

BONUS GUIDE

Sleep Rescue

Crate Training and Calm Nights, From the First Night to Sleeping Through



A companion to **Is This Normal? The Puppy Blues Survival Plan**

NIBBLE & NAP

INTRODUCTION

Tonight Can Be a Little Easier

It's late, you're tired, and the tiny dog in the crate has opinions about bedtime. You're not doing it wrong. Sleep is a skill, and your puppy is learning it from scratch.

Chapter 5 of the *Survival Plan* gave you the basics: a cozy crate, a calm evening, quiet night trips. This guide picks up where that chapter stops. It's for the nights when the basics aren't enough yet.

● How to use this guide

Inside: a 10-day crate plan, bedtime scripts, "If... / Try..." tables for rough nights, and nap schedules by age. You don't need to read it in order. If last night was rough, jump straight to Chapter 4.

Then come back to Chapters 1 and 2 when you have ten calm minutes. Most night problems start during the day.

Pick one change at a time. Give it several days before you judge it. Sleep habits shift slowly, and that's normal.

CHAPTER 1

How Puppy Sleep Works

Puppies are built to sleep a lot. Their brains and bodies are growing fast, and sleep is where much of that work happens. Once you understand their sleep, the crying, the biting and the zoomies start to make a lot more sense.



Is this normal?

Yes, if your puppy sleeps most of the day, falls asleep mid-play, twitches, whimpers or "runs" in their sleep. Dream movements are common and nothing to worry about. Call your vet if your puppy is hard to wake, seems weak or wobbly when awake, breathes with effort, or suddenly sleeps much more than usual along with not eating, vomiting or diarrhea.

● How much sleep is "a lot"?

Young puppies are awake for short bursts and asleep for long stretches. At 8-10 weeks, many puppies can only handle a short awake window before they need to sleep again. That window slowly gets longer as they grow.

A puppy who naps often is usually a puppy who's doing just fine.

Typical awake windows (a rough guide, not a rule)

Age	Awake window before a nap	What it looks like
8-10 weeks	Often under an hour	Potty, short play, chew, sleep
10-16 weeks	A little longer, still short	Add a training game or short outing
4-6 months	Longer, varies a lot	Longer play, still several naps a day

Your puppy is the best guide. Watch them, not the clock.

• The overtired loop

Here's the trap most new owners fall into:

- 1 Puppy gets tired, but doesn't settle on their own.
- 2 Puppy gets wilder: harder biting, barking, zoomies.
- 3 Owner thinks "he has too much energy" and plays more.
- 4 Bedtime turns into crying, chewing the crate and a long fight to settle.

The fix is not more exercise. It's **earlier rest**. When you see the "needs a nap" signs from Chapter 2 of the *Survival Plan*, skip the extra game and go straight to potty, chew, crate.

• Settling is a skill

Falling asleep on purpose is something your puppy has to learn. With their littermates, sleep just happened in a warm pile. Now they need to learn to switch off alone.

You can help by building a **settle routine**: the same small steps before every nap.

- 1 **Potty trip.** An empty bladder makes settling easier.
- 2 **Calm-down activity.** A lick mat, a chew or a stuffed toy for a few minutes. Licking and chewing help many puppies relax.
- 3 **Into the crate** with a soft cue like "bedtime."
- 4 **Lights lower, voices quieter.** Partly cover the crate if your puppy likes it.
- 5 **Stay nearby and boring.** Read, fold laundry, scroll your phone.

Repeat this before every nap. After a while, the routine itself starts to tell your puppy "sleep is coming."

What to avoid

- ✗ **Playing until the puppy "drops".** Overtired puppies sleep worse, not better.
- ✗ **Letting naps happen anywhere, anytime.** Sofa naps on your lap are sweet, but crate naps build the habit you need at night.
- ✗ **Waking a sleeping puppy for visitors or photos.** That nap matters more than the picture.
- ✗ **Judging bedtime by the clock only.** Sleepy signs beat the schedule.

