

THE ESSENTIAL HANDBOOK — ON — PUPPIES



You've Adopted a Puppy!

Now What??

Adopting a puppy IS different than adopting an adult dog. One thing remains the same however ... knowledge is power, preparation is essential, and patience is key. Just as with adult dogs, you need to set your new puppy up for success, not failure. To do that, you have to do your homework BEFORE you get the pup!

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CHAPTER ONE

WHEN TO
ADOPT A PUPPY

Opinions differ on this subject, but as a general rule, the longer a pup stays with its mom, up to 12 to 13 weeks, the better. The absolute earliest they should be separated is eight weeks.

WHY? There is a critical period from 6 to 13 weeks where puppies learn “social” skills’. Their little brains are developing at lightening speed and they get cues from their mom on how to behave.

From week 6 to 8, the mom’s job changes from physically nurturing the pups to giving them their first lessons in submission, compliance, social order and social ranking. It’s during this time that the pup’s natural temperament emerges. Those that are more confident and pushy will shove more timid pups away from food, choice sleeping spots, etc.; those more submissive soon learn how to deal with being challenged by more dominant littermates.

WHEN SEPARATED TOO YOUNG FROM THEIR MOM ... pups can be socially immature and have a whole host of behavior problems: an inability to “read” calming signals so they constantly over- or under-react to signals coming from other dogs; an inability to “self soothe” resulting in separation anxiety, self-mutilation, destructive behavior; an inability to read and model appropriate dog behavior resulting in fear and dog fights.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FIRST WEEK

PREPARE YOUR HOME before your pup arrives. Puppy proof, pick up anything that they can get their teeth into. Have a space ready, with crate set up. Lots of spare blankets, towels, etc., to replace soiled ones.

NO COMPANY OVER. The pup is undoubtedly stressed and a bit scared, and needs a calm, quiet environment to adjust in.

START A NOTEBOOK of feeding times and pee/poop times, for potty training.

KEEP YOUR OTHER PETS SEPARATED, for now. Intros can come later.

START CRATE TRAINING RIGHT AWAY. Put the crate in a spot that is near the sights, sounds and smells of the home but far enough away to be peaceful. Make it a safe, comfortable den-like place. Give your pup a treat when they enter.

SIZE of crate is important; should be large enough for them to comfortably stand, turn around, lay down, but not large enough that they can have a sleep and “poop” area. Crating takes advantage of a dog’s natural desire to live in a clean environment, thus helping with housetraining. Never leave a puppy in a crate longer than 4 to 5 hours. TIP: Place the crate inside a puppy pen. A pen is great way for your pup to have more space to stretch while you are busy doing something.

START HANDLING THE PUPPY THAT FIRST DAY. Not just petting, but purposeful, mindful touching of paws, neck, ears and body. Touch paws and nails daily. Investigate their ears like you’re doing an ear exam. Use baby nail clippers once a week so they get used to it.

THAT FIRST NIGHT. You can place the crate in your bedroom, near your bed. If they cry and whine, let them. They need to learn that that is not going to get them anywhere. They will eventually settle. If they wake up in the middle of the night, it’s likely they need to go to the bathroom. Quickly take them out, then back in the crate. TIP: put a windup alarm clock in with your new pup, it resembles a mother’s heartbeat.

CHAPTER THREE

HOUSETRAINING YOUR NEW PUPPY

HOUSETRAINING a puppy is all about schedule, consistency AND PATIENCE! It won't happen overnight, but it DOES happen if you do a few simple steps.

First, general rule is that puppies can hold their bladders ONE HOUR PER MONTH OF AGE, plus one hour. So, a 3 month old puppy can hold it for FOUR HOURS.

SCHEDULE THE FEEDINGS. No “free feedings”, instead have definite times for their meals. Put food down; pick it up after ten to fifteen minutes. No food offered till next meal.

SCHEDULE THE POTTY BREAKS. Rule of thumb is: take your puppy out every hour to two hours. Take them out to potty as soon as you take them out of the crate/pen, every time they wake up from a nap, after they eat and after they play. TIP: Carry your pup out to where they are to “go”, to avoid them having an accident before they get there.

REINFORCE WITH TREATS AND PRAISE. Praise to the hilt and reinforce with treats when they go outside. If you catch them going in the house, a simple “oops” works, and then take them outside. Do NOT punish AFTER THE ACT! Yelling at your dog scares and confuses them and can ruin your relationship. Just clean it up!

