

The Puppy SURVIVAL GUIDE

I helped!

Biting, potty training, sleep and your first 90 days

🐾 DOG PARENT LIFE 🐾

WELCOME TO THE MOST ADORABLE CHAOS OF YOUR LIFE.

The puppy is asleep. You should probably sleep too, but you're staring at a damp patch on the rug and wondering whether you've made an enormous mistake.

An hour ago, this same puppy climbed into your lap and rested their chin on your wrist, and you nearly cried because it was so sweet. Now you might cry because you need a shower. Both feelings can live in the same afternoon, and both are completely normal.

This guide gets you through the first 90 days: the puddles, the needle teeth, the 3 a.m. crying, and the "is this normal or do I call the vet?" moments. One small, doable step at a time.

My husky Frost was once a puppy who ate a TV remote (just the buttons), so believe me when I say: no judging from this end of the leash.

Elin & Frost

About Elin

I grew up with family dogs, worked for years in a busy grooming salon and dog daycare in my twenties, and have fostered dogs and puppies of many breeds since. I'm not a veterinarian, certified trainer or behaviorist. The numbered sources at the back are the published guidance behind the facts in this book.

This guide is for general education and doesn't replace advice from your veterinarian or a qualified behavior professional. If your puppy seems unwell, call your vet. Suspected poisoning, trouble breathing or collapse needs emergency care right away (see Chapter 9). The stories illustrate the ideas; your puppy sets the pace. **The Puppy Survival Guide** · Dog Parent Life · First edition · 2026

YOUR FIRST 24 HOURS: 3 THINGS THAT HELP RIGHT AWAY

You don't need to teach your puppy everything this week. You need to get through today with fewer puddles, fewer bites and a little more sleep. Start with these three.

- 1 Set up one safe puppy zone.** A gated room or pen with a bed, water and a couple of toys, and nothing chewable they shouldn't have. **Why:** a small, safe space is easier to supervise and makes accidents and chewing disasters far less likely.^{4,11}
- 2 Take them out more than you think you need to.** After waking, eating, drinking, playing and any time they sniff and circle, plus roughly every hour while they're awake. Treat the moment they finish in the right spot. **Why:** each success in the right place teaches your puppy where to go.^{6,7}
- 3 Protect their naps.** Puppies need a lot of sleep, and an overtired puppy turns into a biting machine. When they get wild, think "nap," not "more play." **Why:** many evening "zoomies and biting" sessions are really an overtired baby.^{9,13}



Puppies and puddles come as a set. Here's how to get through day one.

Red Flag: Call Your Vet

Trouble breathing, collapse, repeated vomiting or diarrhea, a puppy who won't eat, or anything you think they swallowed that they shouldn't have: call your vet or an emergency clinic now. Puppies can go downhill quickly.^{20,23}

Elin's Tip

Book your first vet visit before your puppy comes home, and save the number of your nearest emergency clinic in your phone today. You'll be glad you did it while you were calm.

That's your head start. Now let's set you up for the next 90 days.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Bringing your puppy home soon? Read Chapters 1 to 3 first for your setup and potty routine. **Already deep in it?** Jump to Chapter 4 for biting and chewing, or Chapter 5 for the nights. **Either way, read Chapter 6 early.** Your puppy's best window for gentle socialization is happening right now.

Your puppy's age and how long they've lived with you are two different clocks. The 90-day plan in Chapter 10 follows your time together; socialization follows your puppy's age.

Elin's Tip

Practical shortcuts and reminders from years of puppies.

Try This Today

One small action you can do today. Most have a matching printable at the back.

Red Flag: Call Your Vet

A health or safety concern that comes before any training.

Myth vs. Fact

Popular advice, checked against the evidence, with something better to do instead.

The seven printables at the back keep everyone in the house on the same plan, from the potty log to the family rules sheet. The socialization menu has 100 ideas: a menu, not a checklist to finish.

Numbers in brackets point to the sources at the back. **If something seems wrong with your puppy's health,** stop troubleshooting and call your vet. Chapter 9 tells you what's urgent.^{19,20,23}

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Printables: [Puppy Supply Checklist \(34\)](#) · [Puppy-Proofing Checklist \(35\)](#) · [Daily Potty Schedule and Log \(36\)](#) · [My Puppy's Socialization Menu \(37\)](#) · [Our First 90 Days \(38\)](#) · [Veterinary Visit Questions \(39\)](#) · [Our Family Puppy Rules \(40\)](#)

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YOU CAN LOVE YOUR PUPPY AND FEEL OVERWHELMED

Realistic expectations and a manageable first step.



Poppy, a cocker spaniel puppy, was one of my first foster puppies. By day three I'd been up since 4:40, I'd mopped the same corner four times, and I was eating cereal standing up while she chewed my shoelace. I remember thinking, "Everyone else seems to find this easy. What am I doing wrong?"

Nothing, as it turned out. Researchers at the University of Helsinki have studied the "puppy blues": the anxiety, frustration and exhaustion many new owners feel in the early weeks. It's common, and it usually eases as you and your puppy find a rhythm.³ By week three, Poppy and I had one. The nights got longer, the puddles got fewer, and I started enjoying her instead of just surviving her.

Start smaller than you think

- 1 Keep your puppy safe.** Limit access to things they can swallow, chew or get tangled in.
- 2 Offer lots of toilet trips.** We'll build a routine around what your puppy actually does.
- 3 Protect sleep.** Learning and play fit around rest, not the other way around.
- 4 Practice one thing at a time.** You don't need eight perfect cues this week.

Everything in this book uses reward-based teaching and gradual practice, in line with the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior's humane-training guidance.¹

Elin's Tip

Line up help *before* you reach the point where someone breathing near you feels unreasonable. Even a one-hour break from puppy duty makes the rest of the day easier.

If your low mood or stress feels persistent, severe or hard to manage, talk to someone you trust and to your own doctor. You deserve support too.

Try This Today

Write down the hardest part of your day. Pick one change that would make it easier, then ask someone for help with that specific thing.

BEFORE THE TINY TORNADO ARRIVES

Set up a home that makes supervision easy.



Peanut, a terrier puppy I fostered, found a phone charger before he found his bed. The bed was huge and in the middle of the room. The charger was behind a chair. That tells you everything about how puppies inspect a house.

So I got down on my hands and knees, puppy-proofed properly, and set up a pen. Peanut never found another cable, and the pen gave me somewhere safe to put him while I made a cup of coffee.

Preparing for a puppy means checking the sneaky little spaces, then setting up one manageable area so you don't have to follow them around the entire house.⁴

Make one puppy zone

Your puppy doesn't need the run of the house yet. Pick an area with easy-to-clean floors, a bed, water and a few toys. Somewhere near family life, so they aren't isolated, but out of the busiest traffic.