✓ Your sleep-basics checklist

- ☐ I know my puppy's "needs a nap" signs
- ☐ Settle routine written down: potty, chew, crate, quiet
- ☐ Lick mat or chew ready for every nap
- ☐ Most naps happen in the crate
- ☐ Wild play stops before the puppy gets frantic

CHAPTER 2

Making the Crate a Happy Place

A crate your puppy loves is the single biggest help for calm nights. If they only see it at bedtime, it feels like being shut away. If they see it all day as the place where good things happen, bedtime is just one more trip to a favorite spot.



Is this normal?

Yes, if your puppy hesitates at the door, whines for a minute after it closes, or pops in and out at first. Most puppies need days to weeks of short, happy practice to feel relaxed inside. If your puppy panics every time, with frantic scratching, drooling, heavy panting or trying to bite or squeeze through the bars, stop closing the door and go back to open-door games. If panic continues, talk to your vet and a qualified reward-based trainer.

● Choosing and setting up the crate

The basics are in Chapter 5 of the *Survival Plan*. A few extra details make a real difference:

- **Wire or plastic?** Wire is airy and easy to cover; plastic feels more den-like and travels well. Both work.
- **Use the divider.** Room to stand, turn and stretch out. Move the divider back as your puppy grows.
- **Bedding they can't destroy.** If your puppy shreds blankets, use a thin, tough mat for now. Swallowed fabric is a real risk, so check bedding daily.
- **Location by day:** a quiet corner near the family, away from heaters, AC vents, sunny windows and noisy appliances.
- **Water:** ask your vet whether to keep water in the crate for longer stays, and how to handle water in the evening.

● Five crate games

Play one or two games a day, two to five minutes each. Stop while your puppy still wants more.

- 1 Treat trail.** Lay a line of tiny treats leading into the crate, with a few at the back. Let your puppy walk in and out freely. Don't touch the door.
- 2 Crate magic.** When your puppy isn't looking, hide a treat or chew in the crate. Let them "discover" it. Repeat a few times a day so the crate becomes a treasure box.
- 3 In and out.** Say "crate," toss a treat in. When they go in, praise. Say "free," let them come out with no treat. Being inside pays; coming out is boring.
- 4 Door swing.** While your puppy eats a treat inside, close the door for one second, open, treat. Build up to five seconds, then ten. Open the door before they ask to come out.
- 5 Settle and stay.** Door closed, puppy with a lick mat inside. You sit next to the crate, then move a few steps away, then to the other side of the room. Come back and drop a treat in while they're calm.

If your puppy whines during a game, you went a step too fast. Make the next round easier.

● A 10-day crate plan

This is a sample plan. Some puppies race ahead, others need to repeat days. Both are fine. Move on only when your puppy is relaxed at the current step.

Day	Goal	Practice	Move on when
1	Crate = treats	Treat trail, crate magic, door open	Walks in by choice
2	Eat inside	Meals in the crate, door open	Eats without rushing out
3	Cue "crate"	In-and-out game	Goes in on cue
4	Door closes briefly	Door swing, 1-10 seconds	Stays calm when door closes
5	Closed with a chew	Door closed during a chew, you right there	Chews without whining
6	You move away	Settle and stay, a few steps away	Stays relaxed as you move
7	Short nap inside	One daytime nap with door closed, you in the room	Falls asleep inside
8	You leave the room	Out of sight for a few seconds, back calmly	Quiet when you return
9	Several crate naps	Most daytime naps in the crate	Settles within a few minutes
10	Everyday routine	Naps, meals, quiet time in the crate	Crate feels like normal life

Keep playing crate games now and then, even after day 10. A quick refresher keeps the crate positive for the long run.

● When your puppy already dislikes the crate

Maybe the first nights were rough, or the crate was used for long stretches. That's okay. You can rebuild it.

