



THE

PUPPY JUMPSTART SURVIVAL GUIDE

Everything You Need to Raise a Confident, Well-Structured
Puppy — From the First Day Home to 6 Months



The habits you build in the first 6 months determine the dog you'll live with for the next 15 years.

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

WHO THIS GUIDE IS FOR

You just brought home a puppy — or you're about to. Congratulations. You're also about to enter the most important 6 months of your dog's entire life. The decisions you make right now, the habits you install today, and the structure you build this week will determine whether you end up with a calm, confident, well-adjusted dog — or a reactive, anxious, out-of-control adolescent that you spend the next 10 years trying to fix.

- You just picked up your puppy and want to start right from day one
- Your puppy is under 6 months and you want a professional-level system to follow
- You're overwhelmed by conflicting advice from YouTube, breeders, vets, and friends
- You want to prevent problems before they start — not react to them after they've become habits
- You enrolled in our Puppy Jumpstart program and want the complete home maintenance guide

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read Sections 01-04 before your puppy's first night home. These are your survival essentials: the first 24 hours, crate training, potty training, and bite inhibition. Then layer in the remaining sections week by week. By month 2, you should have the full system running. By month 6, you'll have a puppy that other owners are jealous of.

**The first 16 weeks of a puppy's life are the most critical developmental window.
What you do — and don't do — during this period shapes the dog they become permanently.**

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**Your puppy doesn't know they're a puppy. They're a learning machine running at full speed.
Your job is to point that energy in the right direction — starting now.**

SECTION 01

THE FIRST 24 HOURS

"The tone you set today determines the next 6 months."

Your puppy just left their mother, their littermates, and the only environment they've ever known. Everything is new — the smells, the sounds, the people, the space. This is simultaneously the most exciting and most stressful day of their life. How you handle the next 24 hours will set the emotional foundation for everything that follows.



BEFORE PUPPY ARRIVES — YOUR SETUP CHECKLIST

ITEM	WHY YOU NEED IT	PRO TIP
Wire crate (appropriately sized)	The #1 most important tool you'll own. Safe space, potty training, impulse control, sleep.	Get a crate with a divider so you can adjust as the puppy grows. Too big = accidents inside.
Enzymatic cleaner (Nature's Miracle)	Accidents will happen. Regular cleaners don't remove the scent — the puppy will go there again.	Buy two bottles. You'll use them both in the first month.
Treats (small, soft, high-value)	Training currency. You need hundreds of reps in the first weeks. Small treats = more reps.	Boiled chicken, freeze-dried liver, or string cheese cut into pea-sized pieces.
Leash + flat collar or harness	Management from day one. Puppy should never be loose without supervision.	Lightweight 4-6 foot leash. No retractable leashes — ever.
Two identical food/water bowls	Structured feeding protocol starts on day one.	Stainless steel. Easy to clean. Weighted base so the puppy can't flip them.
Chew toys (Kong, Nylabone, rope)	Puppies MUST chew. Provide legal options or they'll find illegal ones (your furniture).	Freeze a Kong stuffed with peanut butter + kibble. Instant crate training aid.
Exercise pen or baby gates	Containment. Puppy should never have full house access.	Create a 'puppy zone' — crate + pen + water + toys in one confined area.
Potty bells or designated spot	Consistency. Same exit, same spot, same routine, every time.	Choose ONE door and ONE grass area. Never vary in the first 8 weeks.

THE FIRST HOUR HOME

1 STRAIGHT TO THE POTTY SPOT

Don't go inside first. Take the puppy directly to your designated potty area. Let them sniff around. The moment they go, mark 'Yes!' and reward heavily. First impression: this is where we go potty.

2 BRIEF HOME EXPLORATION — ON LEASH

Bring the puppy inside on leash. Let them explore ONE room for 10-15 minutes. Not the whole house. One room. They'll sniff everything. Stay calm. No excitement, no baby talk, no 8 family members crowding them.

3 INTRODUCE THE CRATE IMMEDIATELY

Toss treats inside the crate. Door stays open. Let the puppy go in and out freely. Feed their first meal inside the crate. The crate should be associated with food, comfort, and safety from minute one — never punishment.

ESTABLISH THE FIRST ROUTINE

4

Potty → brief play → crate nap. That's the cycle. Start it immediately. Puppies need 18-20 hours of sleep. That first nap in the crate sets the pattern for everything. Expect whining. Don't give in.

THE FIRST NIGHT

This is the hardest part. Your puppy will cry. They will whine. They may howl. This is normal — they've never been alone before. Here's how to handle it without creating a monster:

- **Crate in your bedroom.** The puppy can hear you breathe, smell you, and feel less alone. This is not spoiling them — it's smart management. Move the crate to the living room gradually over 2-3 weeks.
- **Last potty at 10-11 PM.** Remove water 2 hours before bed. Take them out, wait for them to go, mark and reward, then straight into the crate.
- **Set an alarm for 2-3 AM.** Young puppies (8-10 weeks) cannot hold it all night. Take them out, let them potty (no play, no talking, boring), and put them right back. This prevents accidents AND teaches them that nighttime is for sleeping.
- **Ignore the crying.** If you know they don't need to potty (you just took them), the crying is protest, not distress. Opening the crate during a cry teaches them that crying works. Wait for 5 seconds of silence, then calmly open the door.
- **Increase overnight hold time by 30 min each week.** By 12-14 weeks, most puppies can hold it 6-7 hours. By 16 weeks, through the night.

Rule: If the puppy is crying and you know they don't need to potty — wait it out. Every time you open the crate during a cry, you're training a dog that screaming gets results.

SECTION 02

CRATE TRAINING MASTERY

"The crate isn't a cage. It's the most powerful tool in your house."

If you only take one thing from this entire guide, let it be this: **master the crate.** A crate-trained puppy is a puppy that can settle, hold their bladder, travel safely, recover from surgery, stay in hotels, and handle any situation you throw at them. A puppy without crate training is a puppy that destroys your house when you leave, has separation anxiety, and can never be left alone safely.



