Is this normal?**

Yes, if your puppy learns something quickly in the kitchen and seems to have no idea what it means in the yard. Puppies don't generalize well: each new place is like starting over.

Practice in many places, starting easy.

● How to train a puppy (the short version)

- **Tiny sessions:** 1-3 minutes, a few times a day. Stop while your puppy still wants more.
- **Tiny treats:** pea-sized and soft. You can also use part of their daily food.
- **A marker word:** say "yes!" the moment your puppy does the right thing, then give the treat. It tells them exactly what earned the reward.
- **Quiet place first,** then add distractions slowly.
- **One person teaches, then everyone practices** with the same words.

● Skill 1: Their name means "look at me"

- 1 Say your puppy's name once in a happy voice.
- 2 The moment they look at you, "yes!" and treat.
- 3 Repeat 5 times, a few times a day, in different rooms.

Never use the name to scold. It should always predict good things.

● Skill 2: Sit

- 1 Hold a treat at your puppy's nose and move it slowly up and back over their head.
- 2 As the head goes up, the bottom usually goes down. "Yes!" and treat.
- 3 After several repetitions, start saying "sit" just before you move your hand.

- 4 Use sit for everyday things: before meals, before the door opens, to say hello.

• Skill 3: Come (recall)

Recall can save your dog's life, so make it the best game in the world.

- 1 Indoors, with a family member: take turns calling your puppy's name and "come!" in a happy voice.
- 2 When they arrive, "yes!", a great treat and a little fuss.
- 3 Run backwards a few steps as you call: puppies love to chase.
- 4 Outdoors, practice only in safe, fenced areas or on a long line.

Never call your puppy to do something they dislike (like ending play or a bath). Go and get them instead.

• Skill 4: Leave it

- 1 Close a treat in your fist and let your puppy sniff, lick and nibble.
- 2 The moment they back off, even for a second, "yes!" and give a different treat from your other hand.
- 3 When they back off reliably, add the words "leave it" just before.
- 4 Progress slowly: treat on an open palm, then on the floor under your foot.

• Skill 5: Happy handling

Practicing calm handling now makes brushing, nail trims and vet visits much easier.

- Touch an ear → treat. Touch a paw → treat. Lift the lip → treat.
- Keep it very short and stop if your puppy wriggles a lot. Next time, do less.

“A mistake just means the step was too hard. Go back one step.”

What to avoid

- ✗ **Repeating the cue five times.** Say it once. If it doesn't work, make it easier.
- ✗ **Long sessions.** A bored or tired puppy learns to ignore you.
- ✗ **Punishing mistakes.** Mistakes mean the step was too hard. Go back a step.
- ✗ **Calling them for bad news.** It ruins the recall.

✓ Your first-skills checklist

- ☐ Marker word chosen ("yes!") and used by everyone
- ☐ Two or three 2-minute sessions a day
- ☐ Name, sit and come practiced in three different places
- ☐ Leave it started with the closed fist
- ☐ Handling practiced with treats every day
- ☐ Long line ready for outdoor recall practice

CHAPTER 9

Learning to Be Alone

At some point you'll need to go to work, run errands or simply leave the house without a soundtrack of howling. Teaching your puppy that being alone is safe and boring is one of the kindest things you can do for them. And it's much easier to teach now than to fix later.



Is this normal?

Yes, if your puppy whines for a minute or two when you leave and then settles. Puppies are social animals and it takes time to learn that you always come back. Watch for signs of real panic: non-stop crying or howling, heavy drooling or panting, frantic scratching at doors, or self-injury trying to escape. If you see these, go back to much shorter absences and consider a professional. The bonus *Home Alone Starter* has a step-by-step plan.

• Start tiny and build up

Think of alone time as a skill, like sit. You start with seconds, not hours.