- **Stop closing the door** for a few days. Keep the crate open, cozy and full of surprises.
- **Change something:** new spot, a cover, new bedding.
- **Use a pen meanwhile,** with the open crate inside it.
- **Restart the 10-day plan** from day 1, and expect it to take longer.

What to avoid

- ✗ **Closing the door on day one** and walking away. Build up in seconds, not hours.
- ✗ **Letting your puppy out the moment they bark.** Wait for a second of quiet, then open.
- ✗ **Using the crate after scolding** or as a "time-out." It must always mean good things.
- ✗ **Unsafe items inside.** No collars with tags that can catch, and no chews small enough to swallow whole.
- ✗ **Crate games when your puppy is wild.** Play them after a potty break, when your puppy is calm-ish.

✓ Your crate checklist

- ☐ Crate sized with divider, in a quiet daytime spot
- ☐ Safe bedding, checked daily
- ☐ One or two crate games a day, a few minutes each
- ☐ Meals and special chews in the crate
- ☐ 10-day plan started, moving on only when relaxed
- ☐ Door opened only after a second of quiet

CHAPTER 3

The First Nights and the Bedtime Routine

The first nights set the tone, but they don't set it forever. If they've already been rough, you can still build a calm routine from tonight. The goal is not a silent puppy on night one. It's a puppy who learns, a little more each week, that night is safe and boring.



Is this normal?

Yes, if your puppy cries for a while the first nights, wakes once or twice to pee, or settles only with your hand near the crate. Many puppies cry less within days to a couple of weeks with a steady routine. Call your vet if night waking suddenly increases, or comes with peeing much more than usual, straining, diarrhea, scratching or signs of pain.

● Where the crate goes at night

For the first weeks, the crate goes **next to your bed**. Your puppy can hear you breathe and smell you, and you can hear them stir before an accident.

- **Raise it if you can.** A crate on a sturdy chair or low table, at bed height, lets your fingers reach the bars. Make sure it's stable and can't tip.
- **Two crates are fine.** One in the living room for naps, one in the bedroom for nights. Easier than carrying one around.
- **Partly covered,** with the side facing your bed left open so your puppy can see you.
- **Can't have it in the bedroom?** Sleep near your puppy for the first nights instead: a camp bed or the sofa next to the crate. Then move back to your room gradually.

• The evening wind-down

The last two hours before bed are where good nights are made. Use this as a template and adjust the times.

Time before bed	What to do	Why
About 2 hours	Last active play, then potty	Uses up energy early
About 90 minutes	Short training game or sniffing walk	Tires the brain gently
About 1 hour	Calm time: lick mat, chew, cuddles	Helps switch off
About 15 minutes	Lights lower, TV quieter	Signals "night is coming"
Bedtime	Last potty, then crate with a cue	Same steps every night

Dinner time and evening water depend on your puppy's age, food and health. Ask your vet what's right for your puppy.

• A bedtime script

Say and do the same thing every night. Repeating the same steps is what makes them work.

- 1 Last potty.** Same spot, same cue word. Wait calmly. Praise softly when they go.
- 2 Walk to the crate** without play on the way.
- 3 Cue "bedtime"** and toss a small treat in.
- 4 Close the door** while they eat it. Give a safe chew or a snuggle toy.
- 5 Say your night words** in a low voice: "Goodnight, sleep tight."
- 6 Lights off.** Get into bed. If needed, rest your fingers by the bars for a minute.

After that, you stop talking. Calm breathing is enough company.

• Night potty trips that don't wake everyone up

Many young puppies need at least one trip in the night. Make it as dull as possible.

- **Prepare before bed:** shoes, a dim light, leash and paper towels ready.
- **Carry or leash.** Carrying a small puppy avoids pit stops on the rug.

- **Same spot, one cue, no chat.** Wait a few minutes. If they go, a quiet "good" and maybe one tiny treat.
- **No play, no cuddles, no phone.** Straight back to the crate.
- **Didn't go?** Back to the crate anyway. Try again in a little while if they cry.