THE 7-DAY CRATE TRAINING PROTOCOL

DAY	GOAL	HOW TO DO IT
Day 1	Positive association	Toss treats in. Feed meals inside. Door stays open. Puppy goes in and out freely. Never force.
Day 2	Close the door briefly	Puppy goes in for a treat. Close door for 5 seconds. Open before they fuss. Repeat 20 times.
Day 3	Build to 1-2 minutes	Same as Day 2 but extend to 1-2 min. Give a stuffed Kong. Stay in the room. Open on calm behavior.
Day 4	Build to 5-10 minutes	Kong in crate. Close door. Sit nearby reading or on your phone. Ignore any whining. Open on quiet.
Day 5	Leave the room briefly	Puppy in crate with Kong. Leave for 2 min. Return calmly — no excited greeting. Build to 5-10 min.
Day 6	30-minute hold	Puppy in crate during a meal or while you shower. They learn: crate time is normal, not an event.
Day 7	Naptime in crate	Full nap (1-2 hours) in the crate. This should happen naturally if Steps 1-6 were done correctly.

CRATE RULES — NON-NEGOTIABLE

- **Never use the crate as punishment.** If you shove the puppy in when you're angry, the crate becomes a prison. It should always be associated with calm, food, and rest.
- **Never let them out during a cry.** Wait for silence — even 3 seconds of it — then open. This is the single most important crate training rule.
- **Crate time by age:** 8 weeks = 1-2 hrs max. 12 weeks = 2-3 hrs. 16 weeks = 3-4 hrs. 6 months = 5-6 hrs. Always provide a potty break after crate time.
- **Cover the crate** with a blanket (leave the front open for airflow). The den-like darkness promotes calm and sleep.
- **No bedding until potty trained.** Soft bedding absorbs accidents and removes the puppy's motivation to hold it. A plain crate pan or a single towel is fine.
- **Location matters.** Start in your bedroom for nighttime. Daytime crate should be in a common area where the family spends time — not isolated in a basement or garage.

CRATE SCHEDULE BY AGE

AGE	MAX CRATE TIME	NIGHTTIME	NAPS/DAY
8-10 weeks	1-2 hours	6-7 hrs (with 1 potty break at 2-3 AM)	4-5 naps, 1-2 hrs each
10-12 weeks	2-3 hours	7 hrs (with 1 potty break)	3-4 naps, 1.5-2 hrs each
12-16 weeks	3-4 hours	7-8 hrs (may still need 1 break)	3 naps, 2 hrs each
4-6 months	4-6 hours	8 hrs (through the night)	2-3 naps, 1.5-2 hrs each
6+ months	6-8 hours max	8+ hrs (through the night)	1-2 naps as needed

SECTION 03

POTTY TRAINING PROTOCOL

"Potty training isn't about the dog. It's about YOUR schedule."

Here's the truth about potty training: there is no magic trick. There is no special spray, no magic bell, no secret technique. Potty training is a math problem. You take the puppy out frequently enough that they succeed outside and never have the opportunity to fail inside. That's it. Frequency + consistency + management = a potty trained puppy in 2-4 weeks.



THE POTTY TRAINING SCHEDULE

Take your puppy outside to their designated spot at ALL of these times:

- **Immediately after waking up** — from nighttime sleep AND every nap. No exceptions.
- **Within 5-10 minutes after eating or drinking.** Food and water trigger the gastrocolic reflex. It's coming.
- **After every play session.** Excitement and physical activity stimulate the bladder and bowels.
- **After coming out of the crate.** Even if they were only in for 30 minutes.
- **Every 30-60 minutes during active/awake time** (for puppies 8-12 weeks). Every 1-2 hours for 12-16 weeks.
- **Before crate time.** Always give them a chance to empty before being confined.
- **Last trip at 10-11 PM.** Make this the final event of the day.
- **When in doubt — take them out.** It's always better to make an unnecessary trip than to clean up an accident.

THE POTTY SEQUENCE (EVERY SINGLE TIME)

1

LEASH TO THE DESIGNATED SPOT

Same door. Same path. Same patch of grass. Every single time. The consistency builds a neural pathway: this door means potty time. No carrying the puppy — they walk on leash so the routine is the same.

WAIT SILENTLY FOR UP TO 5 MINUTES

2

Stand there. Don't talk. Don't play. Don't scroll your phone. Boring. If they go within 5 minutes, mark 'Yes!' immediately and reward with a treat ON THE SPOT. If they don't go, back inside and into the crate for 10-15 min, then try again.

REWARD IMMEDIATELY — NOT BACK INSIDE

3

The reward must happen within 1-2 seconds of the puppy finishing. If you wait until you get back inside, the puppy thinks they're being rewarded for walking in the door, not for going potty. Timing is everything.

EARN FREE TIME

4

After a successful potty, the puppy earns 15-20 minutes of supervised free time inside. If they did NOT go outside, they go into the crate and you try again in 10-15 minutes. No free time without an empty bladder.

WHEN ACCIDENTS HAPPEN (AND THEY WILL)

- **If you catch them in the act:** Interrupt with a sharp 'Eh-eh!' — pick them up and rush outside. If they finish outside, mark and reward. The interruption teaches them: inside = interrupted, outside = rewarded.
- **If you find it after the fact:** You missed it. Clean it up with enzymatic cleaner and improve your management. The puppy has zero idea what you're upset about. Punishing after the fact teaches them nothing except to fear you.
- **Never rub their nose in it.** This is an old myth that has been debunked for decades. It creates a dog that hides to go potty — behind furniture, in closets — because they've learned that YOU near their waste = punishment.
- **Every accident is YOUR fault.** The puppy didn't fail. Your supervision or schedule did. Adjust and prevent.