- 1 **While you're home:** puppy in the pen or crate with a chew, you in the same room doing something boring. Then in the next room for a few seconds.
- 2 **Step out of sight** for 5-10 seconds. Come back calmly before your puppy fusses.
- 3 **Increase slowly:** 30 seconds, 1 minute, 3 minutes, 5 minutes. Mix short and longer absences so leaving isn't always a big event.
- 4 **Practice the real routine:** shoes, keys, jacket, door, back in a minute.
- 5 **Short trips outside:** check the mailbox, take out the trash, then a quick walk around the block.

If your puppy gets upset at any step, go back to the last step that was easy and stay there a few days.

● **Make leaving and returning boring**

- **No big goodbyes.** A calm "see you later" is enough.
- **No big hellos.** When you come back, wait until your puppy is calm, then say hello quietly. Take them to potty.
- **Leave with something good:** a stuffed chew or lick mat given only when you leave. It turns your departure into a small treat.

● **Set up a safe alone-time space**

- **Pen or puppy-proofed room** rather than the whole house.
- **Water, bed, chew toys,** nothing dangerous within reach.
- **Background noise** like soft radio or white noise can help some puppies.
- **Tired but not overtired:** a little play and a potty break before you go, then a calm-down chew.

● **How long can a puppy be alone?**

It depends on age, bladder control and how well alone time has been practiced. Young puppies can't hold their bladder for long, so for longer absences plan for someone to come by for a potty break and a little play. Build up time gradually over weeks, and ask your vet or a trainer if you're unsure about your puppy's limits.

“Leaving should be boring. Coming back, too.”

What to avoid

- ✗ **Going from zero to a full workday** in one step.
- ✗ **Punishing messes or chewing** you find when you come home. Your puppy can't connect it to what happened earlier.
- ✗ **Always being with your puppy** for the first weeks, then suddenly disappearing.
- ✗ **Coming back the moment they cry** at the start of a session. Wait for a second of quiet, then return.

✓ Your alone-time checklist

- ☐ Daily alone-time practice, starting with seconds
- ☐ Calm departures and calm returns
- ☐ Special chew given only when you leave
- ☐ Safe alone-time space set up
- ☐ Help organized for longer absences
- ☐ Signs of real panic known by the whole family

CHAPTER 10

Calm Vet Visits and Grooming

Your puppy will visit the vet many times in their life and be brushed, bathed and handled thousands of times. If those moments are scary now, they can become a battle later. A few minutes of practice each week can make them easy, or even enjoyable.

This chapter is about **how your puppy feels** during vet visits and grooming. For anything about health, vaccines, parasites, diet or medication, always follow your vet.



Is this normal?

Yes, if your puppy is wiggly and unsure on the vet's table or squirms during brushing. That's normal for a young dog. Watch for growling, snapping, or freezing with a stiff body during handling: it means your puppy is really uncomfortable. Slow down, go back to easier steps, and mention it to your vet.

● Happy vet visits

- **Social visits:** ask your clinic if you can pop in just to say hello, get a treat from the staff, step on the scale and leave.
- **Bring the best treats** you have, and a familiar mat or towel.
- **Wait in the car** if the waiting room is busy and noisy, and ask the staff to call you.
- **Practice at home:** gently lift your puppy onto a table or the couch, touch ears, paws and mouth, look at teeth, and reward. Pretend to listen to their chest with a toilet-paper roll. It sounds silly, but it works.
- **Stay calm yourself.** Puppies read your mood.

● Grooming without the struggle

Brushing

- 1 Show the brush, treat. Touch the brush to the body for one second, treat.

- 2 One or two strokes, treat. Build up slowly.
- 3 Use a lick mat with something tasty stuck to it to keep your puppy busy (ask your vet what's safe).

Nails

- 1 Touch paws every day with a treat.
- 2 Show the clippers or grinder, treat. Touch them to a nail without cutting, treat.
- 3 Trim just one nail tip, then stop for the day. Ask your vet or groomer to show you how much to cut safely.