• Stretching the night, step by step

As your puppy's bladder matures, you can slowly move the night trip later. Slowly is the key.

- 1 Find the baseline.** For three or four nights, note when your puppy wakes and cries to go out.
- 2 Set an alarm a bit before that time.** Take them out before they wake and cry. This avoids teaching "crying gets me out."
- 3 Push it later in small steps,** like 15 minutes every few nights, as long as the crate stays dry.
- 4 Had an accident?** Go back to the last time that worked and stay there longer.
- 5 Notice the natural fade.** One night your puppy will sleep through the alarm time. Then you can try skipping it.

Every puppy matures at their own pace. Breed, size and age all play a part, so don't compare your schedule with a friend's.

Remember: A night with one quiet potty trip is a good night. You're not behind.

What to avoid

- ✗ **A long, exciting goodbye.** It winds your puppy up right before sleep.
- ✗ **Rough play in the last hour.** Save the zoomies for earlier in the evening.
- ✗ **Skipping the last potty** because the puppy is already sleepy. Wake them gently and go.
- ✗ **Turning on bright lights** or talking a lot during night trips.
- ✗ **Stretching the night too fast.** Accidents in the crate can make it feel less like a clean den.

 Your first-nights checklist

- ☐ Crate next to the bed, partly covered
- ☐ Evening wind-down from active to calm
- ☐ Bedtime script used every night
- ☐ Night-trip kit ready before bed
- ☐ Night wake-up times written down for a few nights
- ☐ Alarm moved later only when the crate stays dry

CHAPTER 4

Troubleshooting Nights

Even with a good routine, some nights go sideways. This chapter is your "it's 3 a.m. and I need an answer" page. Find your situation, try one thing for several nights, and track what changes.

**Is this normal?**

Yes, if things get worse for a night or two before they get better, or if a good week is followed by a bad night. Teething, a busy day, a change at home or a growth spurt can all disturb sleep. Call your vet if night waking comes with scratching, diarrhea, vomiting, coughing, peeing a lot or signs of pain. If your puppy panics in the crate and could hurt themselves, see Chapter 5.

• First, the 3 a.m. decision

When your puppy cries in the night, run through these three questions in order.

- 1 Could they need to pee?** If it's been a while since the last trip, assume yes. Quiet trip out, straight back.
- 2 Are they uncomfortable?** Too hot, too cold, bedding wet, a chew stuck out of reach, a strange noise outside.
- 3 Have they just gone out?** Then wait a minute or two. Many puppies fuss briefly and resettle. If it builds, a calm hand by the crate or a soft "shh" for a moment.

If you've checked all three and the crying keeps going, take them out once more, quietly. Some puppies need a second trip, especially in the early weeks.

● Crying and early wake-ups

If...	Try...
Cries right after bedtime, every night	Longer calm wind-down, a lick mat in the crate, your fingers by the bars for a minute
Wakes at 3 a.m. crying	Alarm-before-wake plan from Chapter 3, then push it later slowly
Cries after the night potty trip	Make the trip duller: no talk, no treats, lights off
Wakes at 5 a.m. ready to party	Darken the room, delay breakfast a little, keep the first trip quiet, then back to the crate
Wakes when you move or cough	White noise or a fan in the room
Was sleeping well, now waking again	Check for teething, a busy day, a change at home; go back to the basics for a week

About 5 a.m. wake-ups. If every early wake-up leads to breakfast and play, your puppy learns that 5 a.m. is the start of the fun. Treat any wake-up before your chosen time like a night trip: quiet potty, back to the crate. Then start the day at your normal time, with your normal routine.