**The potty training formula: TAKE THEM OUT MORE OFTEN THAN YOU THINK YOU NEED TO.
Success outside + zero chance to fail inside = potty trained in 2-4 weeks.**

POTTY TRAINING TIMELINE BY AGE

AGE	HOLD TIME (AWAKE)	HOLD TIME (SLEEPING)	EXPECTED ACCIDENTS/WEEK	NOTES
8-10 weeks	30-45 min	3-4 hours	5-10	Normal. Management is everything. Don't expect reliability.
10-12 weeks	45-60 min	4-5 hours	3-5	Improving. Puppy starting to signal (circling, sniffing, going to door).
12-14 weeks	1-1.5 hours	5-6 hours	1-3	Puppy can often make it through the night. Daytime accidents rare if schedule is consistent.
14-16 weeks	1.5-2 hours	6-7 hours	0-1	Near reliable. Accidents are management failures at this point, not training failures.
4-5 months	2-3 hours	7-8 hours	Rare	Should be fully potty trained in the house with consistent routine.
5-6 months	3-4 hours	8+ hours	Zero	If still having accidents, consult your vet to rule out medical issues. Then audit your routine.

SIGNS YOUR PUPPY NEEDS TO GO

- **Circling and sniffing the floor** — classic pre-potty behavior. Grab the leash immediately.
- **Suddenly leaving the room or walking toward the door** — they're trying to tell you something.
- **Squatting** — you have about 1 second. Scoop and run outside.
- **Whining or pacing after being calm** — something changed, and it's probably their bladder.
- **Stopping play abruptly** — mid-play potty breaks are common. Excitement stimulates the bladder.

SECTION 04

BITE INHIBITION & MOUTHING

"Puppies bite. That's normal. Teaching them not to is your job."

Every puppy bites. Every single one. This is not aggression — it's how they explore the world. Their mouth is their hand. The goal is not to stop mouthing entirely (that's developmentally impossible at 8-16 weeks). The goal is to teach **bite inhibition** — the ability to control the pressure of their mouth. A puppy that learns bite inhibition becomes an adult dog with a 'soft mouth' that can take treats gently and never accidentally hurt a person.



THE BITE INHIBITION PROTOCOL

YELP AND REDIRECT (WEEKS 8-12)

1

When the puppy bites too hard, say 'OW!' in a sharp, high-pitched tone (mimicking a littermate yelp). Immediately redirect to a toy. If they take the toy, praise. If they bite you again, repeat. If they bite a third time, playtime ends — walk away for 30 seconds.

REDIRECT BEFORE THEY BITE (WEEKS 10-14)

2

Learn to read the body language: when the puppy's mouth is heading for your hand, preemptively shove a toy in their mouth before contact. You're teaching: hands are not toys, but THIS is a toy. Have a toy in your pocket at all times.

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR TEETH ON SKIN (WEEKS 14-20)

3

By 14-16 weeks, the puppy should understand that teeth on human skin ends all fun. Any tooth contact = you stand up, cross arms, turn away, and completely disengage for 15-30 seconds. Re-engage only when they're calm. Consistency here is critical.

TEETHING MANAGEMENT (WEEKS 16-24)

4

Teething is painful and increases mouthing dramatically. Provide frozen washcloths, frozen Kongs, ice cubes, and hard rubber chews. The puppy NEEDS to chew during teething — give them legal outlets or they'll find illegal ones.

WHAT NEVER TO DO

- **Never hold the puppy's mouth shut.** This creates fear, frustration, and often makes biting worse because the puppy learns to bite harder and faster before you can grab them.
- **Never flick, tap, or hit the puppy's nose.** Pain-based corrections for a developmental behavior create a dog that is hand-shy and afraid of being touched around the face.
- **Never wrestle or roughhouse with your hands.** If your hands are toys during play, they'll be toys all the time. Use toys for play, hands for gentle petting only.
- **Never alpha-roll or pin the puppy.** This is dangerous, outdated, and has been debunked by every reputable behavioral organization. It creates fear aggression, not respect.

MOUTHING SEVERITY SCALE

Not all biting is the same. Understanding where your puppy falls helps you respond appropriately:

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION	YOUR RESPONSE	TIMELINE TO RESOLVE
1 — Exploring	Soft mouthing, barely any pressure, teeth barely touching skin	Redirect to toy. Normal puppy behavior.	Fades naturally by 14-16 weeks with consistent redirection
2 — Play biting	Medium pressure, sometimes leaves red marks but no broken skin	Yelp + redirect + timeout if repeated. Increase chew toy availability.	Should decrease significantly by 16-18 weeks
3 — Teething	Hard biting on everything, including furniture. Gums may be swollen.	Provide frozen Kongs, frozen washcloths, hard rubber chews. NOT a training issue — it's a pain issue.	Peaks at 16-20 weeks, resolves by 24 weeks when adult teeth are in
4 — Overstimulated	Frantic biting during zoomies or when overtired. Can't stop even with redirection.	Enforced nap immediately. This puppy is overtired, not aggressive. Crate + Kong.	Resolves when nap schedule is enforced consistently
5 — Concerning	Hard biting with stiff body, growling, resource guarding, biting during handling	Consult a professional trainer or veterinary behaviorist. This is beyond normal puppy mouthing.	Requires professional assessment

Level 1-4 = Normal puppy development. Frustrating but temporary.
Level 5 = Professional help needed. Don't wait.

SECTION 05

SOCIALIZATION DONE RIGHT

"The window closes at 16 weeks. What you do now matters forever."

Socialization is the single most misunderstood concept in puppy raising. Most people think it means 'let my puppy meet everyone and play with every dog.' **That is wrong.** That approach creates a dog that is obsessed with other dogs and people — one who loses their mind with excitement every time they see a living being. That's not social. That's reactive.

Real socialization means exposing your puppy to a wide variety of stimuli — people, dogs, surfaces, sounds, environments — in a way that creates **neutral, confident responses**. The goal is a puppy that sees the world and thinks 'that's interesting' instead of 'I MUST GO INVESTIGATE IMMEDIATELY.'



THE SOCIALIZATION WINDOW: 3-16 WEEKS

Between 3 and 16 weeks, your puppy's brain is a sponge. Everything they experience during this window is filed as 'normal.' After 16 weeks, the window begins to close — new experiences become 'suspicious' by default. This is why undersocialized puppies grow into fearful, reactive adults. You cannot make up for lost socialization later. You can improve it, but you can never fully replace it.