Bath

- Start with an empty tub and treats, then a little lukewarm water on the paws.
- Use a non-slip mat and a gentle, puppy-safe product.
- Keep it short and dry with a towel your puppy already knows.

• Collar, harness and leash

- Let your puppy sniff the harness, treat. Slip it on for a few seconds, treat, take it off.
- Wear it for short periods indoors during play or meals.
- Clip the leash on at home and let it trail under supervision, so it's no big deal outside.

What to avoid

- ✗ **Holding your puppy down** to "get it over with". It often makes the next time harder.
- ✗ **Doing everything in one session:** nails, bath, brushing, ears. Spread it out.
- ✗ **Skipping practice** until something is urgent.
- ✗ **Changing products or routines** suggested by your vet without asking.

 Your vet and grooming checklist

- ☐ Vet schedule followed (vaccines, checkups, parasite prevention as advised)
- ☐ One or two "happy visits" to the clinic
- ☐ Handling practice at home every day
- ☐ Brushing and paw touching with treats, a few minutes a week
- ☐ One-nail-at-a-time trimming started (with guidance)
- ☐ Harness and leash introduced indoors

PART

3

The Testing Phase

Months 4-6

Your puppy is bigger, braver and more independent. They're also teething, curious about everything, and suddenly selective about when they listen. Many owners feel like they've gone backwards. You haven't. This is a normal phase, and the habits you build now carry into adulthood.

11 Teething and Chewing

12 Leash Walking Without the Tug of War

13 Jumping and Greeting Guests

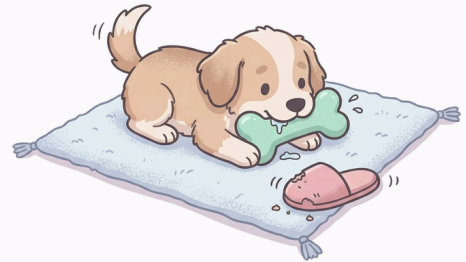
14 "He Forgot Everything!"



CHAPTER 11

Teething and Chewing

Shoes, chair legs, cables, remote controls, the corner of the rug. If it fits in the mouth, it's a target. Chewing is a real need for puppies, especially while their adult teeth are coming in. You can't stop it, but you can choose *what* gets chewed.



Is this normal?

Yes, if your puppy chews more than ever, drools a bit, has slightly red gums, or leaves tiny baby teeth on the floor. Puppies usually lose their baby teeth and grow adult teeth during these months. Call your vet if you see a broken tooth, a baby tooth that stays when the adult one is already there, bleeding that doesn't stop, or if your puppy stops eating or may have swallowed something.

Why chewing peaks now

- **Teething:** chewing relieves sore gums.
- **Exploring:** your puppy is discovering the world, and the mouth is their main tool.
- **Boredom or energy:** a puppy with nothing to do will find something to do.
- **Stress:** some puppies chew more when left alone or when something changes.

What to do this month

- 1 **Chew toy rotation:** offer several types (rubber, rope, edible chews approved by your vet) and rotate them every few days so they stay interesting.
- 2 **Cold relief:** a damp, frozen washcloth or a frozen rubber toy can soothe sore gums. Supervise so nothing gets swallowed.

- 3 Trade, don't chase.** If your puppy grabs something forbidden, offer a tasty treat or a better toy in exchange. Chasing turns it into a fun game.
- 4 Teach "drop it".** Show a treat, wait for the object to drop, "yes!", treat, then give the object back if it's a toy. Your puppy learns that giving things up pays off.
- 5 Puppy-proof again.** Your puppy can reach higher now. Check tables, shelves and cables.
- 6 Use deterrents only as a backup.** Bitter sprays can help on furniture, but they don't replace good chew options.

● Chewing when you're not home

- Keep your puppy in a safe pen or room with approved chews (see Chapter 9).
- Give a stuffed chew toy as you leave, so chewing goes into the right object.
- Make sure your puppy has had a potty break, some play and a calm-down before you go.

