Congratulations! You have decided to take the next big step in expanding your family — soon you will be welcoming a four-pawed bundle of love into your home.

Raising a puppy is a wonderful experience, from the moment you start looking to the day your perfect pooch comes home. This new puppy guide will serve as your go-to resource for everything you need to know about raising a happy, healthy, four-legged family member, from his first day home to his first birthday and beyond.

This is an interactive PDF. To get started, just click and go!
I can’t wait to come live with you in my fur-ever home!
But before I become the newest four-pawed addition to the family, it’s a good idea to start getting the house and my new siblings — two- and four-legged! — ready so my homecoming is easy and safe.

– Dr. Jules Benson
Petplan Chief Veterinary Medical Officer

A lot needs to be done before you bring your fuzzy bundle of joy home, but don't despair! Start by ticking off the items on our new puppy checklist to make sure everything is in place before the big day:

**puppy-proofing**

- **This involves getting down on all fours for a dog’s-eye view!** Watch for sharp edges that could cause injury, and place out of reach anything that your puppy could chew, lick or ingest. Puppies love to put their mouths on everything — shoes, toys and even wooden baseboards can be fair game if not protected or moved.

- **Secure bookshelves or televisions that could topple over,** especially if the puppy jumps up on them or can crash into them.

- **Secure trash cans** so that they cannot be pillaged or knocked over by a curious (or hungry) pup.

- **Make use of baby gates** to keep your naturally curious pup out of off-limits or dangerous areas of the house and away from stairs.

**crate**

- **Your crate will be your puppy’s den,** so select one that will grow with your puppy — many have removable sections. Also consider material: Choose from wire, solid plastic or foldable fabric.

- **Sizewise, it should be just big enough for your puppy to turn around in,** stretch out while lying down and stand up without bumping his head (but not so big he can use the potty in one corner and then lie in the other!)

- **Get your pup to love his new bed!** Check out some fun training tips from certified professional dog trainer, Nicole Larocco Skeehan, to learn how.
homeward bound (continued)

lap it up

☐ Pick food and water bowls appropriate for your pup’s size. You may need to upgrade as your dog grows.

☐ Ceramic bowls are easily cleaned in the dishwasher, but are easily broken. Aluminum and hard plastic are more durable choices.

toy time

☐ This is the fun part! Toss a variety of types of toys into your shopping basket. Some puppies prefer one “texture” over another, so try a mix of natural rubber, rope and soft plush.

☐ Choose size-appropriate toys made for puppies, whose jaws and teeth can be hurt on harder toys made for older dogs.

☐ Remember, there is no “100% safe toy,” so always monitor puppy playtime to prevent ingestion or choking.

“Providing the right toys for your puppy can help save your home from destruction — and save your pup from the dangers of foreign body ingestion! If your pup goes for your coffee table leg, offer a chew toy instead and praise him for “chew-sing” the appropriate option!” — Dr. Jules Benson

preparing your family

Welcoming a new puppy is exciting, but it can also be a big adjustment for people and other pets in the household. Minimizing everyone’s stress is the key to success, so follow these tips to put the right pieces in place:

feline friends

The whirlwind of new noises, smells and activity that comes with a new puppy can be stressful for cats. Follow these tips as you’re introducing puppy to cat, so they get a smart start on the path to acceptance — and eventually, even puppy love!

i’m feline good! Invest in feline “feel-good” pheromones a couple of weeks before you bring the puppy home. This will help to keep your cat relaxed as the big day comes and goes. Talk to your veterinarian about recommendations for brands like Feliway.

cat sanctuary: Provide your cat with a way to avoid being cornered, frightened or even harmed by an enthusiastic new playmate. This can easily be done by using baby gates or installing a cat door that allows for escape into a laundry room, basement or bedroom. Cat furniture, such as “cat trees” and “condos” can give your kitty a spot to safely observe high out of the puppy’s reach.