THE PUPPY SOCIALIZATION CHECKLIST

Expose your puppy to as many of these as possible before 16 weeks. **Observe, don't force. Reward calm behavior. Never flood.**

CATEGORY	EXAMPLES	HOW TO EXPOSE
People	Men, women, children, elderly, people in hats, sunglasses, uniforms, wheelchairs, different ethnicities	Controlled meetings. Puppy sits, person approaches calmly, treat from person. No overwhelming mob greetings.
Dogs	Vaccinated, calm adult dogs. Puppy-friendly dogs of different sizes and breeds.	Brief, supervised meetings on leash. Watch body language. End on a positive note. No dog parks until 16+ weeks.
Surfaces	Grass, gravel, tile, metal grates, wet surfaces, sand, wood chips, stairs	Walk across on leash. Reward brave exploration. Never force — let them approach at their own pace.
Sounds	Thunder, fireworks (at low volume), vacuum, blender, traffic, sirens, doorbells, construction	Play recordings at LOW volume during meals. Gradually increase over days. Pairing noise with food creates positive associations.
Environments	Cars, elevators, pet stores, outdoor cafes, parking lots, vet clinic (happy visits), friend's houses	Short exposure. 5-10 minutes max for new environments. Always have treats. Leave before the puppy gets overwhelmed.
Handling	Paws touched, ears checked, mouth opened, tail held, belly rubbed, being lifted, being brushed, nail trimming simulation	Daily handling exercises. Touch paw = treat. Look in ear = treat. 5 minutes/day builds a dog that tolerates grooming and vet visits.

THE RULE OF 7s

By the time your puppy is 12 weeks old, they should have experienced at least 7 different surfaces, met at least 7 different people, been to at least 7 different locations, heard at least 7 different sounds, and played with at least 7 different objects. This is the minimum — more is better, as long as every experience is positive.

**Socialization is not about quantity of interactions.
It's about quality of experiences. One bad experience can undo 20 good ones.**

BALANCING VACCINATION AND SOCIALIZATION

This is the most common concern new puppy owners have: 'My vet said not to take the puppy out until fully vaccinated, but this guide says to socialize before 16 weeks. Which is it?' The answer is both.

SAFE BEFORE FULL VACCINATION	AVOID UNTIL FULLY VACCINATED
Your own yard and neighborhood (low dog traffic)	Dog parks
Friends' houses with vaccinated dogs	Pet store floors (carry the puppy in instead)
Puppy socialization classes (require proof of vaccination)	Areas with heavy dog traffic or unknown vaccination status

SAFE BEFORE FULL VACCINATION	AVOID UNTIL FULLY VACCINATED
Outdoor cafes, hardware stores (carry or use a mat)	Standing water, puddles, dog waste areas
Car rides (in a crate or secured)	Off-leash areas with unknown dogs
Controlled introductions with known, vaccinated adult dogs	Boarding facilities or dog daycares

The risk of behavioral problems from undersocialization is **far greater** than the risk of disease from smart, controlled exposure. More dogs are euthanized for behavior problems than die from parvo. Socialize wisely, not recklessly.

SECTION 06

PUPPY COMMAND FOUNDATION

"Start simple. Build habits. The commands come faster than you think."

Puppies can start learning commands as early as 8 weeks. They won't be reliable — they're babies — but the neural pathways you build now will make adolescent training 10x easier. Keep sessions short (2-3 minutes, 3-5 times per day), use high-value treats, and always end on a win.



NAME RECOGNITION (START IMMEDIATELY)

Before you can teach any command, the puppy needs to know their name means 'look at me.' Say the name once. The instant they look at you, mark 'Yes!' and treat. Repeat 30-50 times per day for the first week. Within 3-5 days, the puppy should whip their head toward you when they hear their name. This is the foundation of every command that follows.

THE FIVE PUPPY COMMANDS

COMMAND	WHEN TO START	HOW TO TEACH	GOAL BY 16 WEEKS
SIT	Day 1	Lure with treat from nose upward. Butt hits ground = 'Yes!' + treat. 20 reps/day.	Sits on first ask in low distraction. Holds 5 seconds.
DOWN	Week 2	From sit, lure treat from nose to ground between paws. Mark when elbows hit floor.	Downs on first ask. Holds 10 seconds. Starting to settle.
COME	Day 1	Say name + 'Come!' in happy voice. Crouch down, open arms. Treat when they arrive. Party every time.	Comes immediately in the house. Comes on a long line outdoors.
PLACE	Week 3-4	Lure onto a mat/bed. All 4 paws on = 'Yes!' + treat on the bed. Build duration slowly.	Goes to place on command. Holds 5-10 min with mild distractions.
LEAVE IT	Week 4-6	Hold treat in closed fist. Puppy sniffs/paws. The instant they pull away, 'Yes!' + treat from OTHER hand.	Ignores dropped food on first 'leave it.' Turns away from distractions.

PUPPY TRAINING RULES

- **Sessions = 2-3 minutes MAX.** Puppies have the attention span of a goldfish. Short, high-energy bursts beat long, boring sessions every time. End before they lose focus.
- **100% reward rate at first.** Every correct response gets a treat. You're building the habit. Reduce the rate gradually after 4+ weeks of consistency, not before.
- **No corrections for puppies under 14 weeks.** They don't understand correction yet. If they do it wrong, lure them into the right position. They learn through repetition, not punishment.
- **Train before meals.** A slightly hungry puppy is a motivated puppy. If they just ate, they have zero interest in your treats.
- **End on a win.** Always finish with something the puppy can succeed at. If they're struggling with 'down,' end with an easy 'sit' and a big reward. The last experience colors the whole session.

SECTION 07

LEASH INTRODUCTION & FIRST WALKS

"Before you can walk a dog, you have to teach them what a leash is."

Most puppy owners slap a collar and leash on their puppy and head out the door expecting a walk. The result? The puppy freezes, bucks, flails, or turns into a crocodile trying to eat the leash. Leash skills need to be introduced gradually — like everything else in this guide.