"You can't stop the chewing. You can choose what gets chewed."

What to avoid

- ✗ **Punishing after the fact.** Your puppy can't link it to the chewed shoe from an hour ago.
- ✗ **Giving old shoes or socks as toys.** Your puppy can't tell old from new.
- ✗ **Hard bones or objects that may break teeth.** Ask your vet which chews are safe for your puppy.
- ✗ **Leaving your puppy unsupervised** with toys that can be torn apart and swallowed.

 Your teething checklist

- ☐ At least four types of approved chews, rotated weekly
- ☐ Frozen washcloth or frozen toy ready for sore days
- ☐ "Drop it" practiced with trades every day
- ☐ House puppy-proofed again at the new height
- ☐ Stuffed chew ready for departures
- ☐ Vet check if anything about the teeth looks unusual

CHAPTER 12

Leash Walking Without the Tug of War

Your puppy is getting stronger, and every walk feels like waterskiing. Pulling is natural: the world is exciting, and pulling often works because it gets them where they want to go. The goal is to teach that a loose leash is what makes the walk go forward.



Is this normal?

Yes, if your puppy pulls, zigzags, stops to sniff everything, or sits down and refuses to move. Young dogs are easily distracted and walk at a different pace than we do. Contact your vet if your puppy seems to tire unusually fast, limps, or coughs when wearing a collar.

● Gear that helps

- **A well-fitted harness**, ideally with a front clip, is gentler than pulling on a collar and gives you more control.
- **A standard leash** about 4-6 feet long (around 1.2-1.8 m). Avoid retractable leashes while learning: they reward pulling.
- **A treat pouch** so rewards are always ready.

● Start at home

- 1 **Find the "sweet spot"** next to your leg. Every time your puppy is there, "yes!" and treat at your leg.
- 2 **Walk a few steps** in the hallway or garden. Reward often for staying close.
- 3 **Change direction** and reward when your puppy follows you.
- 4 **Add a cue** like "let's go" when you start walking.

● On the street: be a tree

- 1 **The moment the leash gets tight, stop.** Stand still like a tree.

- 2 **Wait** until your puppy turns back toward you or the leash loosens.
- 3 **"Yes!" and walk on.** A loose leash means we move. A tight leash means we stop.
- 4 **Turn around** if your puppy keeps pulling toward something. Walk the other way a few steps, reward when they follow.
- 5 **Reward often** at first: every few steps of a loose leash earns a treat.

It will be slow at first. You may only cover a short distance. That's fine: the walk is training, not exercise.

● **Let them sniff**

Sniffing is how dogs read the world, and it's calming and tiring in a good way. Teach a cue like "go sniff" that gives permission to explore, then "let's go" to move on. A walk with sniff breaks is a happier walk.

"Loose leash, we go. Tight leash, we stop."

What to avoid

- ✗ **Yanking or jerking the leash.** It can hurt and makes walks stressful.
- ✗ **Following when your puppy pulls.** Every time pulling works, it gets stronger.
- ✗ **Long, tiring walks.** Short walks with lots of sniffing are better at this age. Ask your vet about exercise for your puppy's breed and size.
- ✗ **Training only on busy streets.** Start somewhere quiet.

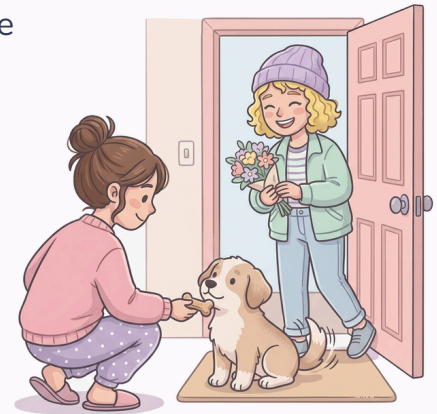
✓ **Your leash checklist**

- ☐ Harness fitted and comfortable
- ☐ Standard leash, no retractable for now
- ☐ Treat pouch on every walk
- ☐ Sweet spot practiced at home
- ☐ "Be a tree" rule used by everyone who walks the puppy
- ☐ Sniff breaks part of every walk