(don’t) use the force: Remember never to force a confrontation between the puppy and your cat. This can frighten everyone involved, and your cat may hide under the bed for a week!
common ground: Always make an introduction between dogs on “common ground” such as a living room area, away from food bowls, favorite sleeping spots or toys. This will promote neutrality and can help prevent any “faux paws.”

safety first: Both puppy and other dogs need to be leashed and under positive control during the introduction for safety’s sake. Even as they begin to bond, be careful that a larger adult dog doesn’t play too ruff-ly with a smaller, more delicate puppy.

actions speak louder than words: Watch your dog’s body language closely when introducing a new puppy. If your dog is showing signs of being uneasy — including cowering, tucking his tail between his legs or licking his lips — stay relaxed and have him focus on you, offering treats when he glances at the puppy. This may seem counter-intuitive, but you’re not rewarding the nervousness; you are helping him to relax with distraction, focus and rewards. Food can turn a nervous situation into a pawsitive one!

know your dog: If your dog is well socialized and never has problems with new dogs in your home or at the dog park, the first introduction and few days are likely to be relatively worry-free. It’s likely a lot of sniffing, running and jumping will help everyone sleep well!

home alone: Safety is always fur-st; you should never leave your puppy alone with other household dogs until it has been established that the dogs get along well.

canine companions: Many dogs welcome a new addition immediately, but others may need a little time to adjust. Follow these tips on how to introduce a puppy to an older dog to ease your new addition into your household pack:

two-legged tykes: There is nothing that warms the heart more than watching puppies and kids play. However, it is important to remember to keep everyone safe and start out on the right paw (or foot!)

Small children should be instructed to be as calm as possible when first meeting the puppy. Prompt them to:

- Stay quiet as a mouse. Loud noises, shrieking and even laughter can easily startle a puppy.
- Touch gently, not allowing infants or toddlers to grab the puppy’s ears, face or fur, as this can sometimes trigger a defensive bite.
- Leave puppy alone when he’s sleeping or eating, to avoid any inadvertent nips.
- Remember to remind children of these “puppy rules” often — when kids get excited it can be easy for them to forget!

Older children should be instructed to:

- Sit quietly on the floor and allow the puppy to approach them first. (Offer treats!)
- Don’t chase or throw things at the puppy.
- Don’t grab the fur, face, ears or tail.
- Don’t sit on, lie on or jump onto the puppy

As your puppy adjusts to your family’s daily routine, he or she should be able to take a little bit of “child’s play.” However, parents should ensure the puppy’s and children’s safety by always supervising playtime to prevent accidental injury or abuse from occurring.
breed all about it

No matter where you find your next best friend, it's important to think carefully about what type of puppy is best for your family — before you fall in love with the pick of the litter from a rescue group, animal shelter or breeder!

he's going to be how big?

✓ Some people prefer a purse-sized pooch, while others like to run with the big dogs! Your puppy will start small, but consider how big he’ll be when he’s fully grown.

✓ A good rule-of-thumb is that a 50-lb. dog has about the same strength as a 150-lb. human. That strength can be harnessed with appropriate training, but it is something for every pup parent-to-be to consider.

get into the groom

✓ If anyone in the family has allergies, consider a breed with a hair coat that sheds less.

✓ Some breeds have coats that require more care than others, including daily brushing and/or professional grooming. Make sure your schedule and budget allow for it!

✓ If you are into low-maintenance, select a short-haired breed that does not require clipping or more than routine bathing and brushing.

✓ Dogs with double coats or long-haired breeds may be super cuddly, but may become uncomfortable if you live in a hot, humid climate.

like parent, like puppy

✓ Are you an outdoorsy, active sportsman or like to blaze the jogging trails? Consider a high-energy breed like an Australian Shepherd, Border Collie or Springer Spaniel.

✓ Do you prefer to pass the evenings cuddled up with a good book? Consider breeds that require less exercise like Bulldogs or Greyhounds (yes!), or those bred to be “lap dogs,” like Shih Tzus or Bichon Frises.

✓ Hunting breeds, such as Beagles and Dachshunds, have a keen sense of smell and a drive to track down prey. This may drive you (and them) to distraction if they start digging up the yard, so obedience training is a must for these active pups.

oh, behave!

✓ Remember certain breeds are instinctually prone to certain behaviors. Intelligent herding breeds like Shepherds love to “have a job,” and if they don’t have one, they will find one — some may even try to “herd” your children! These breeds need lots of mental exertion with games and exercise or hobbies such as obedience training or agility.

