



Complete Guide to Bringing Home a New Puppy (With Checklists)

It's the most wonderful day of the year! Not Christmas, or New Years" or even your birthday although any of them might coincide. It's the day you get to bring home your new puppy!

You picked out the pup and did all of your research. You've got new toys and a collar with their name in shiny new letters on a tag. You've booked an appointment at the vet and figured out the best place to take him to play. Everything is ready for your new furry friend to come to his new home!

This may be a time of planning and expectation for you but for a puppy, it's all very new and while exciting, can also be very scary. Never fear! There are lots of things you can do like his new person and family to help ease the puppy into this transition and help him (and you) adjust to his new life!

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What To Buy For Your Puppy

Before you even get in the car to go pick up your new best friend, there are some things you want to have on hand at home and several items you need to buy for your puppy before he even arrives. By purchasing these beforehand, you'll be all set for those first few days with your new dog.

A CRATE FOR YOUR PUPPY – HOW BIG SHOULD MY PUPPY'S CRATE BE?

Buy them a crate that fits them! Little puppies don't need Great Dane size kennels and Great Dane puppies are only going to get bigger. With too much space, your puppy will feel like he's got room to potty in his kennel and cause a mess. Too little space and he'll be uncomfortable while he's sleeping or kenneled up.

You can cover this crate with a blanket for bedtime and naps to create a cozy space where your new puppy feels safe. Keeping the crate in your room will help your puppy feel comfortable and cared for as he learns to trust and rely on you. Leaving him alone in the crate in another room might save you on sleep but it's also a recipe for your pup to get into trouble, have accidents, or feel isolated.

PUPPY TOYS! SAFE TOYS FOR PUPPIES

Puppies learn by playing and having stimulating, safe toys for him to use and play with is a great way to help keep his mind sharp and help him bond with you. Choose a few toys that you think will work for a puppy early on and purchase them before your puppy arrives at your home. Then he'll have his choice of fun things to play with at his new house!

AGE APPROPRIATE PUPPY FOOD – WHAT FOOD SHOULD I GIVE MY PUPPY?

Check with the shelter or breeder on what food the pups have been eating already. Then buy the same bag and have it on hand early on at your home. There's nothing better than a good meal and some playtime when it comes to introducing your pup to his new home! By having his brand of food on hand, you'll save yourself the stress of trying to run out to the store in the first few days he's at home to try to find the brand he needs.

Puppies can have major digestive issues if you switch up their food sources too quickly when you bring them home. Pick a vet recommended brand that's specifically designed for young puppies and ease them into it with a little bit of new food mixed in gradually over time.

COLLAR, LEASH, NAME TAG, OH MY!

There's a good chance your new puppy will already have some sort of collar when he comes home. But get one that is expandable so they can continue wearing it as they grow and get older! Pick up a collar and a leash that you like and that is easy for you to use before you bring your puppy home.

Hopefully, your puppy will never run away but having a name tag with his name and yours along with your number engraved on it is a great way to keep him safe. Bring this name tag along with you when you pick him up so it can immediately be attached to the collar and you'll know he can be identified!

ODDS AND ENDS – PUPPY PADS, SPRAYS, TREATS, DISHES, GATES

Add a few other things to your shopping list so as soon as your puppy comes in the door you'll be ready for him! Pick up puppy pads for those inevitable accidents along with a spot begone spray that will help eliminate odors from mishaps. Get good, age-appropriate treats for training along with a food and water dish. If you've got stairs or areas of your house where you don't want the puppy to be when you're home with him, pick up a cheap baby gate that can be easily set up.

PUPPY SUPPLIES CHECKLIST

- Appropriate sized crate
- Toys
- Age-appropriate food
- Collar
- Leash
- Tags
- Food and Water bowl
- Puppy pads
- Spot cleaner spray
- Age-appropriate treats
- Baby or dog gate

Picking up Your Puppy

The big day is here! You're on the road to go pick up your new furry friend and you need to know what to bring along and the best way to introduce yourself to this puppy. After all, first impressions are important!

SNIFFS AND SNUGGLES – LETTING YOUR PUPPY LEARN YOUR SCENT

Let your puppy sniff you as much as possible when you're picking him up to take home! This lets him get completely familiar with your scent. If it's allowed, you may want to jump ahead of the game and bring an old t-shirt that smells like you to the breeder or shelter where your puppy is living so they can become acclimated to your scent much earlier.

Once you're in the car, let them sit with you on your lap if it's possible. If not, tuck them into a travel kennel with an old t-shirt or blanket that smells like you and let them get used to your scent. Talk to them in the car so they are reassured and become familiar with your voice in addition to your scent.

POTTY FIRST – POTTY TRAINING YOUR NEW PUPPY

House training your new dog is one of the hardest things you'll do as a new pet owner. Start it off right by taking them to their outside potty place as soon as you get home. Riding in the car for a long or short time is a good way to shake things up and make them need to go pee as soon as they get out of the car!