CHAPTER 13

Jumping and Greeting Guests

A puppy jumping up is cute at 10 pounds. It's much less cute when they're bigger, muddy, and landing on a child or an elderly relative. Puppies jump because they want to reach faces, and because it usually gets attention. The fix is to teach a better way to say hello.



Is this normal?

Yes, if your puppy jumps on you when you come home, on guests at the door, or on people in the street. It's a friendly, excited behavior. It needs teaching, not punishment.

• Choose the new greeting: four paws on the floor

Decide as a family: attention only happens when all four paws are on the floor, or when your puppy sits.

- 1 **When your puppy jumps:** stand still, fold your arms, look away. No words, no pushing.
- 2 **The moment four paws touch the floor:** "yes!", calm praise, and a treat delivered low, near the floor.
- 3 **If they jump again:** turn away again. Repeat.
- 4 **Ask for a sit** before saying hello once your puppy knows the cue.

Consistency is everything. If one person lets the puppy jump and another doesn't, the puppy keeps trying.

• Guests at the door

The doorbell is a big trigger, so plan ahead.

- **Before guests arrive:** a short play and potty break, so your puppy isn't bursting with energy.

- **Use a leash or a gate** when guests come in, so your puppy can't practice jumping.
- **Toss treats on the floor** while the guest enters: your puppy's nose goes down instead of up.
- **Guests say hello only when four paws are down.** Give them a treat to drop on the floor.
- **Practice with friends:** ring the bell, come in, go out, repeat, with treats for calm behavior.

● On walks

- If someone wants to say hi, ask them to wait until your puppy sits or stands calmly.
- If your puppy is too excited, politely say "not today" and keep walking. Your puppy's training comes first.

"Four paws on the floor means hello."

What to avoid

- ✗ **Pushing, kneeling or stepping on toes.** It can hurt and can look like a game.
- ✗ **Shouting "no!" and touching** the puppy. Even negative attention is attention.
- ✗ **Mixed messages:** letting the puppy jump when you're in old clothes but not in work clothes.
- ✗ **Over-excited arrivals.** If you come home loud and excited, your puppy will be too.

✓ Your greeting checklist

- ☐ Family rule: attention only for four paws on the floor
- ☐ Treats near the front door
- ☐ Leash or gate ready for guests
- ☐ Guests briefed on the rule
- ☐ Doorbell practice with friends
- ☐ Calm hellos when you come home

CHAPTER 14

"He Forgot Everything!"

You spent weeks teaching sit, come and potty outside. And now, around four to six months, your puppy acts like they've never heard any of it. Accidents come back. Recall disappears. You call their name and get a blank stare. It's one of the most discouraging moments for new owners, and one of the most common.



Is this normal?

Yes. Regression in this phase is very common. Your puppy is growing fast, getting more confident and more curious, and the world has become more interesting than you. Skills learned in the kitchen don't automatically work at the park. If accidents suddenly increase a lot, or your puppy seems unwell, check with your vet first: sometimes a "training problem" is a health problem.

• Why it happens

- **Bigger, braver puppy:** more independence means more testing.
- **New distractions:** smells, dogs, people, squirrels. Your treats have competition.
- **Skills not generalized:** a cue practiced only at home isn't really learned yet.
- **Inconsistency:** different family members using different rules or words.
- **Too much freedom too soon:** more space in the house can bring back accidents.

• The reset plan

When things fall apart, don't start from zero. Go back a step and rebuild.