Setup	Good when	Watch for
Puppy-proofed room with a gate	You have a room near daily activity	Gaps, climbable furniture, hidden hazards
Secure pen	You want a defined space in a bigger room	Stability, climbing, things reachable through the bars
Open crate inside a pen	You want to offer a cozy den	The crate must stay a happy choice
Closed crate	Your puppy has been gradually taught to like it	Toilet needs, distress, too much time inside

A crate is optional. A pen or a safe room works just as well.¹¹

Puppy-proof room by room

- 1 Living areas:** cords, remotes, batteries, loose decorations and small objects up and out of reach.
- 2 Bedrooms:** socks, underwear, shoes, jewelry and medications put away.
- 3 Kitchen and bathroom:** bins secured, cleaning products, food, medicines and laundry locked away.



A pen with a bed, water and safe toys gives your puppy a safe home base.

- 4 Yard:** check gates, fence gaps, chemicals, plants and standing water.

Recheck as your puppy grows. Yesterday's unreachable shelf is tomorrow's project.^{4,20} If you think your puppy swallowed something harmful, call your vet right away. Don't try a home remedy.^{20,21}

Buy the essentials first

Start with the food they're already eating, bowls, washable bedding, a pen or gate, a few right-sized toys, enzyme cleaner, an ID tag, a fitted collar and harness, and a car crate or restraint for the ride home.⁴ Ask the breeder or rescue what food your puppy eats, how meals are arranged, and which health records come with them. Talk to your vet before changing food.^{5,19} The supply checklist at the back has the full list.

The first ride and arrival

- 1 Secure your puppy for the car ride** in a crate or restraint, not on someone's lap.
- 2 Keep the arrival quiet.** Save the neighborhood welcome party for another week.
- 3 Head straight to the toilet spot** and wait.
- 4 Let your puppy explore their zone** at their own pace.
- 5 Offer their usual food, water and a chance to nap.**

Start toilet training right away, and expect accidents. Reward the moment they finish in the right place.⁵

Elin's Tip

Keep the paper towels and enzyme cleaner where you can grab them with one hand. The cupboard behind six other bottles feels very far away at midnight.

Plan the first night

Set up a safe sleeping spot where you can hear your puppy and get to them quickly. That might mean their bed or pen beside yours, or you sleeping near them for a few nights. Don't make the first night their first long stretch shut in a crate. Chapter 5 has the full plan.^{11,12}

Try This Today

Sit on the floor in the puppy zone. Look under furniture and through gaps at puppy height, and remove the first five hazards you spot.

POTTY TRAINING WITHOUT THE GUESSWORK

Swap constant guessing for a routine you can adjust.



You take your puppy outside. They inspect a leaf, watch a bird and sit on your shoe. You go back inside. They pee.

Sunny, a yellow Lab puppy I fostered, did this to me five times in one day. So I started a simple log, and the pattern jumped out: she needed about ten more minutes outside after waking up, and a second trip right after her post-dinner zoomies. Once I adjusted, most trips started ending with a success and a treat. Within a couple of weeks, she was heading for the back door on her own.

Housetraining comes down to three things: lots of chances to get it right, a reward for the right spot, and preventing unsupervised mistakes.^{6,7}

Choose your toilet setup

Option	Good when	Downside
Outdoor toilet spot	You can get there quickly	Weather, access and disease risk before vaccinations
Indoor pad or tray	Getting outside quickly is hard	Your puppy learns that surface is a toilet
Indoor grass patch	You want a defined indoor option	Cleaning, cost, chewing
Indoor backup plus outdoor practice	You need both	Takes consistency to switch over later

Indoor toilets can be a sensible choice. If outdoors is the end goal, plan the switch gradually.⁸ Ask your vet which outdoor spots are safe for your puppy's vaccination status.²

When to go out

- Right after waking up.
- After eating and drinking.
- During and after play.
- After excitement (visitors, a new toy).
- Before bedtime.
- Any time they start sniffing, circling or wandering off.^{6,7}

In between, a trip roughly every hour while they're awake is a good starting point for young puppies. Many need to go more often.⁶

Myth vs. Fact

Myth: “Puppies can hold it for their age in months plus one, in hours.”

Fact: That's a rough rule of thumb at best. A puppy who just drank and played may need to go within minutes. Follow your puppy's actual pattern, not the math.⁸

The outdoor routine

- 1 **Grab a treat before you head out.** You need it at the toilet spot, not back in the kitchen.
- 2 **Go to the same spot,** calmly, on leash if needed.
- 3 **Stand still and let them sniff.** Hold off on games for now.
- 4 **The moment they finish, praise and treat,** right there, within seconds.
- 5 **Then add a little playtime or exploring,** so peeing doesn't always end the fun.^{6,7}

Once there's a clear pattern, you can say a cue like “go potty” just as they start. It takes lots of repetition to stick.

If nothing happens after a few minutes, go back inside and keep your puppy with you or in their zone, then try again in 10 to 15 minutes. Don't give them free run of the house yet.

Apartment life

Have the leash, keys, shoes and treats ready by the door. If the trip downstairs takes a while, head out sooner than you would with a back door, and carry your puppy when you can so they can't stop on the way. If you just can't get outside fast enough yet, a designated indoor toilet is a smart backup. Keep it away from their bed and food.⁸



Treat the moment your puppy finishes, right there in the toilet spot.

Using an indoor toilet

- 1 **Pick one spot.** Don't scatter pads all over the house.
- 2 **Take your puppy there** at the usual toilet times.
- 3 **Treat right after they finish** on the pad or tray.
- 4 **Supervise between trips.**
- 5 **Keep it clean,** and stop them chewing the pad.

To switch to outdoors later, offer outdoor trips at predictable times, reward success there, and phase out the indoor option slowly, based on results, not a deadline.⁸ If moving the pad causes confusion, go back to what worked and change more slowly.

When accidents happen

They will. If you find one afterward, just clean it up; there's nothing to teach the puppy next to an old puddle. If you catch them starting, calmly scoop them up or guide them to the right spot. Never shout, punish or rub their nose in it. That only teaches them to hide when they need to go.⁶

Clean with an enzyme-based pet cleaner, following the label, so the smell doesn't invite a repeat.^{4,7}

Myth vs. Fact

Myth: "That guilty look proves they know they did wrong."

Fact: Your puppy is reacting to *you*, not to the puddle from ten minutes ago. Focus on the next trip and reward the spot you want.^{1,6}

When accidents keep happening

Ask yourself: were trips frequent enough? Did everyone assume someone else had taken the puppy out? Did the last trip actually produce a pee? Has the puppy been given too much freedom too fast? Was the treat given outside, or only once you were back in? Go back to closer supervision for a while, and use the log to spot the pattern.^{7,8}

Red Flag: Call Your Vet

Straining, crying while peeing, lots of tries with little or no urine, blood in the urine, or a sudden change in toilet habits need a vet visit. A puppy who can't pee at all needs urgent help. Don't assume it's a training problem.²³

Get the whole household on board

Agree who handles the first trip of the morning, who watches after meals, and how you'll mark trips done. "Someone took her out" needs a name attached.

Try This Today

Use the potty log for one day: note waking, meals, drinks, play and toilet results. Spot when trips came too late, and adjust tomorrow around your puppy's real pattern.

TINY TEETH, BUSY MOUTH

Handle mouthing and chewing without scaring your puppy.



Bean, a beagle puppy I fostered, had a thing for the loose end of my cardigan. Unfortunately, I was usually wearing it. If I walked away fast, the cardigan became even more exciting. If I flapped my hands, she discovered bonus entertainment. I needed something better than “Bean, please reconsider.”

