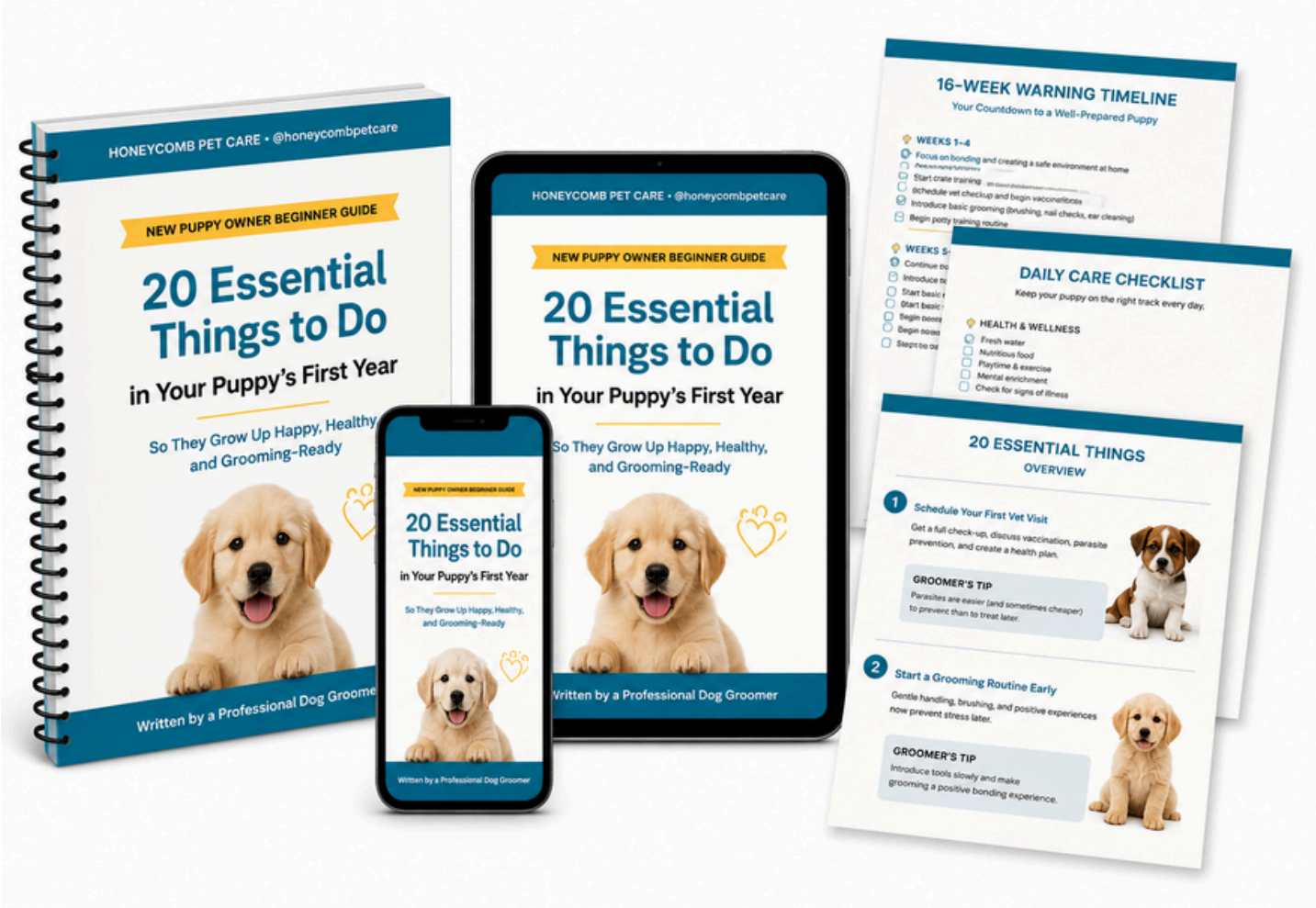
HONEYCOMB PET CARE

NEW PUPPY OWNER BEGINNER GUIDE



Welcome, New Puppy Parent :)

First of all — congratulations. Getting a puppy is one of the most exciting, joyful, and yes, slightly overwhelming things you'll ever do. And the fact that you're reading this right now tells me something important about you:

You want to get this right.