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picking a name

You may be unsure what to name your new canine companion, or you may have the paw-fect name picked out! But if you take your time, you may be surprised — sometimes your new puppy’s personality will “come out” in full force only after he’s settled into his home! For ins-paw-ration, try looking at Petplan’s handy list of popular dog names!
At this age, your young puppy is growing fast, alternating between bursts of energy and stretches of sleep. Starting your puppy on a daily schedule will help to streamline his transition into your home and help establish potty training. Your puppy is becoming more and more inquisitive and is curious about new people and other puppies, making this the optimal time for socialization. His first veterinary visit will be important for getting him off on the right paw toward a long, healthy life.

— Dr. Jules Benson
Petplan Chief Veterinary Medical Officer

**puppy’s first vet visit**

New collar? Check. Leash? Check. Food, toys, treat, all of the accoutrements — check! Now it’s time for puppy’s first vet visit. Ideally, your vet should see your puppy within the first 48 hours of his arrival to your house, so that any immediate health concerns or congenital abnormalities can be identified and addressed.

Now, how are you going to prepare? Wait — you mean you don’t just walk your dog into the office and let the doc do his thing? Well, you could, but there are things you can do to prime your pup to leave the whole hospital staff cooing:

- **Brush up on vet visit etiquette** — it’s important for pet parents, but it is helpful for four-legged patients, too!
- **Tote along any previous records** you have relating to your pet’s health, including vaccine records, microchip information and a list of current medications, vitamins and supplements. In addition, bring any records of illness.
- **Certified professional dog trainer Nicole Larocco-Skeehan** has pawfect ways to prep your pup through some simple training tips prior to your puppy’s first vet visit.
During the physical exam, your veterinarian will check your pup’s eyes and ears, look in his mouth and check his teeth, listen to his heart, palpate his belly and check to see if his testicles have dropped yet. (Obviously, this will be skipped if your new puppy is a girl!)

Pup quiz!

While your veterinarian is giving your pup a good rubdown, feel free to ask a few questions!

Not sure what to ask? Here are a few suggestions to catch their attention:

- **How is my puppy’s weight?** After checking your puppy’s weight, your vet will make recommendations about how much to feed and how often.

- **Does my puppy have any signs of breed-specific problems?** Your vet will be on the lookout, but he or she can also give you a run-down on issues that might occur, like “floating kneecaps” in purebred Miniature Poodles.

- **How can I keep my puppy’s ears clean at home?** Your vet can teach you how to clean his ears, which will in turn teach your puppy to tolerate it! Routine hygiene can prevent ear infections and waxy buildup.

- **How should I cut his nails, and how often?** It is best to teach your puppy to have his nails trimmed from the very beginning. Begin by handling his paws often, so he gets used to them being touched. Your vet can teach you about toenail anatomy and how to safely and effectively perform “mani-pedis” at home — saving you time and money!

Your puppy will likely be dewormed at his first visit to protect him from intestinal parasites that pose a major health risk to all puppies — some of which can be transmitted to pet parents and human playmates!

Petplan’s [Vets for Pets blog](https://www.petsmart.com/petplan-vets-fort-pets) has the full list of usual suspects your vet might mention, including:

- **Roundworms:** one of the most common worms, these cause diarrhea and vomiting, or in severe cases, intestinal obstruction.

- **Hookworms:** commonly seen in puppies, who can get them from their mothers, these blood-sucking worms can cause anemia.

- **Whipworms:** making their home in puppy’s intestines, they can cause chronic bloody diarrhea.
Chapter 2

What to Expect When You’re Expecting... a Puppy!

Puppy’s First Vet Visit (continued)

Vaccination Nation

Depending on your puppy’s age, he may or may not get vaccines at his first vet visit. Puppies are most susceptible to deadly infectious diseases during the ages of 3 to 9 months, so depending on your puppy’s age when you brought him home, he may have gotten his first few puppy shots already.

