

YOUR PUPPY'S FIRST FEW DAYS HOME

The fun of bringing a puppy home and introducing him to his new family is a very special experience. What hopes we have for our perfect puppy! He will, of course, become a well-mannered dog, staying quietly at our side, eager to follow our every command. This is every family's dream, and although not unrealistic, does take quite a bit of patience and work to make it happen. Well, it is a long road from the cuddly puppy to the mature dog, but with some effort and understanding, it can be traveled successfully.

The first few days in a new home can be difficult for the puppy and the new owner, because both are trying to adjust to a new situation. The puppy finds out that he has been suddenly taken from his den and littermates and is expected to immediately accept a new, foreign way of life. Creating a calm, quiet, environment, where clear expectations are given, along with gentle affection and rewards for good behavior.

It is important to remember not to inadvertently reinforce negative behavior by allowing your puppy to do as he pleases during the first few days. For instance, jumping up for attention, crying, or nipping behaviors are often started in the first few days. Many families inadvertently reinforce these behaviors by giving attention to the puppy in response to the behavior. It will not make your puppy feel unwanted or unwelcome if you begin training, along with rewards and consequences the very first day. In fact, this will give your puppy the feeling of security of being in a strong pack with a strong pack leader, which will make him feel very safe.

The seven to ten week old puppy still needs a lot of rest and will take frequent naps. He is probably eating two to four times daily. Allow him to explore his bed, play area, food and water areas. Introduce him to his potty area immediately upon arriving home. Ask your breeder for a little mulching material that the puppies have been using in their potty area. Praise him when he shows interest in the area, especially if he does his business there. If you take him to the same place each time you potty him, he will learn to only potty in one area, and keep the rest of your yard clean!

The most difficult part of your puppy's first day is the first night in a new and strange place. You can either situate him in his crate in an area away from bedrooms or allow him to sleep in your bedroom. If you prefer him to sleep away from you, from the beginning, be prepared for loud crying for at least two nights. This can be difficult to endure, but once you commit to it, and then later, give in, and take the puppy out, while he is crying, then you will strongly reinforce crying behavior. If you do allow him to sleep in his crate, or in a box, beside you in your bedroom for the first 2-3 days, this will best help him to transition to the new environment with much less crying. Dogs instinctually need to be near their pack leader, and benefit from this closeness, especially if you work or are away from home a lot. This is one way of giving your dog a sense of your presence and of your desire to be with him as much as possible. If you do not plan to allow the pup to continue sleeping in your room, it is best not to let him stay past the third night. If you wait much past that time, the pup will reach a point where he won't want to be moved, and you'll be back to where you started with the crying when you move him. Either way, know that your puppy will adjust and be just fine. Again, Do not respond to plaintive cries, however, or you will unwittingly train your puppy to whine for attention.

Your puppy begins developing behavior habits from the very first day he enters his new home. You can use this to your advantage immediately. For instance, a puppy can learn to sit for his food dish before he even knows the sit command, by placing him in the sit position before you place his dinner in front of him each time. Before long, he is doing it automatically. A puppy can just as easily be conditioned to jump up, bite your pant leg or bark at you. If your response is to pet him, pick him up, pay special attention to him, when he does this, then you are rewarding his behavior and telling him the behavior is acceptable.

A puppy's behavior is molded all day long in this same manner. Whenever we praise the pup, or pat or cuddle him, the behavior immediately preceding the attention is being encouraged. Whenever we speak sharply or distract the pup or discipline him, the behavior is being discouraged. Puppies develop habits very quickly. If you can control your behavior and pay attention to what actions you are rewarding, you're going to end up with a nice dog that you'll be happy to have around the house. It's much easier to encourage good behavior than to change bad behavior after the puppy has been allowed to get away with it.

The importance of the first few days home with your new puppy cannot be overstated. Relax and enjoy!