Take them to the spot you want them to use in the long-term as a place to go potty. Be patient and if they do potty outside, praise them and use positive reinforcement like a treat to begin cementing the idea for your young charge. They'll soon catch on and be excited to go outside to do their business!

START SMALL – PUPPY PROOFING AND AVOIDING OVERLOAD

Puppies are just babies and having too much happening all at once is a disaster waiting to happen! As you come to introduce your puppy into your house for the first time, start small with an area he can be comfortable in and that's been thoroughly puppy-proofed. Letting your pup roam free in your house can overload his sense and can be scary. Start with this puppy-proof area and work your way up from there.

ONE-ON-ONE INTRODUCTIONS – SOCIALIZING YOUR PUPPY

With all of the excitement around a new puppy, it can be hard to tone things down and know what to do with the puppy when you first bring him home! Rather than letting everyone swarm him and run the risk of overwhelming his senses, meet him one-on-one in the area where he'll be living.

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT – STOP YOUR PUPPY BITING, NIPPING, AND CHEWING

Puppies learn fast! Start on the right foot by encouraging appropriate behavior early with positive reinforcement and some yummy treat rewards when they follow commands. Within your puppy-proof space, be sure to correct any biting, nipping, or chewing and redirect them to toys or treats that they can nibble and chew. By using positive reinforcement, you'll set your pup up for a great first night at his new home!

CHECKLIST FOR YOUR PUPPY'S FIRST TIME HOME

- Potty outside first, establish an appropriate spot
- Introduce slowly starting with an approved puppy-proof area
- Start with one-on-one introductions
- Enforce the rules early

Good Night, Sleep Tight! Sleeping With Your Puppy

Just like bringing home a new baby, the first night with a new puppy can be rough. Set yourself up for the best night possible for both you and your furry friend by doing a few things before and after you get your puppy home!

SET UP HIS ROOM – WHERE SHOULD MY PUPPY SLEEP?

Everyone likes to have their own space to relax and sleep securely and puppies are no different. His kennel is his room and it should be set up before he even gets there. Put a bed, an old t-shirt of yours, and a couple of safe toys inside his kennel, and introduce him to it once you get home. Let him sniff around, put him inside for just a minute, and make sure he knows it's his safe place. You can drape a blanket over the kennel to make it darker and more secure as well but determining if this will be better or worse may take some trial and error.

POTTY BEFORE BEDTIME

Before you're ready to tuck in your pup for the night, go outside and try to go to the bathroom one more time. Give the command you've chosen and be patient! Puppies are still learning and sniffing the yard or outside area, you've selected for their potty place and they may need to take a lap or five around before deciding to do their business.

SET UP A ROUTINE – PUPPY POTTY SCHEDULE – HOW LONG SHOULD PUPPIES SLEEP?

Once you've taken the puppy outside for the last potty, set up your nightly routine. Give them the command to kennel or crate and give them time to comply. This is a good time to enforce those same rules as well and coax them with just a small treat to reinforce the command. This is a good time to tell them good night and shut out the lights.

Puppies tend to sleep 15-20 hours a day so you should have no trouble getting them to sleep through the night by the time they're 10-12 weeks old. Once they've settled into the routine and gotten used to their new environment, they'll be able to easily sleep through the night. Read more in our [guide to puppy sleeping](#).

CRYING HIMSELF TO SLEEP – SHOULD I IGNORE MY PUPPY CRYING AT NIGHT?

If your best friend in the whole world shuts out the light and is away from you, as a puppy, that's probably the worst thing you can imagine! You're most likely going to cry a little. And that's exactly what puppies feel. Try as hard as possible not to give in to this crying. Reassure them by repeating that they can go to sleep and give them time to cry and settle in.

Resist the temptation to let the puppy sleep in bed with you the first night! Crate training takes time, effort, and persistence on your part but it will give your puppy an excellent place that they can call their own. They can always retreat to this kennel and crate if they're feeling threatened or just want a place to relax. Teaching that starts early and when you let them sleep in the bed, they miss out on the first night in their new room.

MIDNIGHT POTTY BREAKS – HOW OFTEN SHOULD I LET MY PUPPY OUT TO PEE?

Puppies are tiny and their bladders are even smaller! During the first few nights that your puppy is at home, you'll most likely be woken up in the middle of the night for a bathroom break. Listen to his cry and respond quickly. Take him out to his potty place outside and be patient. This is the hardest time to keep your cool and not lose heart. The puppy will probably wander around and make a lap or two or five around your yard which can be very difficult at 2:37 a.m. Let him take a lap or two or five and potty when he needs to. This is going to keep reinforcing the need to go outside for any potty business no matter the time.

After the puppy does his business, reward him with lots of praise and some run around time for a moment outside. By rewarding him with this play, he'll get the idea cemented that going outside is good for him and good for you. It won't just be a chore for him but a time to run outside and play after he does what he needs to.