- 1 **Back to basics for one week.** Short sessions, easy places, lots of rewards.
- 2 **Raise the value of rewards.** Use better treats outdoors, where competition is high.
- 3 **Practice in new places,** starting with quiet ones: garden, quiet street, empty parking lot, then busier spots.
- 4 **Bring back structure:** more supervision, back to the pen or gates if accidents return, more frequent potty trips.

- 5 **Family meeting:** same rules, same words, same rewards for everyone.
- 6 **Use a long line** for recall practice outside. Never let your puppy learn that ignoring you is an option.

• Celebrate small wins

Progress in this phase isn't a straight line. It's a zigzag going up. Look back at your progress note from Chapter 6: compare your puppy to last month, not to yesterday. A sit at the park with a dog nearby is a big win.

“Progress is a zigzag going up.”

What to avoid

- ✗ **Deciding your puppy is "stubborn" or "dumb".** They're a normal teenager-in-training.
- ✗ **Getting louder or angrier.** It makes you less interesting, not more.
- ✗ **Repeating cues over and over.** Make it easier instead.
- ✗ **Giving up on the routine** that worked before. This is exactly when you need it.

✓ Your reset checklist

- ☐ One week of back-to-basics sessions
- ☐ High-value treats for outdoor training
- ☐ Three new practice places, from quiet to busier
- ☐ Supervision and potty routine tightened again if needed
- ☐ Family rules reviewed together
- ☐ Long line for recall practice outside

PART

4

Teen Dog Preview

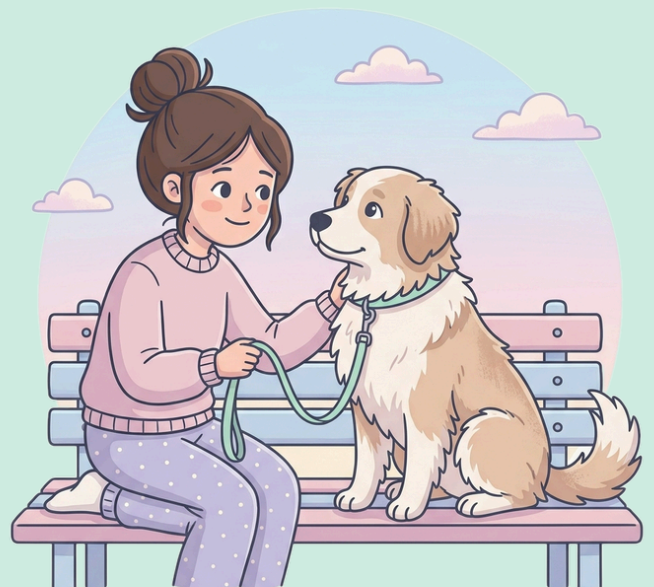
Months 7-12

The puppy stage is ending, and the teenage stage is starting. Your dog may look almost grown up, but their brain is still developing. This part prepares you for what's coming, so it doesn't catch you by surprise.

15 Meet Your Teenage Dog

16 Your Maintenance Plan

17 When to Call a Professional



CHAPTER 15

Meet Your Teenage Dog

Adolescence in dogs often starts somewhere around six months and can last well past the first birthday, sometimes into the second year for larger breeds. Like human teenagers, adolescent dogs can be wonderful one day and exhausting the next.



Is this normal?

Yes, if your dog tests boundaries, ignores cues they know, has bursts of energy, becomes more interested in other dogs and smells, or seems a little more cautious about new things for a while. These are common teenage changes. Talk to your vet about spaying or neutering and about any body changes; and see Chapter 17 if you notice new aggression or strong fears.

• What often changes

- **Selective hearing:** your dog knows the cue, they're just weighing whether it's worth it.
- **More energy and less patience:** more zoomies, more jumping, more mouthiness when bored.
- **More independence:** wandering farther, slower recalls, more interest in the world than in you.
- **Interest in other dogs:** more excitement or more reactions on walks.
- **Possible new fears:** a sudden worry about something that never bothered them before.