So I kept a long rope toy within reach at all times and offered it *before* she went for the cardigan. Within a couple of weeks, she’d started bringing me the rope instead of hunting for my sleeve. Not every time, but often enough that my cardigan survived.

Puppies explore the world with their mouths, and teething adds an extra urge to chew. How you respond depends on what your puppy is doing and what happened just before.^{9,10}

First, check the basics

Does your puppy need a toilet trip? Have they eaten, played and had company? Has play gotten too wild? Are they overdue for a nap? Is the tempting thing just too easy to reach?

An overtired puppy often gets bitier, not sleepier, so more play isn’t always the answer.⁹

Choose a response that fits

What’s happening	Try	Keep in mind
Biting starts during normal play	Offer a toy and play with that instead	Waving the toy wildly adds excitement
Teeth keep landing on skin or clothes	Pause play or step behind a gate	Their needs still have to be met
Your puppy is getting wilder and wilder	Calm things down and offer a nap	Never force a distressed puppy into a crate
Furniture or shoes are getting chewed	Block access and offer a chew toy	Redirecting needs supervision
Biting seems linked to pain, fear or guarding	Get vet and professional help	Don’t keep testing it

These work together. You don’t need one perfect fix for every bite.^{1,9}

Method 1: Get the toy there first

- 1 Spot the predictable moment.** Maybe your puppy grabs sleeves whenever you sit on the floor.

- 2 **Have a long toy ready.** Length keeps teeth away from fingers.
- 3 **Offer it before the sleeve becomes the game.**
- 4 **Play with the toy** and keep it fun.
- 5 **Wind down before things get too wild.**

If your puppy keeps choosing your hand, make play calmer, try a different toy, or stop for a moment. Don't push the toy into their mouth.⁹

Method 2: Pause the fun

- 1 **Keep your movements small and calm.** Flapping hands are irresistible.
- 2 **Stop playing.**
- 3 **If needed, step behind a gate** so your puppy stays safe in their zone.
- 4 **Come back once they've calmed down.**
- 5 **Offer a toy or meet whatever need is behind the biting.**



A long toy gives those needle teeth something better than your fingers.

A pause is a short break, not a punishment. Never use it to isolate a frightened puppy. If stepping away leads to more chasing, set up the gate before play starts. If saying “ouch!” just revs your puppy up, skip it.⁹

Method 3: The calm reset

When your puppy is a whirlwind of teeth: lower the noise and movement, offer water and a toilet trip, then head to their bed and stay nearby while they settle. A reset should never mean chasing, grabbing and shutting them in a crate.

Elin's Tip

Leave a toy beside the chair or spot where biting usually happens. It's much easier than hunting for one while someone is attached to your trouser leg.

Gentle treat-taking

Offer treats on a flat palm, or place them on the floor if fingers attract teeth. Reward soft, careful taking, and if grabbing gets worse, switch to dropping treats. Don't offer your fingers for practice bites.

Children and puppies

An adult always supervises, with a gate ready. Pick games that keep hands away from the puppy's mouth, like an adult-led "find the treat" game or watching a short training session. Never make a child responsible for stopping biting, and separate them before either gets tired or overexcited. Never leave a young child and puppy alone together.^{1,9}

Give that mouth a job

Biscuit, the Golden Retriever I grew up with, had a lifelong passion for socks. It taught me the true value of a laundry basket with a lid. Manage access first, then offer good things to chew:

- 1 **Choose the right size**, too big to swallow.
- 2 **Skip very hard chews**. Bones, antlers and other hard items can break teeth.
- 3 **Supervise**. No chew is guaranteed safe.
- 4 **Check toys often**, and throw away anything breaking apart.
- 5 **Rotate a few favorites** instead of leaving out twenty.¹⁰

Ask your vet which chews suit your puppy's size, teeth and diet.

If your puppy grabs something they shouldn't, offer a trade instead of a chase (Chapter 7 teaches "drop it"). If they keep going back to the furniture, block access and have a chew ready before the next attempt.

What I'll never ask you to do

No hitting, holding the mouth shut, pinning or rolling your puppy over, or scaring them into stopping. Just management, rewards and changing the activity, as AVSAB recommends.¹



Flexible rubber chews, with supervision, give teething puppies relief.

Red Flag: Call Your Vet

A swallowed object or missing piece of toy, a broken tooth, real mouth pain or unusual bleeding need a vet's advice, even if your puppy seems fine right now.^{10,20}

Try This Today

Notice when biting usually happens. Put a toy and a gate within reach of that spot, and offer the toy before the biting starts.

SLEEP, CRATES AND THOSE FIRST NIGHTS

Build good sleep without making a crate compulsory.



At 2:14 a.m., the puppy makes a noise. You lie there listening. A toilet request? Loneliness? The opening bars of a full performance? You're tired enough to consider asking the puppy directly.

Noodle, a tiny dachshund puppy I fostered, slept in a pen right beside my bed for her first nights, with an open crate inside it as a cozy den. When she woke, I could reach down, settle her, or take her out for a quick, boring toilet trip. By the end of the second week, she was sleeping until 4 a.m. Over the next few weeks, I moved the pen a little farther away, and she barely noticed.

How much sleep do puppies need?

A lot. The American Kennel Club estimates 18 to 20 hours a day for young puppies.¹³ Treat that as a guide, not a quota, and give plenty of chances for undisturbed naps. Never keep a puppy awake to tire them out for the night. If your puppy seems unusually hard to wake, weak or unwell, that's not great napping; call your vet.²³

Choose a sleeping setup

Option	Good when	What it needs
Puppy-proofed room or gated area	You have a safe space	Comfort and quick toilet access
Secure pen	Your puppy needs room to move	A stable setup, no reachable hazards
Open crate inside a pen	You want a cozy den option	Happy introductions
Closed crate	Your puppy already likes the crate	Short stretches, monitoring, toilet breaks

A crate doesn't replace meeting your puppy's needs. Dogs Trust recommends pens as a good alternative, including at night.¹¹

Teach the crate during the day

- 1 Set it up.** Check the size, stability, airflow and anything that could snag.
- 2 Reward your puppy for going near it,** with the door fixed open.
- 3 Drop treats near the entrance.** Let them choose to explore.

- 4 **Reward stepping inside.** Never push them in.
- 5 **Build up relaxed time inside,** door still open.
- 6 **Move the door a little,** reward, then open it again.
- 7 **Try a very short closure** only when all that is easy.
- 8 **Add time and your movement separately.** One change at a time.

If your puppy gets worried, go back a step. Don't wait for panic to tell you it was too much.¹¹ If they won't go in, start farther from the door. If they rush out, let them, and keep sessions shorter.

Two kind ways to handle the first nights

Bring their bed close to you. Once they're settled, gradually move it toward where you want it long term.

Or sleep near their bed. Use a temporary bed nearby, then gradually increase the distance as your puppy copes.

Both let your puppy feel close while they adjust.¹² There's no particular night you have to move anything.



Let your puppy choose to step into the open crate. Treats help.