CHECKLIST – FIRST NIGHT AT HOME WITH YOUR PUPPY

- Set up the kennel or crate
- Potty before bedtime
- Set up a routine
- Let him cry himself to sleep
- Take midnight potty breaks as needed

Adjusting Your Puppy to a New Home: First Few Weeks

Bringing home a new puppy is all about adjusting. Your puppy is adjusting to his new home and you're adjusting to his habits, quirks, and personality! But this adjustment does take time so don't expect a perfect puppy overnight. By continuing to be consistent with training and reassurance you'll have your puppy set up on a schedule in no time!

CRATE TRAINING YOUR PUPPY

Your puppy's crate is their home and the safe place you've created for them in your home. But teaching them to use the crate appropriately can be a trial.

Start by encouraging your puppy to go into the crate on command. Utilize a small treat and lots of loud praise when they respond. Once they're inside, shut the door and walk away for a short amount of time. Wait until they're quiet before you return and open the door. Encourage them to stay sitting in the kennel until you give a command for release.

Puppies, just like babies, need naps. This is a great time for you to have a break from watching them and for them to spend a little time in their crate on their own. They're most likely going to fuss and possibly cry when you shut them in but allow them to adjust and settle down.

FOOD TRAINING

Dogs tend to become possessive of their food and it's up to you to break the habit early. Start by hand feeding your puppy each day at each meal. They'll learn to share the space around their food and be calm when others intrude on that space.

Keep the amount of food they get each day to the appropriate amount. It's hard to resist those puppy-dog eyes but keep extra food and treats out of reach and away from prying teeth!

Your favorite food may be hamburgers and fries or steak and Brussel sprouts but your puppy and his tummy can't quite tolerate this human food. Refrain from treating your

puppy with people's food as it can easily upset his digestion. If you need a reward, rely on puppy appropriate treats in the right size.

Lastly, feed your puppy on a set schedule. This will help you control the amount of food they take in as well as when and where they'll go potty.

DOG TO DOG TRAINING – SOCIALIZING YOUR PUPPY

It seems like one dog or puppy is never enough and if you're introducing your new puppy to an older dog, the prospect can be daunting. Much like your puppy is settling into his new home, your older dog may feel that he's been intruded upon with this new ball of fluff! Keep the hair raising antics to a minimum by doing a little training with both pets.

Start by introducing your older dog to your new puppy in a more neutral location like a yard or anteroom. Let them sniff and smell each other as this is the best way for them to get an idea of the other one and their intention. Keep your big dog on a leash so you can easily move him away if he starts to pick a fight or get aggressive toward your new puppy.

Let your dogs become more familiar with each other through the safety of the puppy-proof area or over a dog gate. Your puppy will stay safe within his gated area but can sniff and "talk" to his new older sibling while they get used to each other.

Any interaction between your older dog and your new puppy should be monitored by you or another trustworthy person in your family. Once older dogs understand that the puppy isn't a threat, they usually settle into the role of an older sibling and play and enjoy the puppy but if they're annoyed they can lash out. Refrain from letting young children watch your dogs as they interact in case this happens!

POTTY TRAINING YOUR PUPPY

This is the hard one! Potty training your dog takes a long time with some puppies catching on in a matter of weeks and others taking months to be completely house trained. The key to house training your new furry friend is patience, consistency, and rewards.

Start by taking your puppy out as soon as he leaves his kennel and before he goes to bed at night. You'll also want to keep him in his puppy-proof area of the house as much as possible so he won't find new areas to mark his territory by having an accident.

After every play session and time of excitement, take him outside to go potty. Puppies often can't control their bladders and during playtime, they often forget they have to go

until it's too late. Taking them out after all the excitement will keep reinforcing the idea that they need to go potty outside.

Lastly, take them out to the potty about half an hour after mealtimes. This is how long it takes them to digest and waiting any longer may mean piles in your house when you don't want them!

Once you've completed a successful outdoor trip to the facilities, use positive reinforcement to give your pup a reward. Use lots of praise, head pets, and some good treats to reward them for their success!

CHECKLIST – FIRST FEW WEEKS WITH YOUR NEW PUPPY

- Spend time crate training so you'll be able to sleep all night
- Work hard to potty train with a good schedule
- Get your puppy on a good food schedule
- Slowly introduce them to your older dog

Takeaways

Your puppy is one of the best investments you'll make and you want to spend your entire life-loving, learning, and growing with him! To get started on this journey together, you want to make sure that your first few weeks together should begin on the right foot.

Introduce your puppy slowly to both his new home and his new family. Taking things slow will ensure that your pup can adequately process the entire area around him without becoming overwhelmed. Once you've gotten him introduced and he's settled into his home, you'll be able to start training with the crate, house training and get on a food schedule as well. Get in contact with a vet to set up a time for your puppy to get his first round of shots and check out local trainers or puppy classes so you they'll begin to socialize with other dogs and learn some good puppy manners!

Puppies are a great joy but introducing them to your home can be stressful. Lessen the stress by taking a few precautions and setting yourself and your pup up for success early!