That matters more than anything else. The single biggest factor in how your puppy turns out — how they behave, how they handle the groomer, how they interact with the world — isn't their breed, their genetics, or even their personality. It's you. And what you do in this first year.



I'm a professional dog groomer for over 5 years. Every week I see dogs that come in calm and cooperative — and ones that are terrified. The difference almost always comes down to the first year of their life.

This guide covers the 20 most essential things to do with your puppy across four areas: socialization, desensitization, training, and grooming. None of these are complicated.

All of them are achievable. And every single one will make a real, visible difference in the dog your puppy grows up to be.

You're already doing an amazing job by investing in this. Let's make the most of this window together.

— Eli at Honeycomb Pet Care

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Work through each section at your own pace. Items highlighted in yellow are the most urgent — they have a time window that closes fast. Every item has a Groomer's Tip. Save this and come back to it throughout your puppy's first year.

SOCIALIZATION

The window that shapes your dog's personality — forever

WHY SOCIALIZATION MATTERS:

Socialization is the single most powerful thing you can do for your puppy right now. Everything they experience in these first few months teaches them what the world is — safe or scary, exciting or threatening. Get this right and you build a confident, friendly, adaptable dog. You're already doing something amazing by learning about this early.

01

Introduce Your Puppy to Different Types of People

Your puppy needs to meet as many different looking, sounding, and moving people as possible — and every experience needs to be positive. Think hats, beards, glasses, uniforms, children, elderly people, people using walking aids. Each person they meet and feel good about is a future fear they'll never have. You're not just socializing your puppy — you're building the foundation of a dog that trusts the world.

✦ GROOMER'S TIP:

Find a great grooming salon near you and ask if your puppy can visit before their actual appointment. Let them explore the tools, meet their groomer, and get comfortable with the space — no grooming, just positive exposure. A few practice visits make a huge difference.



02

Expose Them to Different Environments Every Week

Every new environment your puppy explores positively becomes familiar territory for life. Take them to parks, pet stores, busy streets, and quiet neighborhoods. Let them walk on different surfaces — grass, gravel, tile, carpet, wood. Each new texture, smell, and sound they experience calmly now means one less thing that can overwhelm them as an adult.



✦ GROOMER'S TIP:

Carry high value treats on outing that are new and loud then give it to your pup as positive reinforcement that these places are safe.

03

Introduce Them to Other Vaccinated Dogs Before 16 Weeks

Playing with other dogs is how puppies learn one of the most important skills they'll ever have — how to communicate with other dogs. They learn bite inhibition, body language, and appropriate play. Arrange playdates with vaccinated dogs or attend a puppy socialization class. A puppy that plays well with other dogs grows up to be a friendly, well-adjusted dog — but remember, during walks you'll want to train them to stay focused on you rather than rushing to greet every dog they see.



✦ GROOMER'S TIP:

Puppy classes do double duty — socialization with other dogs AND structured training in a distraction-filled environment. Worth every penny for what they prevent.

04

Expose Them to Everyday Sounds — Always Positively

Every new sound is a potential fear trigger. The difference is entirely in how you introduce it. Washing machines, doorbells, traffic, children playing, blow dryers, and clippers. Turn sounds on while your puppy is doing regular activities to get them accustom to different sounds without getting alarmed.



✦ GROOMER'S TIP:

Search YouTube for 'puppy desensitization sounds.' Hours of everyday sounds designed for this purpose. Play them quietly at meal times every single day.

05

Take Them on Short Car Rides — Starting From Day One

Car anxiety is one of the most common and easily preventable issues in adult dogs. Start with the engine off — just sit in the parked car with treats and praise. Then short five-minute drives, then longer ones. Every positive car ride is a future vet visit, grooming appointment, and adventure made easier.