When your puppy cries at night

- 1 **Respond and check.** Toilet? Too hot or cold? Uncomfortable? Scared?
- 2 **Take a quiet, boring toilet trip** if needed: low lights, no games.
- 3 **Settle them back in their bed.**
- 4 **Stay close enough to help them relax.**
- 5 **Make things easier next time** if crying keeps escalating.

Skip the old “just ignore it” rule. You can't tell every need from the sound alone. Repeated distress means the setup needs changing, not that you need to be tougher.^{11,12} For crying that won't stop, signs of pain or a sudden change, talk to your vet.

Elin's Tip

Lay out your shoes, keys, leash and treats before bed. At 2 a.m., anything with a buckle becomes an engineering project.

Protect daytime naps

Offer a nap after play and a toilet trip, and tell the family that a sleeping puppy is off-limits for cuddles and games. A puppy who's getting busier and bitier may simply need a quiet place to sleep.^{9,12}

Start tiny alone-time practice

Begin with something small: stand up, step away for a moment, come back, all while your puppy stays relaxed. Build up gradually, and make it easier if they get worried. Resting happily with you nearby doesn't mean they can cope with a long absence yet.¹⁶ (Our guide *Calm When I'm Gone* covers alone time step by step.)

Try This Today

Choose a safe sleeping setup, practice one relaxed daytime crate or pen step, and lay out tonight's toilet-trip gear before bed.

SHOW YOUR PUPPY THE WORLD, GENTLY

Build good experiences without rushing or overwhelming them.



A bicycle goes by. Your puppy watches from a comfortable distance, then turns back to you. Nothing dramatic happens. That's a great socialization moment. Your puppy doesn't need to inspect the pedals, greet the rider or pose for a checklist photo.

Teddy, a curly poodle puppy I fostered, hadn't finished his vaccinations, so we couldn't walk the park yet. Instead, I carried him to a bench and we watched the world go by: joggers, strollers, a man with a giant umbrella, a dog far across the grass. Treat, watch, treat, home. A few weeks later, on his first real walk, bikes and strollers were old news to him.

What socialization is for

Socialization means gently introducing your puppy to people, animals, handling, places and everyday sights and sounds, so they grow into a confident adult. The most sensitive window is roughly 3 to 14 weeks of age. Learning doesn't stop after that, but those early weeks matter a lot.^{2,14}

That's weeks of *age*, not weeks since they came home. If your puppy arrived older, work with the puppy you have, and don't try to cram a month of experiences into an afternoon.

Before full vaccination

AVSAB supports starting socialization *before* puppies finish their vaccinations, with sensible precautions.² That doesn't mean every park or unknown dog is okay. Ask your vet about local disease risks, which classes and places are safe, and when your puppy can meet other dogs.

Good options include experiences at home, watching the world while carried or from the car, and meeting healthy, vaccinated dogs your vet is comfortable with.¹⁵

The gentle introduction

- 1 **Start with an easy version:** a quiet sound, a person far away, a familiar object.
- 2 **Give your puppy room to watch.** Don't hold them in place for a greeting.
- 3 **Offer a treat** while they're relaxed.
- 4 **Let them move away** whenever they want.
- 5 **Stop or make it easier** when their body language changes.

How your puppy feels matters more than how many things they see. Lots of scary exposures can make fear worse, not better.¹⁵

Watch the whole puppy

Signs a puppy needs more space: moving away, freezing, a tense body, tucking the tail, or trouble getting back to playing or sniffing. A puppy can take a treat and still be uncomfortable, so don't rely on eating alone. When in doubt, add space and try an easier version. You don't have to wait for barking or a scramble to escape.^{14,15}



Watching from a distance counts. Your puppy doesn't need to touch the umbrella.

Elin's Tip

"We watched from farther away" belongs on the success list.

Different experiences, different setups

Experience	Easy start	Avoid
People	Calm watching, no pressure to say hi	Passing the puppy around to strangers
Sounds	Quiet, short, and you control the volume	Loud recordings until they stop reacting
Surfaces	A stable, non-slip new surface next to a familiar one	Pushing or pulling them across
Handling	Short, gentle touches with treats	Holding them still until they give up
Dogs	Healthy, calm, suitable dogs with supervision	Free-for-all greetings, rough play
Car	Sitting in the parked car, then short trips	Making every trip long or stressful

For outdoor spaces, shared surfaces and meeting other animals, follow your vet's health advice.^{2,15}

Choosing a puppy class

Ask: What health requirements and cleaning routines do you have? How do you help shy puppies? Can a puppy watch instead of joining in? Do you match puppies by size and play style? What happens if a puppy gets overwhelmed? Are your methods reward-based?

A good class has structure, breaks, and the ability to separate puppies. Nonstop group play isn't the goal.^{1,2} Your vet can help with timing and health precautions.

The 100-experience menu

The printable at the back has 100 ideas across people, sounds, surfaces, objects, handling, travel and everyday life. It's a menu, not a quota. Skip what doesn't fit, repeat easy ones, and add things that matter in your household. A tick means "we set up a good experience," not "the puppy put up with it." There's no prize for finishing first.

Myth vs. Fact

Myth: "If I expose my puppy to enough things, they'll never be fearful."

Fact: Experiences shape behavior but can't guarantee it. Quality beats quantity: a few happy, well-judged experiences do more good than lots of overwhelming ones.¹⁵

If your puppy gets worried

Add distance or turn things down, let them retreat if it's safe, stop if they stay uncomfortable, and come back another day with an easier setup. Never lure a puppy toward something scary with food, and never force a greeting to tick a box. For ongoing fear, sudden changes, or a puppy who's becoming hard to handle, get help from your vet and a reward-based professional.^{1,15}



Choosing to walk away is a perfectly good choice. Let them.

Try This Today

Choose one everyday experience, set up the easiest version of it, and watch your puppy closely. Adjust before you add anything more.

THE FIRST SKILLS THAT MAKE LIFE EASIER

Teach useful behaviors in small, repeatable steps.



Your puppy can hear the treat cupboard open from three rooms away. Their name, said right next to them in the yard, apparently travels on a different frequency.

Domino, a black-and-white mixed-breed foster puppy, ignored his name completely for his first few days. So we played a silly game: say “Domino” once, the second he looked, “yes!” and a treat. Ten times in the kitchen, a few times a day. By the end of the week, his head snapped round at his name, even in the yard. It was the first thing that made me feel like we were actually communicating.

Start where learning is easy: a quiet room with few distractions beats a busy doorway every time.¹⁶ Pick one skill per session and stop after a few easy wins.

Make the reward clear

Pick a marker word like “yes.” Say it, then give a tiny treat. Repeat a few times. Once “yes” means a treat is coming, use it to mark the exact moment your puppy does what you want.¹ Count training treats as part of the day’s food, and check with your vet about any dietary needs.

1. Their name

Goal: your puppy hears their name and looks at you.

- 1 Start close by, in a quiet room.
- 2 Say their name once.
- 3 The moment they glance at you, say “yes” and treat.
- 4 A little kissy noise can help at first.
- 5 Practice from different spots before adding distractions.