PHASE 1: COLLAR & LEASH DESENSITIZATION (DAYS 1-3)

- **Day 1:** Put the collar on. Puppy will scratch at it. Distract with play and treats. Leave it on during supervised time. Remove at bedtime. By end of day, they'll forget it's there.
- **Day 2:** Attach a lightweight leash (or piece of string) and let them drag it around the house during supervised play. Don't hold it. Let them feel the weight. Treat them periodically.
- **Day 3:** Pick up the leash. Follow the puppy around — don't pull, don't guide, just hold it with zero tension. Reward them for walking near you. Drop treats at your side to encourage position.

PHASE 2: INDOOR LEASH WALKING (WEEK 1-2)

- Practice in a hallway or living room. Hold a treat at your left side, lure the puppy to walk with you. 3-5 steps, treat. 3-5 steps, treat.

- If the puppy pulls ahead, stop. Wait for slack. Mark and continue. Same technique as adult leash training, but with way more treats and way shorter distance.
- If the puppy freezes or sits down, crouch down, encourage them forward with a happy voice and a treat. Never drag them. Patience beats force every time.
- Target: by end of week 2, the puppy walks beside you for 10-15 steps on a loose leash indoors.

PHASE 3: FIRST OUTDOOR WALKS (WEEK 2-4)

Important: Check with your vet about vaccination status before walking in public areas. Until fully vaccinated (typically 16 weeks), avoid high-traffic dog areas like dog parks, pet store floors, and heavily trafficked sidewalks. Your own neighborhood with low dog traffic is usually fine — consult your vet.

- **Start with 5-minute walks.** Not 30 minutes. Five. The puppy is experiencing everything for the first time. A 5-minute walk at 10 weeks is like a 2-hour hike for you.
- **Let them observe.** If they sit and stare at something (a car, a person, a dog across the street), let them. They're processing. Reward calm observation with treats.
- **Don't force greetings.** If the puppy doesn't want to approach someone, that's fine. Forcing social interaction creates fear, not confidence.
- **Build to 10-15 minute walks by 12 weeks.** Increase by 5 minutes per week. The rule of thumb: 5 minutes of walking per month of age, twice a day.

PUPPY EQUIPMENT GUIDE

EQUIPMENT	WHEN TO USE	PROS	CONS
Flat collar	Daily wear for ID tags. Light leash walking.	Simple, holds tags, comfortable for most puppies	No control for pullers. Can slip off narrow-headed breeds.
Front-clip harness	Walks with a puller. Training aid for leash manners.	Redirects pulling naturally, no pressure on neck	Can restrict shoulder movement if worn all day. Not a permanent solution.
Martingale collar	Breeds with narrow heads (Greyhounds, Whippets). Escape-proof.	Cannot slip off. Gentle tightening when pulled.	Not for unsupervised wear. Must be properly fitted.
Long line (15-30 ft)	Recall training, off-leash practice in non-fenced areas	Safe off-leash practice, lets puppy explore with safety net	Can tangle. Requires awareness. Use in open areas only.
Retractable leash	NEVER	—	Teaches pulling, no control, dangerous mechanism, breaks easily. Do not use.

SECTION 08

BREED FULFILLMENT — KNOW YOUR DOG'S DNA

"Your dog was bred for a job. If you don't give them one, they'll create their own."

This is one of the most overlooked aspects of raising a puppy — and it's the reason so many owners end up frustrated, exhausted, and wondering why their dog 'won't listen.' Every breed was designed for a specific purpose. Herding dogs herd. Retrievers retrieve. Terriers dig and chase. Guard dogs guard. When you don't fulfill your dog's breed-specific drives, those instincts don't disappear — they come out as **behavior problems**.

The Border Collie that nips your kids' heels isn't being aggressive — it's herding. The Beagle that ignores your recall and follows its nose for 30 minutes isn't stubborn — it's doing what 400 years of breeding programmed it to do. The Husky that destroys your couch isn't spiteful — it's bored because it was built to run 50 miles a day and you gave it a 15-minute walk.

BREED GROUP FULFILLMENT GUIDE

BREED GROUP	EXAMPLES	WHAT THEY WERE BRED FOR	HOW TO FULFILL THEM
Herding	Border Collie, Aussie, GSD, Heeler, Corgi, Sheltie	Controlling movement of livestock. Intense focus, decision-making, stamina.	Agility, fetch with rules, flirt pole, obedience drills, treibball, puzzle feeders. They NEED a job or they'll herd your kids.
Sporting / Retrievers	Lab, Golden, Spaniel, Vizsla, Pointer, Setter	Flushing, retrieving, and working alongside hunters. Endurance, cooperation, 'soft mouth.'	Fetch, swimming, dock diving, nose work, structured retrieves, long hikes. Built for endurance — not 5-minute walks.
Working	Rottweiler, Doberman, Boxer, Mastiff, Great Dane, Akita, Husky	Guarding, pulling, rescue, police work. Strength, intelligence, independence.	Strength exercises, weight pulling, obedience with purpose, structured tasks, long walks/runs. Mental stimulation is critical.
Terriers	Jack Russell, Pit Bull, Bull Terrier, Schnauzer, Westie, Cairn	Hunting vermin, digging, and tenacity. High prey drive, courage, determination.	Flirt pole, tug-of-war, digging box (yes, give them a legal dig spot), hide-and-seek with toys, barn hunt.
Hounds	Beagle, Bloodhound, Greyhound, Basset, Dachshund, Coonhound	Tracking by scent or sight. Stamina, independence, incredible nose/eyes.	Nose work, scent trails, snuffle mats, decompression walks where sniffing is allowed, lure coursing for sight hounds.
Toy / Companion	Chihuahua, Maltese, Pomeranian, Shih Tzu, Pug, Cavalier	Companionship, alerting, being a portable companion.	Short training sessions, puzzle toys, socialization, cuddle time with structure, trick training. Don't underestimate their brain.
Bully Breeds	APBT, AmStaff, Bully, Frenchie, English Bulldog	Varied: some for bull-baiting (historical), some for companionship. Strength, loyalty, determination.	Tug, spring pole, flirt pole, structured play, obedience, weight pull. They need an outlet for their physical drive and a job that channels their loyalty.
Mixed Breeds	Any mix	Combination of the above. Observe which instincts are strongest.	Watch what your dog gravitates toward: sniffing, chasing, herding, retrieving. Fulfill the dominant drive.