✦ GROOMER'S TIP:

Put a worn t-shirt of yours in the carrier beside them or their favourite toy for comfort.

■ DESENSITIZATION

What your groomer does — and what you can start at home today

WHY DESENSITIZATION MATTERS:

Desensitization means teaching your puppy that being touched, handled, and exposed to new things is completely safe and normal. As a professional groomer, these are the habits I wish every owner built from day one. The puppies that come to me calm and cooperative? Their owners did these things.

06

Handle Their Entire Body Every Single Day



Every single day — paws, ears, mouth, gums, between every toe, tail, belly, under the armpits. Touch everything gently and slowly. Pair every touch with a treat and calm praise. A puppy that lets you touch every inch of their body becomes a dog that cooperates at every grooming appointment, vet visit, and even when staying with friends or family. This is the most important habit on this entire list.

✦ GROOMER'S TIP:

Don't save this for one set time — weave it throughout your day. A few touches here, a paw hold there, ears during cuddles. Multiple short moments of calm handling throughout the day are more effective than one long session.

07

Introduce Grooming Tools Before Ever Using Them

The brush, comb, and basic grooming tools should be gently introduced before it touches your puppy. Place tools on the floor. Let them sniff. Touch the tool to their body without doing anything. Pair every exposure with treats over several days. A puppy that has investigated every grooming tool becomes a dog that doesn't flinch when the groomer picks up the clippers.



✦ GROOMER'S TIP:

Ask your groomer which tools they use for your puppy's coat type and get the same ones. Familiarity with the exact tools used at the salon makes the biggest difference.

08

Practice Calm Restraint Holds Every Day

Hold your puppy still. Gently but firmly. For 30 seconds. Reward and release. Build to one minute. Then two. Groomers work with sharp tools around moving dogs — a dog that cannot be held still cannot be groomed safely. Every 30 seconds of calm restraint practice at home is a lifetime of safer, easier appointments.



✦ GROOMER'S TIP:

Practice in different positions — standing, lying on their side, and being held in your arms. Groomers need access from every angle at every appointment.

09

Teach Your Puppy That Hands Near Food and Toys Are a Good Thing



While your puppy eats, walk over calmly and place your hand next to their bowl. If they growl, say "ah ah" and remove the bowl. Wait a moment, then try again. When they don't growl, praise them and give a high value treat — then return the bowl. Repeat every meal until a hand near their food predicts something good. Practice the same with toys — trade for a treat, then give it back. Do this daily until it becomes their natural response.

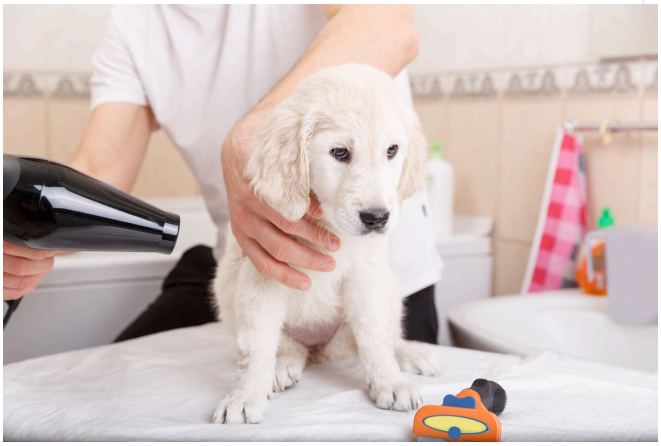
✦ GROOMER'S TIP:

Resource guarding is one of the most common reasons dogs become difficult to groom safely. A puppy that never learns to guard makes every appointment safer for everyone.