No response? Move closer and make it easier. Don’t repeat their name until it becomes background noise.¹⁶

2. Sit

Goal: a happy sit, with no pushing.

- 1 Start with your puppy standing.

- 2 Hold a treat at their nose.
- 3 Move it slowly up and slightly back over their head.
- 4 As their bottom goes down, say “yes” and treat.
- 5 Gradually use the same hand movement without a treat in it.
- 6 Add the word “sit” just before the hand signal.

If they jump or back up, keep your hand lower and the movement smaller. You can also simply reward sits your puppy offers on their own. Never push their bottom down.¹⁶

3. Come

Goal: coming to you is always worth it.

- 1 Start a few steps away, indoors.
- 2 Say your recall word once, in a happy voice.
- 3 Take a step backward to encourage them.
- 4 Treat when they reach you.
- 5 Often let them go straight back to what they were doing.

Practice in safe, enclosed spaces, and keep your puppy on a leash outdoors until recall is solid. If they don't come, get closer and remove distractions. Never scold a puppy when they finally arrive.²⁵

4. Drop it

Goal: letting go of something earns a fair trade.

- 1 Start with an everyday, safe toy, not a treasured chew.
- 2 Let your puppy hold it.
- 3 Offer something better, like a treat placed right by their nose.
- 4 When they let go, “yes” and treat.
- 5 Give the toy back when you can.
- 6 Once they know the game, say “drop” before you offer the trade.

If your puppy stiffens, guards or rushes to swallow, stop practicing that and get professional help. Don't keep reaching into their mouth.¹⁶ If they've got something dangerous, or you think they swallowed something, call your vet right away.²⁰

5. Leave it

Goal: turning away from something earns something better.

- 1 Start with a boring item you can control, in a closed hand.
- 2 Let your puppy sniff at your hand.
- 3 The moment they turn away, “yes.”
- 4 Treat from your *other* hand.
- 5 Add “leave it” once they’re turning away reliably.
- 6 Make it harder gradually.



“Drop it” should feel like a great trade, not losing a prize.

“Leave it” means *don’t pick it up*. “Drop it” means *let go of what you have*.¹⁶

6. Settle on a mat

Goal: a cozy place to relax.

- 1 Put a mat near you.
- 2 Reward sniffing it or stepping on it.
- 3 Place treats low, on the mat.
- 4 Gradually reward standing, sitting or lying there calmly.
- 5 Slowly add a little time between treats while they stay relaxed.
- 6 Finish before it gets frustrating.

Don’t insist on a down or keep putting them back on the mat. If they get excited, deliver treats more calmly or keep it shorter.²⁴

7. Loose-leash basics

Goal: a few relaxed steps without pulling.

- 1 Introduce the harness and leash slowly, with treats.
- 2 Practice somewhere quiet and safe.
- 3 Treat right beside your leg.
- 4 Take one step together, and treat while the leash is loose.
- 5 Build to a few steps, then take a sniff break.



Calm treats on the mat build a puppy who knows how to switch off.

If the leash tightens, pause or change direction, then reward loose steps. Follow your vet's advice about where your puppy can walk before vaccinations are complete.¹⁶ (*Walks Without the Drama* takes leash skills all the way.)

8. Greetings without jumping

Reward four on the floor: greet calmly, treat while all four paws are down, keep it short, and pause or step back if jumping starts.

Prevent the rehearsal: use a gate before visitors come in, let the visitor settle, give your puppy a toy, then allow a short hello when things are calm.

Offer something else to do: ask for an easy sit before the person gets close, reward it, then allow a brief greeting.

Never knee, push or pull your puppy down. If jumping looks worried or frantic, give space instead of insisting on a greeting.¹⁶

Elin's Tip

Brief visitors before you open the gate. "Hands low, and please pause if she jumps" works far better than explaining mid-reunion.

When a cue stops working

Check the distance, distractions and treat value, and go back to an easier version instead of repeating the word louder. Everyone in the house should use the same word for the same thing; the family rules sheet at the back keeps you all on track.^{1,16}

Try This Today

Pick one skill, practice a few easy repetitions, and stop while your puppy is still keen.

PAWS, BRUSHES AND EVERYDAY CARE

Make grooming and handling easy, one small step at a time.



Coco, a fluffy white puppy, came to the salon for her very first “groom” at ten weeks. Her owner was hoping for a full makeover. My boss’s rule was strict: one brush stroke, one treat, one paw touch, one treat, and home. Coco’s owner looked a little disappointed. But Coco bounced in for every visit after that, and by six months she was hopping onto the grooming table by herself.

The one-brush-stroke rule stuck with me. It’s tempting, after one good stroke, to do the other side, check the ears and trim a nail while the gear is out. That’s exactly how one good moment turns into too much. Early grooming practice should be short and rewarding, not about making a puppy tolerate everything at once.¹⁷

Start with one easy touch

- 1 Pick a calm moment when your puppy is awake and relaxed.
- 2 Briefly touch somewhere they already like, such as the shoulder.
- 3 Give a treat.
- 4 Take your hand away and pause.
- 5 Continue only if they’re still relaxed.

Gradually work toward paws, ears and the outside of the mouth. Never start by gripping a paw or prying the mouth open. If your puppy moves away, let that end the session, and try a smaller step next time.^{2,17}

First brushing

Let your puppy sniff the brush, reward their interest, then try one gentle stroke in an easy spot. Treat and pause. Add strokes as they stay comfortable. Use a brush suited to their coat, and never pull through painful tangles. If the brush becomes a toy, practice after playtime or offer a separate toy to hold. For mats, skin changes or pain, ask your groomer or vet.¹⁷



A quick paw touch and a treat. That’s a whole session.

Getting ready for baths

- 1 Set up a stable, non-slip surface.
- 2 Let your puppy get comfortable near the bath area while it's dry.
- 3 Introduce the water sound and gentle wetting in separate easy steps.
- 4 Use comfortably warm water and a puppy-safe shampoo.
- 5 Keep water and shampoo away from eyes and ears.
- 6 Rinse well, dry gently, and keep it short.

If your puppy gets scared, stop and go back to dry practice. Ask your vet about products or skin concerns.¹⁸ (*The Happy Coat Handbook* covers grooming every coat type at home.)

Nail care

Clippers, a file or a slowly introduced grinder all work, or ask your vet or groomer for help.

- 1 Show the tool.
- 2 Pair sniffing it with treats.
- 3 Practice short paw handling separately.
- 4 Bring the tool near a nail, with treats.
- 5 Trim only once you know the technique and your puppy is relaxed.

One nail can be the whole session. If you can't see the quick (the sensitive part inside the nail), ask for a demonstration. Don't guess how much to cut.¹⁸ For bleeding, injury or pain, call your vet.

Elin's Tip

Every so often, bring the clippers out, give a treat, and put them away again. Your puppy learns that clippers don't always mean a full pedicure.

Make vet handling easier

Tell the vet team about any worries before they start, bring tasty treats, and ask how you can help. At home, practice gentle touches rather than copying procedures you haven't been shown. If handling suddenly becomes difficult or your puppy seems sore, stop and call your vet.^{15,19}

Try This Today

Pick one easy touch or grooming step, pair it with a great treat, and stop before you add anything else.