● Naps and crate dislike

If...	Try...
Won't nap in the crate by day	Start the settle routine earlier, before the puppy gets frantic
Naps only on your lap	Let lap naps finish, then do crate naps right after a long play and potty
Naps for 20 minutes, wakes cranky	Quiet room, cover the crate, wait for a second of quiet before opening
Barks to come out	Wait for a short pause, then open; next time open earlier, before barking starts
Hates the crate after a bad night	Back to day 1 of the 10-day plan, door open for a few days
Chews the crate bars	Give a tough chew inside; check whether they're overtired or need a potty trip

• Barking when you leave the room

Some puppies are fine with you in bed next to them, but protest the moment you leave the room in the evening.

- 1 **Start while you're in sight.** Puppy in the crate with a chew, you walk across the room and back. Treat while they're calm.
- 2 **Step out for a few seconds.** Come back before they fuss. Drop a treat in.
- 3 **Vary the time:** 5 seconds, 20 seconds, 10 seconds, 45 seconds. Not always longer.
- 4 **Make it part of evening life:** short trips to the kitchen, the bathroom, the laundry.
- 5 **If barking starts,** wait for a short pause, come back calmly, and make the next absence shorter.

For a full plan, the bonus *Home Alone Starter* builds alone time step by step. Chapter 9 of the *Survival Plan* covers the basics.

• Two-person households and night shifts

Two tired adults are better than one exhausted one. Share the nights on purpose.

- **Agree on one script.** Same cue words, same potty spot, same "no chat" rule. Mixed signals slow everything down.
- **Take turns** instead of both waking up. One person is "on duty," the other wears earplugs.
- **Write it down.** A note on the phone: time of each trip, peed or not, how long to resettle.
- **Swap at the weekend** so one person can catch up on sleep.

A sample night-shift split

Night	On duty	Off duty	Notes
Mon, Wed, Fri	Partner A	Partner B sleeps in	B does the morning trip
Tue, Thu, Sat	Partner B	Partner A sleeps in	A does the morning trip
Sun	Whoever is less tired	The other one	Review the notes together

Doing this alone? Nap when your puppy naps when you can, and ask a friend to take a morning so you can sleep. Chapter 6 of the *Survival Plan* is for you.

What to avoid

- ✗ **Changing the plan every night.** Pick one fix and give it several nights.
- ✗ **Getting the puppy out of the crate to play** to "tire them out" at 3 a.m.
- ✗ **Bringing the puppy into your bed** one night and not the next. Choose one setup and stick to it.
- ✗ **Two adults with two different scripts.** Agree before bedtime, not at 3 a.m.
- ✗ **Ignoring a sudden change.** New night waking with other symptoms is a vet question.

✓ Your troubleshooting checklist

- ☐ The 3 a.m. decision: pee, comfort, then wait
- ☐ One change at a time, tried for several nights
- ☐ Night notes kept: times, potty, how long to settle
- ☐ Early wake-ups handled like night trips
- ☐ Short "leave the room" practice every evening
- ☐ Night shifts agreed with my partner or a helper

CHAPTER 5

Naps, Schedules and Moving the Crate

Once nights are calmer, it's time to think about the bigger picture: a nap rhythm that grows with your puppy, moving the crate out of your bedroom, and sleeping away from home. These changes go best when they happen slowly and on a good week, not a chaotic one.



Is this normal?

Yes, if your puppy fights naps more around 4-6 months, sleeps a bit less by day, or has a rough night after a change like a trip or a new crate spot. Most puppies adjust within days to a few weeks. Get help if your puppy panics in the crate, injures their mouth, paws or nails trying to escape, or bends the bars. Stop crating for now, contact your vet, and work with a qualified reward-based trainer or a veterinary behaviorist.

● A nap schedule that grows with your puppy

Naps keep nights calm. A puppy who skips daytime sleep often arrives at bedtime overtired and wired.

Age	Nap pattern	Tip
8-10 weeks	Many short naps, after nearly every awake window	Settle routine before each one
10-16 weeks	Several naps, a bit further apart	One longer midday "anchor nap"
4-6 months	Fewer, longer naps, often morning and afternoon	Teething can disturb sleep: safe chews, and ask your vet about pain

• Enforced naps (the kind way)

An enforced nap simply means you decide when nap time starts, instead of waiting for your puppy to collapse. It's not a punishment. It's like a parent putting a toddler down before the meltdown.