MANAGEMENT. Try tethering your pup to you when they are out of the crate. Behavior such as sniffing, circling, etc., when they need to eliminate is easily spotted and you can quickly get them outside.

CLEAN UP! Clean with products meant for dog messes. Pups will go back again and again to the same spot if they can smell it.

CHAPTER FOUR

SOCIALIZING YOUR NEW PUPPY

HANDLE YOUR NEW PUP RIGHT AWAY, the first day. Touch them all over, ears, legs, paws, etc. A puppy's key socialization window takes place from birth to around 12 to 16 weeks of age, so start immediately.

DON'T LET EVERYONE PET THE PUPPY. This can foster a pup's expectation to ALWAYS get attention from everyone they see. They might become over-aroused when greeting new people, not a desired behavior. Teach the pup to remain calm around new people. TIP: When guests arrive, have them wait to pet the puppy until they are seated and the puppy is calm.

EXPOSURE TO KIDS. Should ALWAYS BE MONITORED, and kept as low key as possible. TIPS: Introduce your new pup to your kids when their excitement has passed and they are calm. Keep an eye on the kids' energy level and note the pup's reactions. Don't be afraid to say no if the situation appears unsafe. Set ground rules; the kids should not engage in rough play, tug their tail or ears. Teach your kids to say loudly "OW!!" if the pup nips them. Watch for the pup's body language that they're tired and have had enough. Practice on a stuffed animal to show your kids how and where to touch their new pup.

EXPOSURE TO NEW THINGS. Introduce your pup to new and different people, animals, sounds and surfaces CALMLY, without overwhelming them. Go to a park and hang out, play, toss a ball, sit on a park bench and let them watch the world pass by. Encourage them to explore and investigate new environments. Bring them along on car rides. Keep sessions short, 5 to 15 minutes.

EXPOSURE TO OTHER DOGS. Have your pup meet calm, stable dogs; not always allowing play to happen. Let them just “chill” in the same vicinity. Pups will model good behavior; so arrange play dates with well-socialized dogs. TIP: let your pup observe your other dog doing positive behaviors so they can mimic it.

GOAL IS FOR THEM TO BECOME THE DOG YOU WANT. Calm, relaxed, confident and neutral around stimuli.

CHAPTER FIVE

TRAINING YOUR NEW PUPPY

LAY THE GROUNDWORK. It's essential your new pup get to know some basic commands. Learning the command "come" can be a lifesaver. TIP: Play hide and seek with your pup, calling their name with the word "come". When walking them around your yard, bend down and call them to you; get super excited when they come and reward with a treat.

BE CONSISTENT. If you don't want you new pup on the couch, then never let them up on the couch! Be consistent from the start.

AVOID RESOURCE GUARDING. Put your pup's dish down, let them eat, wait ten to fifteen minutes, take it away. Put some extra tidbit in, and then give it back. Try hand feeding the meals occasionally. Work on handling what your dog values without them guarding it.

AVOID "GIVING IN". Avoid giving into things that might be cute when they're small such as jumping up, but not so cute when they're bigger and older.

KEEP IT SHORT. Pups, like kids, have short attention spans. Practice one command for five minutes at a time. Focus on one skill and when they master it, move onto the next. Always end the session on a very positive note so your pup is excited for the next time.

PRACTICE EVERYWHERE. You want your pup to respond to you in various situations and places, so practice in your home, back and front yard, surrounding neighborhood, woods, park, etc.

AND while it helps to have one adult assert themselves as pack leader, your pup should be trained by every member of your household.

PUPPY CLASSES. A great idea once you've accomplished some in-home training. Builds confidence for both you and your new puppy.

Vaccination Schedule and Spay/Neuter

IT IS ESSENTIAL that your new puppy receive their vaccinations before going outside, or being exposed to other dogs. Puppies can contract the deadly parvo virus, a very serious condition that can result in death.

The schedule for vaccinations for a new pup is:

6 to 8 weeks	Distemper, measles, parainfluenza
10 to 12 weeks	DHPP (distemper, adenovirus {hepatitis}, parainfluenza and parvovirus)
12 to 24 weeks	Rabies
14 to 16 weeks	DHPP
12 to 16 months	Rabies, DHPP
every 1 to 2 yrs	DHPP
every 1 to 3 yrs	Rabies

WHEN TO SPAY/NEUTER? Done as young as 8 weeks, more often at or around six months, it is a somewhat controversial subject; many vets now believe in holding off the surgery till at least a year, in some cases, even later. Do your research and decide what is in your pup's best interest.