WHAT'S NORMAL, AND WHEN TO CALL YOUR VET

Know when to stop troubleshooting and pick up the phone.



Your puppy has fallen asleep in a position that seems to involve more elbows than necessary. That's an ordinary nap. A puppy who's unusually weak, hard to wake or not responding normally needs a completely different response.

Pretzel, a corgi puppy who came to our daycare, once chewed a chunk off a squeaky toy. He seemed totally fine, and his family nearly decided to wait and see. They called the vet instead, and were told to come in right away. Pretzel turned out fine, but his family now has a house rule: check every toy at bedtime, and call first, worry later.

This chapter helps you decide when to get help. It can't diagnose your puppy.^{19,23}

Book the first vet visit

Bring all the records from the breeder, rescue or previous carer, and ask about:

- The exam results and healthy growth.
- The right food, meal plan and treats.
- Vaccinations and parasite prevention.
- Local disease risks and safe places for socialization.
- Microchip and ID details.
- Any behavior or handling worries.
- Who to call after hours.

Follow your vet's schedule for your puppy, not an internet timetable.¹⁹

Know your household hazards

Keep chocolate, grapes and raisins, anything with xylitol (some gum, candy, peanut butters and baked goods), medications, nicotine, cannabis, cleaning products and pest control completely out of reach. Also secure batteries, string, laundry, food wrappers and anything small enough to swallow.^{20,21} A cupboard only helps if your puppy can't open it.

If you think your puppy ate something harmful, call your vet or an animal poison-control line right away. Don't wait for symptoms, and don't try home remedies without professional advice.^{20,21}

Get emergency help now

- Trouble breathing.
- Collapse, unresponsiveness or severe weakness.
- Seizures.
- Suspected poisoning.
- Serious injury or bleeding you can't stop.
- Straining to pee with little or nothing coming out.
- Repeated vomiting or severe diarrhea, especially with blood, weakness or other signs of illness.^{20,21,23}

If something seems seriously wrong, call ahead while you get ready to go, and head to an emergency vet rather than waiting for a regular appointment.

Call your vet promptly

- Not eating, or a sudden change in appetite.
- Vomiting or diarrhea.
- Unusually quiet or less responsive.
- Pain, limping, or a big change in behavior.
- Straining in the toilet.
- Possibly swallowed part of a toy or another object.

Tell them your puppy's age, size, symptoms and when it started. Young puppies can get sick fast, so don't use the "wait a day or two" rules that might apply to adult dogs.^{19,20,22,23}

Don't diagnose from a checklist

Vomiting, diarrhea, not eating and lethargy can be signs of serious illnesses such as parvovirus. They don't confirm it, and a missing sign doesn't rule it out.²² If an infectious illness is possible, call the clinic before you arrive so they can tell you how to come in safely.

Red Flag: Call Your Vet

A puppy who's unwell needs a health check, not a tougher training session. Sudden changes in toileting, sleep, appetite or tolerance of handling all deserve a call to your vet.^{15,19}

Get ready before you need help

- 1 Save your regular vet's number in your phone.
- 2 Find your nearest emergency clinic and check its hours.
- 3 Keep your puppy's records somewhere easy to grab.

4 Know how you'll transport your puppy safely.

5 Tell sitters and family where all of this is.

Try This Today

Fill in the contacts section of the vet questions printable, gather your puppy's records in one place, and write down the questions you don't want to forget.

YOUR FIRST 90 DAYS TOGETHER

A flexible weekly plan that fits the puppy in front of you.



One day, you'll notice something small. Your puppy heads for the toilet spot on their own. Or drops a toy for a trade. Or settles beside you while you finish a cup of coffee. While it's still warm.

Honey, a golden retriever puppy, went home from my house with a little notebook. Her new family wrote one line a day. Week one: "Peed on the rug twice. Bit my sleeve. Cried at 2 a.m." Week twelve: "Asked to go out. Napped on her mat while we ate dinner." When they sent me a photo of those two pages side by side, it was the best update I'd ever received.

This plan organizes your first 90 days together. It doesn't promise every skill will be perfect by Day 90. Repeat any week, as often as you need.

Keep two clocks

Your puppy's age: _____ **Time living with you:** _____

This matters most for socialization: your puppy's sensitive window depends on their age, not how long they've been home.^{2,14} So start gentle, vet-approved socialization right away. Don't save it for "week six."

A simple daily rhythm

After...	Think...
Waking up	Toilet trip
Eating, drinking, play or excitement	Another toilet trip
Play or training	Nap time
An easy training win	A break
Something worrying	More space, and an easier next step

A pattern to adapt, not a minute-by-minute timetable.^{6,11,12}

Weeks 1–4: Settle in

Week 1: Make daily life manageable. Set up the puppy zone, start toilet trips, plan the nights, book the vet and gather records. Start easy experiences at home, ask your vet about going out, and arrange cover for any absences your puppy can't handle yet. *Ask: what keeps catching us unprepared?*

Week 2: Spot the patterns. Use the potty log. Practice name games, harness introductions and fair trades with a safe toy. Offer a nap *before* the usual wild hour. *Ask: which times of day need an earlier toilet trip or a quieter activity?*

Week 3: Build small skills. Pick one or two easy cues. Keep up gentle handling and socialization. Practice tiny separations while your puppy is relaxed. *Ask: am I making things easier when needed?*

Week 4: Review the setup. Recheck harness fit and hazards your growing puppy can now reach. Review food, growth and vaccinations with your vet. Look into a puppy class. *Ask: does our home still fit this puppy?*

Weeks 5–8: Build good habits

Week 5: Set up good choices. Put toys out before biting usually starts. Practice four-on-the-floor greetings with a calm adult. *Ask: what can I prepare before the tricky moment?*

Week 6: Try a new easy place. Practice a familiar skill in another quiet room or a safe spot outside, with more treats and shorter sessions. *Ask: did I change more than one thing at once?*

Week 7: Strengthen the basics. Recall in safe spaces, trades, and mat time. Keep socializing without chasing a total. *Ask: which skill is helping daily life most?*

Week 8: Make care routine. Brushing, paw handling and nail-tool practice. Ask for a demonstration if needed. *Ask: can I stop after one easy step?*

Weeks 9–13: Grow up together

Week 9: Check alone time. Look honestly at what your puppy can handle. Don't jump from short practice to a long absence; arrange help when needed.¹⁶ *Ask: does our care plan match our real schedule?*

Week 10: Expand freedom slowly. Give access to more of the house as toileting and chewing allow. Go back to a smaller area if accidents creep up. *Ask: have I given freedom faster than my puppy can handle?*

Week 11: Revisit greetings and outings. Practice everyday situations at an easy level, with an exit ready and no forced contact. *Ask: can my puppy watch without being expected to say hi?*

Week 12: Find what needs help. Get professional advice for ongoing fear, guarding, distress, painful handling or hard biting. Sudden changes need your vet.^{1,15} *Ask: what would benefit from some expert help?*

Week 13 (days 85–90): Look back. Pick the routines worth keeping and one next goal. Repeat comfortable exercises rather than testing everything. *Ask: what's easier now, and what needs a smaller step?*

Adjust for your household

Apartment: keep gear by the door and use an indoor toilet as a backup if you need one. **Children:** an adult always supervises, with gates up before anyone gets overexcited. **Working household:** arrange cover for toilet trips, company and care from day one. **Older puppy:** adjust to their age, history and health instead of starting from scratch.