• How to get through it

- 1 **Keep training short and fun.** Two-minute sessions still work best.
- 2 **Pay well.** For a teenage dog, your rewards compete with the whole world. Use better treats and games.
- 3 **Brain work, not just legwork.** Sniffing games, food puzzles, simple tricks and "find it" games tire the mind and calm the body.
- 4 **Keep the long line** for recall until it's rock solid.
- 5 **Handle new fears gently:** distance, treats, no forcing (see Chapter 7).
- 6 **Protect sleep.** Teenage dogs still need plenty of rest.

“This is a phase, not a forever.”

What to avoid

- ✗ **Thinking the training "stopped working".** It's still working. It just needs maintenance.
- ✗ **Taking away all structure** because "he's grown up now".
- ✗ **Harsh corrections.** They can damage your relationship right when trust matters most.
- ✗ **Too much freedom off-leash** before recall is reliable.

✓ Your teenage-dog checklist

- ☐ Short daily training sessions continued
- ☐ Higher-value rewards for outdoor practice
- ☐ Daily brain games: sniffing, puzzles, tricks
- ☐ Long line kept for recall
- ☐ Vet talk about spay or neuter and growth
- ☐ Patience reminder on the fridge: "This is a phase"

CHAPTER 16

Your Maintenance Plan

The good habits you built in these months are the foundation of your adult dog. But like any skill, they fade if you stop using them. The good news: keeping them alive takes only a few minutes a day once they're part of your routine.



Is this normal?

Yes, if your dog is great at some skills and still a work in progress on others. Most dogs need ongoing practice, especially on recall, loose-leash walking and calm greetings. That's not failure, it's normal dog life.

The 10-minute daily routine

When	What	Time
Morning	2 minutes of quick cues: name, sit, come, leave it	2 min
Walk	Loose-leash practice for the first few minutes, then sniff time	part of the walk
Afternoon	A brain game: food puzzle, "find it" or a new trick	5 min
Evening	Handling: paws, ears, brushing, with treats	2-3 min
Anytime	Reward calm behavior when you see it	a few seconds

Use "life rewards"

You don't need treats forever. Your dog wants lots of things you control every day: going outside, dinner, the ball, saying hi to a friend, getting off the leash in a safe area. Ask for a simple behavior first — a sit, a look, four paws on the floor — then give the life reward. Everyday life becomes training.

Keep the rules consistent

- Same words, same rules for everyone in the family.
- Review the fridge sheet every few months: what's working, what needs attention.

- When something new goes wrong, go back to the chapter for that problem and follow its steps again.

● Plan for change

Moves, a new baby, a new pet, a new job or holidays can unsettle your dog. When life changes:

- Keep meals, walks and sleep as regular as possible.
- Go back to supervision and the pen for a while if needed.
- Practice alone time again in small steps if your schedule changes.

What to avoid

- ✗ **Stopping all training** once your dog "knows" something.
- ✗ **Only training when there's a problem.** Practice when things are good.
- ✗ **Removing all rewards suddenly.** Fade treats slowly and replace them with life rewards.

✓ Your maintenance checklist

- ☐ 10-minute daily routine set
- ☐ Life rewards used every day
- ☐ Family rules reviewed every few months
- ☐ Brain games in the weekly rotation
- ☐ Plan for big life changes

CHAPTER 17

When to Call a Professional

This book covers the normal ups and downs of raising a puppy. Some situations need more than a book. Asking for help is not a failure: it's what responsible owners do, and the earlier you ask, the easier things usually are to fix.

● Call your vet first if you notice

- Sudden changes in behavior, energy, appetite or sleep
- Accidents that suddenly increase, straining, or blood in urine or stool
- Vomiting, diarrhea lasting more than a day, or signs of pain such as limping, crying when touched, or hiding
- Possible swallowed objects or toxic foods
- Biting or grumpiness when touched in a specific spot

Pain or illness can look like a behavior problem. Ruling out health causes is always the first step.