10

Introduce the Blow Dryer Sound Before It Ever Touches Them

The blow dryer is the single most common cause of grooming panic in adult dogs — and it is entirely preventable. Turn the dryer on in the next room while your puppy eats. Over several days, move it progressively closer. Then in the same room. Then directed briefly toward them while treating. By the time the dryer touches their coat, it should already be the most boring sound in the world.



✦ GROOMER'S TIP:

Turn the dryer on low and let them sit in your lap. Give them treats and praise. do not force them or corner them with the dryer. them see you are completely calm around it. Your body language teaches them how to feel about new things.

■ TRAINING

Simple, positive, consistent — the only approach that truly works

WHY TRAINING MATTERS:

Training your puppy doesn't have to be complicated or stressful. Positive reinforcement works faster, works longer, and builds a relationship of trust that lasts a lifetime. You're not trying to dominate your puppy — you're teaching them. And you are already the best teacher they have.

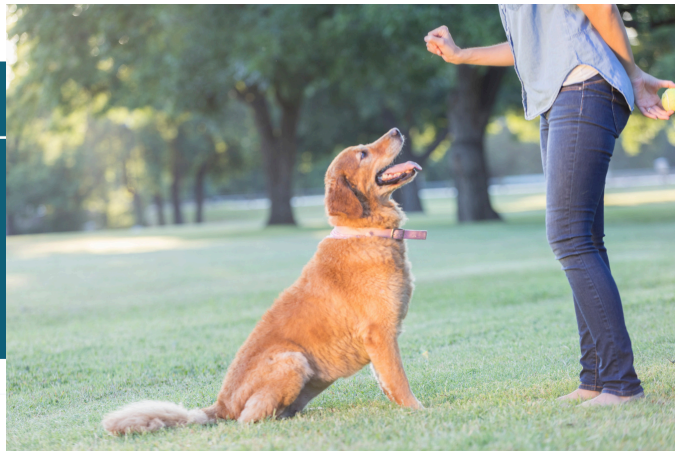
11

Start With Sit, Come, and Name Recognition Immediately

These three things are the foundation of everything. Your puppy's name — said once in a happy tone, rewarded every time they look at you. Sit — lure a treat over their head until their bottom touches the floor, say 'yes' and reward. Come — crouch down, excited voice, biggest reward when they arrive. Keep sessions to 5 minutes maximum.

✦ GROOMER'S TIP:

Never repeat a command more than once. Say it clearly, once. Repeating commands teaches puppies to ignore the first one — patience always pays off.



12

Teach Bite Inhibition From the Very First Day

Biting is completely normal for puppies — but learning how hard is too hard is one of the most important lessons of their life. When your puppy's teeth touch your skin, say 'no or ahh ahh' in a stern calm tone and immediately stop play. Withdraw attention for 10 to 15 seconds, then resume. Consistency is everything — every person in the household must respond the same way every time.



✦ GROOMER'S TIP:

Redirect to a chew toy immediately after the 'no' withdrawal. Teach them what TO bite, not just what not to. Chew toys are essential at this stage.

13

Crate Train — Make It the Best Place in the House

The crate is not a punishment — it is a gift. Feed every meal inside with the door open. Toss treats in throughout the day. Put a worn piece of your clothing inside. Build positive association before you ever close the door. A dog that loves their crate travels easily, handles disruptions calmly, and has a safe space that is completely theirs.



✦ GROOMER'S TIP:

Cover the crate with a blanket on three sides to create a cozy den-like environment. Dogs feel dramatically calmer with walls around them — it reduces anxiety significantly.

14

Use Tons Of Positive Reinforcement

Focus on positive reinforment. Reward the behaviours you want to see with treats, praise, or play. Your puppy is not being stubborn when they don't respond. They are learning. They need more repetition, a higher value reward, or a quieter environment — not punishment. Every rewarded behavior becomes more likely to happen again.



✦ GROOMER'S TIP:

Use different treat values. Kibble for easy known behaviors. Soft treats for new skills. High-value treats like chicken or cheese for difficult environments or new challenges.