What counts as progress?

- Fewer accidents, and more trips to the door.
- Biting that's softer and less frequent.
- Longer stretches of sleep at night.
- Calmer reactions to new sights and sounds.
- Settling on their own more often.
- A routine you can keep without dreading tomorrow.

Elin's Tip

"We repeated an easy week" is a complete plan.

Try This Today

Fill in your puppy's age and time at home, choose this week's priority, and write one change that would make tomorrow easier.

PUPPY SUPPLY CHECKLIST

Buy for the puppy you have. Check fit, size and suitability as they grow.

Puppy's name: _____

Arrival date: _____

Home and rest

- ☐ Comfortable, washable bedding
- ☐ Secure pen, suitable gates or puppy-proofed room
- ☐ Crate, if you choose to introduce one
- ☐ Stable water bowl
- ☐ Food bowl or suitable feeding equipment
- ☐ Safe place to store food and supplies

Walking and travel

- ☐ Properly fitted collar and identification
- ☐ Comfortable, adjustable harness
- ☐ Fixed leash appropriate for puppy size
- ☐ Suitable secured travel crate or car restraint
- ☐ Waste bags
- ☐ Updated microchip contact details, where applicable

Cleanup and preparation

- ☐ Enzymatic pet-urine cleaner
- ☐ Cleaning supplies stored safely
- ☐ Designated indoor toilet materials, if needed
- ☐ Veterinary records
- ☐ Regular and emergency clinic details
- ☐ Care arrangements for absences

Useful extras for our household:

Questions before buying:

Ask your vet about food, chews, products or equipment affected by your puppy's health.

Food and rewards

- ☐ Current food and feeding information
- ☐ Suitable training rewards
- ☐ Veterinary questions about diet and meal arrangements
- ☐ Suitable feeding-enrichment options

Play and care

- ☐ Appropriately sized toys
- ☐ Suitable supervised chewing options
- ☐ Coat-appropriate brush or comb
- ☐ Puppy-appropriate bathing product, if needed
- ☐ Towels and nonslip surface
- ☐ Nail-care tools and a demonstration before use

PUPPY-PROOFING CHECKLIST

Check again as your puppy grows and gains access.

Checked by: _____ Date: _____

Living areas

- ☐ Electrical cords and charging cables inaccessible
- ☐ Batteries, remotes and small electronics secured
- ☐ Small decorations and swallowable objects removed
- ☐ Blind cords and other dangling loops secured
- ☐ Furniture gaps and unstable objects checked
- ☐ Plants checked for safety and access prevented as needed

Kitchen and bathroom

- ☐ Bins secured
- ☐ Food and food packaging inaccessible
- ☐ Cleaning products and chemicals secured
- ☐ Human and animal medicines stored safely
- ☐ Xylitol-containing products inaccessible
- ☐ Toilet and other water hazards managed

Puppy zone

- ☐ Stable barriers and suitable flooring
- ☐ Nothing hazardous reachable through the sides
- ☐ Resting area comfortable
- ☐ Water available
- ☐ Toys and bedding checked for damage
- ☐ Family knows the supervision plan

Still to fix:

Next recheck date: _____

For suspected poisoning or ingestion, contact your vet promptly.

Bedrooms and laundry

- ☐ Socks, underwear and shoes put away
- ☐ Laundry baskets inaccessible
- ☐ Medication, cosmetics and jewelry secured
- ☐ Sewing supplies, string and hair ties inaccessible
- ☐ Bags checked for food, gum and medication

Yard, balcony and entrances

- ☐ Gates latch securely
- ☐ Fence gaps and escape routes checked
- ☐ Balcony gaps and fall risks managed
- ☐ Fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals secured
- ☐ Plants and discarded objects checked
- ☐ Doors can be managed during arrivals and departures

DAILY POTTY SCHEDULE AND LOG

Use your puppy's pattern, not a bladder formula, to adjust opportunities.

Date: _____ Puppy's age: _____

Chosen toilet location: _____

Time	Woke / ate / drank / played / other	Toilet opportunity and location	Pee / poop / neither	Accident or useful observation

Opportunity reminders

- ☐ After waking
- ☐ After meals and drinking
- ☐ During or after active play
- ☐ After excitement
- ☐ Before settling for the night
- ☐ Whenever toileting signs appear

Who handles the first trip? _____

Who supervises after meals? _____

What happened before today's accidents?

Tomorrow's adjustment:

Reward promptly after finishing in the chosen place. Never punish accidents. Pain, straining or sudden changes need veterinary advice.

MY PUPPY'S SOCIALIZATION Menu

100 possibilities, not 100 requirements.

Puppy's age: _____ Date started: _____

Choose appropriate experiences, repeat easy ones and skip unsuitable items. Observe from a comfortable distance. Allow withdrawal. For health precautions, shared surfaces and animal contact, follow your vet's advice.

A tick means an appropriate introduction was arranged. It doesn't certify that the puppy is comfortable in every version of that situation.

People to observe comfortably

- ☐ 1. Familiar adult sitting
- ☐ 2. Familiar adult standing
- ☐ 3. Familiar adult walking
- ☐ 4. Unfamiliar adult at a distance
- ☐ 5. Older adult at a distance
- ☐ 6. Child playing at a distance
- ☐ 7. Person speaking softly
- ☐ 8. Person carrying shopping
- ☐ 9. Person using a mobility aid
- ☐ 10. People passing without greeting

Clothing and appearance

- ☐ 11. Hat
- ☐ 12. Hood
- ☐ 13. Sunglasses
- ☐ 14. Raincoat
- ☐ 15. Boots
- ☐ 16. Gloves
- ☐ 17. Backpack
- ☐ 18. Helmet
- ☐ 19. Umbrella held still
- ☐ 20. Familiar person in different clothes

Quiet household sounds

- ☐ 21. Door opening gently
- ☐ 22. Cupboard closing gently
- ☐ 23. Keys moving
- ☐ 24. Phone ringing quietly
- ☐ 25. Television at low volume
- ☐ 26. Washing machine from a distance
- ☐ 27. Dishwasher from a distance
- ☐ 28. Quiet vacuum introduction
- ☐ 29. Hair dryer from a distance
- ☐ 30. Doorbell at low intensity

Sounds beyond the home

- ☐ 31. Distant traffic
- ☐ 32. Distant bicycle bell
- ☐ 33. Distant vehicle door
- ☐ 34. Distant voices

- ☐ 35. Birds
- ☐ 36. Gentle rain
- ☐ 37. Wind in trees
- ☐ 38. Distant delivery activity
- ☐ 39. Quiet rolling-bin sound
- ☐ 40. Low-volume unfamiliar sound recording