HOW TO IDENTIFY YOUR PUPPY'S DRIVE

- **Prey drive:** Does your puppy chase everything that moves? Leaves, bugs, squirrels, cats, your feet? High prey drive. Fulfill with: flirt pole, fetch, tug, lure coursing.
- **Pack drive:** Is your puppy constantly seeking your attention, following you everywhere, wanting to be near you? High pack drive. Fulfill with: training sessions, structured games, being included in activities with rules.
- **Nose drive:** Does your puppy put their nose to the ground and lose awareness of everything else? High nose drive. Fulfill with: nose work, scent trails, snuffle mats, decompression walks.

- **Herding drive:** Does your puppy nip at heels, chase kids, try to 'round up' other dogs or people? Herding instinct. Fulfill with: agility, treibball, obedience, fetch, flirt pole.
- **Guard drive:** Does your puppy bark at new people, position themselves between you and strangers, or watch the perimeter? Emerging guard instinct. Fulfill with: structured socialization, obedience, confidence building.

**An unfulfilled dog is a destructive dog. A fulfilled dog is a calm dog.
Know your breed. Fulfill their DNA. Watch the behavior problems disappear.**

SECTION 09

THE PUPPY DAILY OPERATING SYSTEM

"Structure the day and the behavior follows."

Puppies thrive on routine. They don't need variety — they need predictability. When a puppy knows what comes next, they relax. When they don't, they default to chaos. This daily schedule is your blueprint for every day until your puppy is 6 months old.



DAILY SCHEDULE: 8-12 WEEK OLD PUPPY

TIME	ACTIVITY	NOTES
6:00 AM	Wake up → straight outside to potty	Carry puppy or walk on leash to designated spot. Mark + reward.
6:15 AM	Breakfast in crate	Structured feeding. Sit-wait if possible. Eat in crate.
6:30 AM	Potty trip → 15 min supervised free play	Short play session. Keep it in one room. Toys available.
6:45 AM	Training session #1 (2-3 min)	Name recognition, sit, luring exercises. End on a win.
7:00 AM	Potty trip → CRATE NAP (1.5-2 hrs)	Puppy goes down for their first nap. This is non-negotiable.
9:00 AM	Wake up → potty → enrichment activity	Frozen Kong, snuffle mat, or puzzle feeder. Mental work.
9:30 AM	Training session #2 (2-3 min)	Sit, down, come practice. Short and fun.
9:45 AM	Potty trip → supervised free play (15-20 min)	Socialization handling exercises — touch paws, ears, mouth.
10:00 AM	Potty trip → CRATE NAP (1.5-2 hrs)	Second nap. Enforce it even if puppy seems awake.
12:00 PM	Wake up → potty → Lunch in crate	Same feeding protocol as morning.
12:30 PM	Potty → 15 min free play → Training #3	Leash practice, name games, come when called.
1:00 PM	Potty trip → CRATE NAP (1.5-2 hrs)	Third nap.
3:00 PM	Wake up → potty → Walk or outdoor exposure	5-10 min walk or front yard exposure. Socialization.
3:30 PM	Training session #4 (2-3 min)	Place introduction, leave-it, or new skill.
3:45 PM	Potty → enrichment → supervised play	Chew toy, tug-of-war with rules, or nosework.
4:15 PM	Potty → CRATE NAP (1-1.5 hrs)	Fourth nap.
5:30 PM	Wake up → potty → Dinner in crate	Same feeding protocol.
6:00 PM	Potty → family time (on leash or in pen)	Puppy hangs with the family but managed. Not free-roaming.

TIME	ACTIVITY	NOTES
7:00 PM	Final training session #5 (2-3 min)	Review the day's best skill. End on a big win.
7:15 PM	Calm chew time → potty → settle	Kong or Nylabone. Winding down for bedtime.
8:00-8:30 PM	Remove water → final potty at 9:30-10 PM	Wind-down period. No exciting play after 8 PM.
10:00 PM	Last potty → CRATE for bed	Boring potty trip. No play. Into crate. Lights out.
2:00-3:00 AM	Alarm → potty break → back to crate	Quick, boring, silent potty. No interaction. Back to sleep.

Puppies sleep 18-20 hours per day. That's not a guideline — it's a biological requirement. Enforced naps prevent overtired, overstimulated, bitey, hyper puppies.

SECTION 10

FEEDING, NUTRITION & SCHEDULE

"What you put in your puppy determines what you get out of them."

Nutrition directly affects your puppy's energy, coat, digestion, growth, and behavior. Cheap food = hyperactivity, poor coat, loose stools, and a puppy that's harder to train because they feel lousy. Quality food = steady energy, solid stools, healthy growth, and a puppy that can focus.

FEEDING SCHEDULE BY AGE

AGE	MEALS/DAY	AMOUNT	NOTES
8-12 weeks	3-4 meals	Per food package guidelines (divide daily total by meals)	Small, frequent meals. Prevents blood sugar crashes and supports growth.
12-16 weeks	3 meals	Adjust per package as weight increases	Can drop the midday meal gradually. Monitor weight.
4-6 months	2-3 meals	Per package, monitor body condition	Transition to 2x/day by 6 months. Morning + evening.
6+ months	2 meals	Per package guidelines for adult portion	Breakfast + dinner. Consistent times every day.