15

Teach Them to Walk Calmly on a Leash From Day One

A dog that pulls on the leash is one of the most common frustrations dog owners face — and it starts with the very first walk. Begin inside the house. Reward your puppy for walking beside you with a loose leash. Every step next to you gets a treat. Stop moving the moment tension appears. A puppy that learns loose-leash walking early becomes a dog that makes every walk enjoyable.



✦ GROOMER'S TIP:

Short leash training sessions inside first — before you ever hit the street. Once they understand loose leash indoors, the real world becomes a manageable training environment.

■ GROOMING

From a professional who sees the difference every single week

WHY GROOMING MATTERS:

This is where I get to share what I see every day in the salon. The puppies whose owners did these things come in calm, cooperative, and happy. Their owners leave without a dematting fee, without a shave-down, and without guilt. These habits take minutes. And they change everything.

16

Start Brushing From Week One — With the Right Brush

Start brushing from week one regardless of coat length. Begin with your hand in long gentle strokes, then introduce the brush back-first, then bristles. Always be gentle — this should feel good for your puppy, not uncomfortable. Two to three minutes, full of treats and praise. The goal right now is not a perfect coat — it's a puppy that associates the brush with good things. Get the right brush for your puppy's coat type and ask your groomer which one is right.

✦ GROOMER'S TIP:

After every brush session, run a metal comb all the way through the coat to the skin. If it catches anywhere, a mat is forming. Build this habit from week one and do it forever.



17

Introduce the Bathtub Before Any Water Touches Them

Put your puppy in the empty tub several times before any bath. Toss treats in. Let them scramble in and out on their own terms. Make the tub exciting before it is ever wet. Once comfortable, run water nearby while they eat. Then gradually introduce water. By the time they have their first real bath, the tub itself is already completely normal.



✦ GROOMER'S TIP:

Use a non-slip mat in the tub every single time. Feeling secure on a non-slip surface makes the entire bath experience dramatically less stressful from the very first wash.

18

Start Teeth Brushing in the Very First Week



Dental disease is the number one health issue in adult dogs — and it is almost entirely preventable. Begin by letting your puppy lick dog-safe toothpaste off your finger. Then rub your finger along their gums. Then introduce a finger brush. Once this is a daily habit it takes 60 seconds. Skip it for the first year and you're setting your dog up for painful, expensive dental issues.

✦ GROOMER'S TIP:

Never use human toothpaste — it's toxic to dogs. Dog-safe toothpaste comes in chicken or peanut butter flavor. Your puppy will genuinely look forward to this every single day.

19

Check and Clean Ears Weekly From Day One

Gently massage the base and inside of both ears every day from the moment you bring your puppy home. Once per week, use a vet-recommended ear cleaning solution applied to a cotton ball — never a cotton swab, never directly in the canal. Dry ears prevent infections. Wet ears cause them. A puppy whose ears are handled daily becomes a dog whose ears are easy to clean for life.



✦ GROOMER'S TIP:

Ask your groomer to show you exactly how they clean ears at the salon during your first visit. Watching a professional do it once teaches you more than any written description.

20

Book Their First Grooming Appointment Before 16 Weeks



This is the one with a deadline — and most owners miss it. The ability to form positive associations drops dramatically after 4 months of age. A puppy who visits the salon before 16 weeks learns it is a safe, exciting place. Book the appointment now. Tell the groomer it's a first visit and ask them to focus entirely on making it a positive experience above everything else.

✦ GROOMER'S TIP:

The first visit doesn't need to be a full groom. A bath, dry, nail file, and lots of treats is the perfect introduction. You are investing in a lifetime of easy, stress-free grooming appointments.

🎊 CONGRATULATIONS 🎊

You've made it to the end of this guide. I really hope you find this guide helpful on your journey. Now before you go, let's see where you are right now.

Score yourself below.

How many are you doing?	■ 0 – 5 Just getting started! great!	■ 6 – 12 Good foundation keep going!	**■ 13 – 20 Groomer's dream puppy owner!**



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