Safe, stable surfaces

- ☐ 41. Familiar flooring
- ☐ 42. Nonslip mat
- ☐ 43. Carpet
- ☐ 44. Towel laid flat
- ☐ 45. Rubber mat
- ☐ 46. Suitable grass
- ☐ 47. Suitable pavement
- ☐ 48. Stable wooden surface
- ☐ 49. Safe textured mat
- ☐ 50. Threshold beside familiar flooring

Ordinary objects

- ☐ 51. Empty cardboard box
- ☐ 52. Suitcase standing still
- ☐ 53. Suitcase rolling slowly
- ☐ 54. Broom standing still
- ☐ 55. Bucket
- ☐ 56. Folded umbrella
- ☐ 57. Stationary bicycle
- ☐ 58. Stationary stroller
- ☐ 59. Bin in a different position
- ☐ 60. New safe toy shape

Comfortable handling

- ☐ 61. Brief shoulder touch
- ☐ 62. Brief chest touch
- ☐ 63. Brief paw touch
- ☐ 64. Gentle ear touch
- ☐ 65. Brief outside-of-muzzle touch
- ☐ 66. Collar introduction
- ☐ 67. Harness introduction
- ☐ 68. Brush introduction
- ☐ 69. Towel introduction

- ☐ 70. Nail tool seen at a distance

Everyday home activities

- ☐ 71. Adult sitting at a desk
- ☐ 72. Adult preparing food behind a barrier
- ☐ 73. Adult carrying laundry
- ☐ 74. Adult changing position in a chair
- ☐ 75. Adult wearing outdoor shoes
- ☐ 76. Gentle movement of curtains
- ☐ 77. A calm visitor entering
- ☐ 78. Quiet conversation between adults
- ☐ 79. Resting near ordinary household activity
- ☐ 80. Brief, comfortable separation practice

Travel and veterinary preparation

- ☐ 81. Approaching a stationary car
- ☐ 82. Comfortable travel-equipment introduction
- ☐ 83. Brief time in a stationary vehicle
- ☐ 84. Short suitable car trip
- ☐ 85. Watching outdoors from a safe arrangement
- ☐ 86. Elevator observation, if appropriate
- ☐ 87. Veterinary carrier or restraint introduction
- ☐ 88. Clinic arrival plan discussed with staff
- ☐ 89. Suitable reward-based clinic visit
- ☐ 90. Comfortable scale introduction with staff

Animals and movement

- ☐ 91. Calm suitable dog at a distance
- ☐ 92. Suitable dog moving at a distance
- ☐ 93. Carefully managed dog meeting, if appropriate
- ☐ 94. Cat observed without pursuit
- ☐ 95. Birds observed without pursuit
- ☐ 96. Jogger at a distance
- ☐ 97. Bicycle moving at a distance
- ☐ 98. Scooter moving at a distance
- ☐ 99. Skateboard moving at a distance
- ☐ 100. Watching activity without joining it

Repeat: _____ **Skip/adapt:** _____

Respect other people and animals. Don't recruit unfamiliar children, force contact or provoke chasing.

OUR FIRST 90 DAYS

Track puppy age separately from time at home.

Puppy's name: _____

Arrival date: _____ Approximate age at arrival: _____

Week at home	Priority	What worked / what needs adjusting	Reviewed
1	Safe setup, toileting, rest, veterinary and socialization planning		☐
2	Notice patterns; begin easy skills and trades		☐
3	Small skills, gentle handling, comfortable separations		☐
4	Review fit, hazards, health questions and class options		☐
5	Prepare for biting and greeting challenges		☐
6	Practice a familiar skill somewhere else easy		☐
7	Repeat useful foundations		☐
8	Make care predictable		☐
9	Review alone-time and care arrangements		☐
10	Review household freedom		☐
11	Manageable greetings and outings		☐
12	Identify questions needing individual support		☐
13, days 85–90	Choose continuing routines and a next goal		☐

Appropriate socialization starts now, not in a later week. Follow your vet's health precautions.

A routine we want to keep:

Something to make easier:

Professional question:

Our next small goal:

Repeat or adapt any week. Your puppy sets the pace.

VETERINARY VISIT QUESTIONS

Bring records and observations. Ask for instructions specific to your puppy.

Puppy's name: _____ Date of birth: _____

Appointment date: _____

Contacts

Regular clinic: _____

Telephone: _____

Emergency clinic: _____

Telephone / location: _____

Records to bring

- ☐ Previous examinations
- ☐ Vaccination information
- ☐ Parasite treatments and test results
- ☐ Current food and feeding information
- ☐ Medication or supplement information, if applicable
- ☐ Microchip details
- ☐ Symptom or behavior notes

Questions to discuss

- ☐ What does today's examination show?
- ☐ Is growth and body condition appropriate?
- ☐ What food, meals and rewards suit this puppy?
- ☐ What vaccination and parasite-prevention plan applies?
- ☐ Which local places and socialization options are suitable now?
- ☐ What should a puppy class require?
- ☐ What handling or grooming should we practice?
- ☐ Do our behavior observations need further assessment?
- ☐ Which signs should prompt an immediate call?
- ☐ Who do we contact outside normal hours?

My observations and when they began:

Veterinary instructions:

Next appointment or action:

For an urgent problem, call rather than waiting to complete this sheet.

OUR FAMILY PUPPY RULES

Agree on the plan before everyone invents a different one.

Puppy's name: _____

Reviewed on: _____

Shared words

Action	Our cue	How we reward
Turn toward us		
Come		
Release an object		
Leave something alone		
Move with us		
Finish an exercise		

Daily responsibilities

First toilet trip: _____

Meals: _____

After-meal supervision: _____

Rest arrangements: _____

Nighttime care: _____

Absence coverage: _____

Our handling and training agreements

- ☐ Reward the behavior we want.
- ☐ Never punish accidents.
- ☐ Trade suitable objects rather than chasing.
- ☐ Prepare toys and barriers for mouthing.
- ☐ Keep greetings manageable.
- ☐ Let the puppy rest undisturbed.
- ☐ Let the puppy pause comfortable handling practice.
- ☐ An adult manages child-and-puppy interactions.
- ☐ No forced greetings, frightening corrections or painful tools.
- ☐ Report health or behavior changes promptly.

When the puppy becomes overwhelmed, we will:

Visitors need to know:

Our current shared priority:

SOURCES

Links checked October 2026. “n.d.” means the page showed no clear publication date. Practical exercises and the 90-day plan are adaptations for this guide, and the socialization menu is a set of ideas, not a scientific quota.

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MORE FROM DOG PARENT LIFE

As your puppy grows, here's what else is on the shelf:

- **100 Dog Facts**, our free ebook: why your dog does all the weird stuff they do.
- **Walks Without the Drama**: less pulling, less lunging, and walks you both enjoy. The perfect next step once your puppy is out and about.
- **Calm When I'm Gone**: helping your dog handle alone time, one small step at a time.
- **The Quiet Dog Guide**: why your dog barks, and how to turn the volume down.
- **The Happy Coat Handbook**: grooming at home for every coat type.

Keep the routines that help. Repeat the small steps. And when your puppy finally settles long enough for you to finish a warm drink, enjoy every sip.

Elin & Frost

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This guide is for general education and doesn't replace advice from your veterinarian or a qualified behavior professional.