FEEDING PROTOCOL (EVERY MEAL)

- **Step 1:** Puppy sits (or attempts to sit) before bowl goes down.
- **Step 2:** Place bowl. Puppy holds position for 2-3 seconds (build from there).
- **Step 3:** Release with your release word. Puppy eats.
- **Step 4:** Pick up food after 15 minutes. If they didn't finish, it's gone until next meal. No free-feeding.
- **Step 5:** Water available during active hours. Remove 2 hours before bedtime for potty training.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN PUPPY FOOD

- **Named protein source first** (chicken, beef, salmon — not 'meat meal' or 'animal by-products')
- **No corn, wheat, or soy as first ingredients** — these are cheap fillers that spike energy and cause allergies
- **AAFCO statement for growth** — the label should say 'formulated for growth' or 'all life stages'
- **Large breed puppy formula** if your dog will be 50+ lbs as an adult — controls calcium for joint health
- **Consistent brand** — don't switch foods every week. Find one that works and stick with it. Switching causes GI upset.

SECTION 11

HOUSEHOLD RULES FROM DAY ONE

"The rules you skip today become the problems you fix tomorrow."

Every behavior you allow at 8 weeks will be a behavior you live with at 80 pounds. The puppy jumping on you is cute now. At 70 pounds, it knocks grandma over. The puppy sleeping in your bed is cuddly now. At 100 pounds, you don't sleep. Set the rules NOW — not when the behavior becomes a problem.

RULE	WHY IT MATTERS	HOW TO ENFORCE
No free roaming	Puppies destroy things, have accidents, and develop bad habits when unsupervised. Every accident and chewed shoe is a missed management opportunity.	Crate, pen, or leash tethered to you at all times. Earn room-by-room freedom gradually over months.
No furniture unless invited	A puppy that owns the couch at 10 weeks owns the whole house at 10 months. Furniture is a privilege, not a right.	Block access with baby gates. If they jump up, remove immediately with 'Off.' Invite up only when calm and asked to sit first.
Sit before everything	Impulse control starts here. Sit before meals, sit before going outside, sit before petting, sit before play starts.	Nothing In Life Is Free from day one. Puppy learns: polite behavior = good things. Demanding behavior = nothing.

RULE	WHY IT MATTERS	HOW TO ENFORCE
No begging or table scraps	One piece of food from the table creates a lifetime beggar. The puppy doesn't know it was 'just this once.'	Puppy goes to crate or pen during meals. Zero food from the table. Every family member follows this. Zero exceptions.
Designated sleeping spot	The puppy sleeps in their crate. Not your bed, not the couch, not wherever they want. Consistency builds routine.	Crate in your bedroom for the first 2-3 weeks, then transition to their permanent sleeping location.
Structured greetings only	No jumping, no mobbing, no mouthing when people come home or visit. Calm greetings from day one.	Ignore the puppy when you come home until they're calm. Ask for a sit, then greet. Teach guests the same protocol.
Everyone follows the same rules	If one person lets the puppy on the couch and another doesn't, the puppy learns that rules are inconsistent — and inconsistency breeds chaos.	Family meeting. Post the rules on the fridge. Weekly check-ins. Everyone accountable. No exceptions for 'cuteness.'

SECTION 12

COMMON PUPPY MISTAKES & FIXES

"Every new puppy owner makes these. You don't have to."

MISTAKE	WHY IT HAPPENS	THE FIX
Too much freedom too fast	The puppy was 'doing so well' for 3 days, so you opened up the house. Now there are accidents everywhere and a chewed baseboard.	Freedom is earned over MONTHS, not days. Crate → pen → one room → supervised house. Follow the Freedom Ladder.
Skipping enforced naps	The puppy seems full of energy so you let them stay up. They get increasingly hyper, bitey, and destructive. That's not energy — that's overtired.	Enforce naps every 1-2 hours of awake time. An overtired puppy is worse than a bored puppy. They NEED 18-20 hours of sleep.
Comforting fear	The puppy is scared of a noise and you pick them up, cuddle them, say 'it's okay baby.' You just reinforced fear. The puppy learned: being scared gets affection.	Be calm and neutral. Redirect with a treat or a game. Show confidence. Your energy is contagious — if you're worried, they're worried.
Letting the puppy greet every dog	You think you're socializing. You're actually creating a dog-obsessed puppy that loses its mind every time it sees another dog because greeting is expected.	80% of dogs you see should be 'look but don't interact.' Only 20% should be actual greetings — and only with calm, vaccinated, known dogs.
Repeating commands	'Sit... sit... sit... SIT.' The puppy learned the command is the 4th sit at maximum volume. You trained them to ignore you.	Say it ONCE. Lure into position if needed. Reward compliance. One command, one expectation.