● Contact a qualified trainer or behavior professional if

- **Aggression:** growling, snapping or biting that isn't play, especially around food, toys, resting places, or when being handled
- **Strong fear:** trembling, hiding or panicking around people, dogs, noises or places, and not improving with gentle practice
- **Panic when alone:** non-stop howling, destruction at exits, drooling, or injuries from trying to escape
- **Reactivity:** lunging and barking at dogs or people that keeps getting worse
- **Safety concerns:** any situation where you, your family, children or other animals might get hurt
- **No progress:** you've followed the plan for several weeks and things are getting worse, not better

● How to choose the right help

- **Look for reward-based, force-free methods.** Avoid anyone who recommends pain, fear, shock collars or "dominance" techniques for a puppy.
- **Ask about qualifications and experience** with puppies and with your specific problem.

- **For serious fear, aggression or panic**, ask your vet about a veterinary behaviorist, who can look at both health and behavior.
- **Expect a plan you understand**, with small steps and clear goals.

• While you wait for help

- **Manage the situation** so the problem can't happen: gates, leash, separate spaces, supervision with children.
- **Avoid the triggers** as much as possible for now.
- **Don't punish warning signs** like growling. Growling is communication. Punishing it can lead to biting without warning.
- **Write down what happens**: when, where, what came before and after. It will help the professional a lot.

Remember: needing help doesn't mean you've failed your puppy. It means you care enough to get it right.

QUICK REFERENCE

Is This Normal?: At a Glance

Use this table when you're worried. If what you see is in the "usually normal" column, breathe and follow the chapter. If it's in the "check with a pro" column, call your vet or a qualified trainer.

Age	Usually normal	Check with a pro	Chapter
8-10 weeks	Crying at night, many accidents, lots of sleep, play biting, clingy	Not eating for more than a day, diarrhea, vomiting, lethargy	1-5
10-16 weeks	Mouthy play, curious then cautious, short attention span, whining when left	Trembling or freezing in many situations, can't take treats when outside	7-9
4-6 months	Teething, chewing everything, pulling on leash, jumping, "forgot everything"	Broken teeth, sudden big rise in accidents, growling when handled	11-14
7-12 months	Selective hearing, more energy, more independence, new mild fears	Snapping or biting that isn't play, panic when alone, worsening reactivity	15-17

CHECKLIST

Your First-Year Checklist

Weeks 8-10

- ☐ Puppy zone, crate and potty spot ready
- ☐ Daily rhythm on the fridge
- ☐ Biting plan used by the whole family
- ☐ Night routine working
- ☐ First vet visit done

Weeks 10-16

- ☐ Socialization list mostly ticked
- ☐ Name, sit, come, leave it started
- ☐ Alone time practiced daily
- ☐ Happy vet visit and handling routine

Months 4-6

- ☐ Chew rotation and "drop it"
- ☐ Loose-leash basics with "be a tree"
- ☐ Four-paws-on-the-floor greetings
- ☐ Reset plan used when things slip

Months 7-12

- ☐ Short daily training continues
- ☐ Brain games in the weekly routine
- ☐ 10-minute maintenance routine set
- ☐ Vet talk about spay or neuter and adult care

BONUS GUIDES

Your Bonus Guides

Your bundle includes four short guides that go deeper on the most common problems:

- ***Land Shark Rescue*** — a step-by-step plan for puppy biting, including biting and children
- ***Potty Rescue*** — troubleshooting accidents, apartment life and setbacks
- ***Sleep Rescue*** — crate training and nights, from the first night to sleeping through
- ***Home Alone Starter*** — a gradual plan to help your puppy feel safe alone

This book is a training and lifestyle guide for puppy owners. It is not veterinary or medical advice. Always follow your veterinarian for anything related to your dog's health. For aggression, strong fears or panic, consult a qualified professional.

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