- 1 Watch the clock and the puppy.** When the awake window is ending, or you see the sleepy signs, start the settle routine.
- 2 Potty, chew, crate.** Same order as always.
- 3 Close the door and sit nearby** for the first few minutes if needed.
- 4 Ignore brief protest.** Wait for a second of quiet before you do anything. Most puppies drift off soon.
- 5 Open the door when they wake,** and go straight to potty.

If your puppy cries hard for a long time, check the basics: potty, comfort, overtiredness. Then go back to more crate games during the day.

• Moving the crate out of your bedroom

There's no fixed date for this. Move when nights are mostly calm and your puppy settles quickly. Some families keep the crate in the bedroom long term, and that's fine too.

- 1 Week 1:** move the crate a little further from the bed, toward the door.
- 2 Week 2:** crate by the bedroom door.
- 3 Week 3:** crate just outside the bedroom, door open.
- 4 Week 4:** crate in its new spot, with the same bedding, chew and bedtime script.

Take each step only when the last one is easy. If your puppy struggles, go back one step for a few nights. A baby monitor or pet camera can help you hear them while you're still doing night trips.

• Sleeping away from home

Trips, holidays and visits to family can shake up sleep. A little preparation goes a long way.

- **Practice before you go.** Use the travel crate at home for naps for a week or two first.
- **Bring home smells:** the same bedding, a worn t-shirt, the usual chews.
- **Keep the script.** Same wind-down, same cue, same night words, even in a strange room.

- **Expect a rough first night.** New places are exciting and a bit scary. Stay close and keep it calm.
- **Car rides:** ask your vet about motion sickness if your puppy drools, vomits or seems unwell in the car.

● When to seek help

Most sleep problems are normal growing pains. A few are not. Contact your vet and a qualified reward-based trainer or veterinary behaviorist if you see:

- **Panic in the crate:** frantic scratching, biting the bars, heavy drooling or panting that doesn't ease.
- **Injury from trying to escape:** bleeding gums, broken nails, sore paws, bent bars.
- **Non-stop crying** every time, for weeks, with no improvement despite slow, careful practice.
- **Sudden changes** in sleep, peeing or energy, especially with other symptoms.

Never use calming products, supplements or medication without your vet's advice. And never punish fear: a frightened puppy needs a slower plan, not a stricter one.

Remember: Asking for help is not failing. It's how you protect your puppy and yourself.

What to avoid

- ✗ **Dropping daytime naps** to make your puppy sleep better at night. It usually backfires.
- ✗ **Moving the crate and changing the routine** in the same week.
- ✗ **Forcing a panicking puppy to "cry it out".** Real panic needs a pro, not more time in the crate.
- ✗ **First crate experience on travel day.** Practice at home first.

 Your naps-and-next-steps checklist

- ☐ Nap rhythm updated for my puppy's age
- ☐ Enforced naps before the meltdown, not after
- ☐ Crate move planned in small weekly steps
- ☐ Travel crate practiced at home before any trip
- ☐ Signs of crate panic known by the whole family
- ☐ Vet and trainer contacts saved, just in case

THE END

Before You Go

If you're reading this half asleep, here's the short version: most puppies get better at nights, slowly, with a calm and steady routine. Not overnight, and not in a straight line. But it does tend to get easier.

Be proud of the small wins. One less wake-up. A nap that happened in the crate without a fight. A night trip where nobody got excited. Those add up.

Keep the *Survival Plan* close for everything else in these first months. And if nights connect to other struggles, the other bonuses can help: *Land Shark Rescue* for biting, *Potty Rescue* for accidents, and *Home Alone Starter* for time apart.

This guide is a training and lifestyle resource 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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