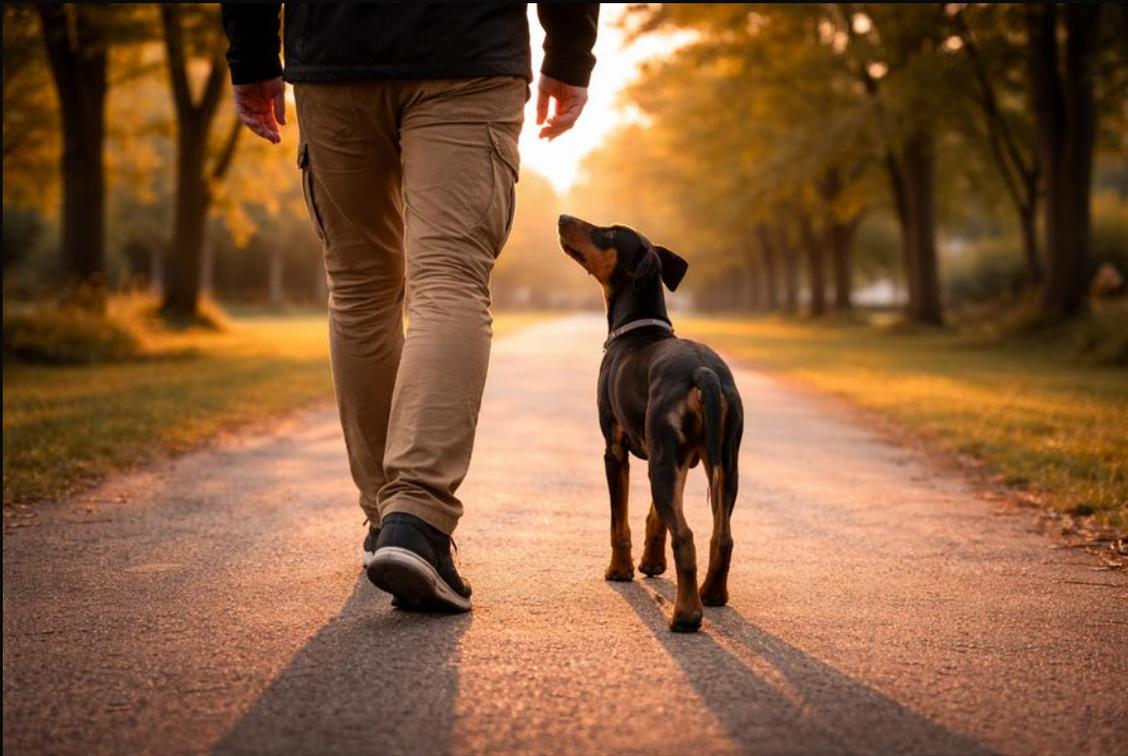
MISTAKE	WHY IT HAPPENS	THE FIX
Punishing potty accidents	You found pee on the floor and scolded the puppy. They now pee behind the couch because they learned: you + pee = anger. They did NOT learn: pee inside = bad.	Every accident is YOUR failure of management. Clean with enzymatic cleaner. Increase potty trip frequency.
No structure on weekends	Monday-Friday the routine is solid. Saturday the puppy sleeps in, skips naps, eats late, and gets 4 hours of unstructured freedom. Sunday is chaos.	Same routine, every day. Dogs don't know what weekends are. Consistency is 7 days a week.
Waiting too long for professional help	The puppy is 5 months old and has been resource guarding, biting hard, or showing fear aggression for weeks — and the owner is still 'hoping they'll grow out of it.'	They won't grow out of it. They'll grow INTO it. Contact a professional trainer at the first sign of serious behavioral issues.

SECTION 13

THE 8-WEEK TO 6-MONTH DEVELOPMENTAL ROADMAP

"What's normal, what to expect, and what to focus on at each age."

Your puppy's brain and body are developing at an incredible rate. What they need at 8 weeks is completely different from what they need at 5 months. This roadmap tells you exactly what to focus on and what to expect at each stage.



AGE	DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE	FOCUS AREAS	WHAT TO EXPECT
8-10 weeks	Exploration period. Everything is new. Fear imprint period #1.	Crate training, potty basics, name recognition, socialization, handling exercises, bite inhibition intro	Biting, accidents, crying at night, short attention span, sleeping 20 hrs. All normal.
10-12 weeks	Confidence building. Socialization window wide open.	Socialization priority! New surfaces, sounds, people, dogs. Basic commands (sit, come). Leash intro.	More confident exploration. Still biting. Potty training improving. Starting to test boundaries.
12-14 weeks	Learning acceleration. Socialization window starting to narrow.	Commands becoming more reliable. Place introduction. Structured walks starting. Breed fulfillment activities.	Attention span increasing. Teething may start. Adolescent independence emerging. Potty training nearly complete.
14-16 weeks	Socialization window closing. Fear imprint period #2 may start.	Lock in socialization experiences. Build command reliability with mild distractions. Increase place duration.	May show sudden fear of previously okay things. Don't flood — gentle exposure. Teething in full swing.
4-5 months	Adolescent brain emerging. Testing boundaries.	Increase structure, not decrease it. Proof commands in new environments. Start Freedom Ladder progression.	Selective hearing, ignoring commands they 'knew,' increased energy, testing rules. The 'teenage' phase begins.
5-6 months	Full adolescence. Maximum independence testing.	Hold the line on structure. Increase mental stimulation. Practice recall obsessively. Stay consistent.	Will act like they forgot everything. They didn't — they're testing. Maintain structure. This is temporary.

FEAR PERIODS — DON'T PANIC

Puppies go through 2-3 fear periods during development (roughly 8-11 weeks, 14-16 weeks, and again around 6-14 months). During these windows, the puppy may suddenly become afraid of things they were previously fine with — strangers, sounds, objects, other dogs. This is neurologically normal. **Do not force exposure during fear periods.** Let the puppy observe from a distance. Reward calm behavior. Don't coddle or reassure — just be neutral and confident. The fear period will pass in 1-3 weeks. What you do during it determines whether it passes cleanly or leaves a permanent scar.

SECTION 14

WHEN TO CALL A PROFESSIONAL

"Some things are beyond YouTube and guides. Know when to get help."

This guide gives you everything you need for a normal, healthy puppy. But some behaviors and situations require professional, hands-on guidance. Here's when to make the call:

- **Aggression toward people or other dogs** — growling, snapping, biting with intent (not puppy mouthing) at any age
- **Resource guarding** — growling, stiffening, or snapping over food, toys, or spaces
- **Severe fear or anxiety** — cowering, shaking, refusing to walk, panic during normal situations
- **Separation distress** — non-stop howling, self-harm, destruction specifically when left alone
- **No improvement after 4+ weeks** of following this guide consistently — something else may be going on
- **You feel overwhelmed, frustrated, or unsure** — that's completely normal and not a failure. Getting help is the smartest thing you can do.

NEED PROFESSIONAL HELP?

This guide gives you the complete system for raising a structured puppy at home. But some puppies — and some situations — need hands-on professional guidance. We're here when you're ready.

PUPPY JUMPSTART PROGRAM

Hands-on sessions where we work with you AND your puppy. Crate training, potty training, bite inhibition, socialization, and basic obedience — installed by a professional, maintained by you.

BOARD & TRAIN

Full immersion training for puppies and adult dogs. We install the system, proof it under real-world conditions, and send your dog home with a complete maintenance plan + ongoing support.

PRIVATE SESSIONS

One-on-one coaching at your home or our facility. We address your specific challenges and build your handling skills alongside your puppy's obedience.

BOOK YOUR FREE CONSULTATION TODAY

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