There are two categories of puppy vaccines:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Vaccines</th>
<th>Non-Core Vaccines</th>
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<tr>
<td>✓ These are usually recommended for all puppies, regardless of their lifestyle, as an important step in protecting their health. Just like human babies, puppies need a series of vaccines to be considered fully vaccinated.</td>
<td>✓ These are vaccines that are available to protect against certain diseases, but not all puppies necessarily need them. Your veterinarian will be able to make recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ These vaccines help to prevent your puppy from infectious or very deadly diseases, including distemper, hepatitis, parovirus, parainfluenza and leptospirosis (depending on where you live). Petplan staff veterinarian Dr. Kim Smyth has more about these conditions in this core vaccines blog.</td>
<td>✓ These vaccines protect your puppy from conditions like bordetella (which many boarding facilities require), Lyme disease, coronavirus, giardia and porphyromonas. Dr. Smyth explains more about why these vaccines might be necessary in this blog.</td>
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Your puppy might have received his first vaccines before you brought him home (which is why any vet records you have are important to bring!), but your vet will be able to advise you on what is best.

Health Homework

Your vet will also likely advise you to establish some healthy pet habits to keep up at home. The sooner you start, the sooner these will become part of your everyday routine!

Brush Up on Dental Care: Your puppy will actually lose his baby teeth between 3 and 6 months of age, but don’t be afraid to start brushing them on the first day you bring him home! It may take a little bit of training and a lot of rewards, but over time, brushing teeth will become second nature to you and your puppy. Tooth brushing on a daily basis helps to prevent the formation of dental tartar and inflammation of the gum tissue, called gingivitis. These aren’t huge issues in a puppy, but can become problematic later in life, so it is important to establish good dental care habits early on.

Pampered Pooch: Puppies’ nails grow fast. If they don’t wear down naturally, they can break, causing pain and even bleeding. Ouch! Get your puppy off to a good start by training him to sit for “mani-pedis” every four to six weeks. Start by having a helper hold him still for you, while you have the trimmers and treats. While he’s focused on chewing on a treat, snip one little toenail and praise him for staying calm. Go slowly at first, and play it safe by only trimming the very tip of the nail. If your puppy has white nails, you might be able to see the pink blood vessels within, called “the quick.”
puppy’s first vet visit (continued)

nail “tips” for success

- Purchase **sharp, new nail trimmers**.
- Purchase **styptic sticks** to have on hand, in case you trim too much and there is a little bleeding.
- If your puppy does bleed, **don’t panic**! Grab a styptic stick and apply to the area.

- Some puppies don’t like the pressure of the clipper on the nail and may pull their paws back. Stay calm and try, try again!
- If your puppy is really putting up a fuss, you might want to skip the at-home manicures and leave it to the pro — your vet!

let’s get social!

Everyone loves playing with a cute, fluffy puppy — but did you know that playtime is also important for your puppy’s development? Experts think that the optimal “socialization window” for puppies to learn to get along with others is between 10 and 16 weeks of age. There are a million different ways that your pup can meet and greet people and new furry friends, but it’s im-paw-tant to also consider your new pup’s health and safety.

For many years, veterinarians have encouraged people to delay socialization until the puppy has finished his puppyhood vaccines — which is after the “socialization window.” This is due to a brief period before a puppy reaches 16 weeks where there is little protection left from the mother’s antibodies and little effective vaccine protection. During this “switchover,” puppies are more vulnerable to viruses, especially parvovirus, which is shed through the feces of infected dogs and can linger in the environment for months.

So what is a concerned parent to do? Don’t despair! Nowadays, veterinarians encourage young puppies to socialize during this time, but to do it carefully.

- **steer clear of high traffic**: Avoid visiting areas where infectious diseases are more likely to linger: dog parks, doggy daycares, common dog walking paths, pet stores and beaches.
- **adult supervision**: Schedule a few play dates with older, fully vaccinated dogs.
- **early enrollment**: Sign up for a puppy kindergarten class that allows only vaccinated, healthy puppy-pupils.

- **carry on**: Hold your pup as you walk around your neighborhood, letting him sniff and get to know new people. This will help keep his feet off potentially contaminated sidewalks.
do i hear the dinner bell?

Your puppy’s passion for play (which is often seemingly endless at this age!) needs to be fueled by nutritious, delicious food. Many puppies will come from the breeder or shelter with a specific puppy food that they are used to, but you may want to change brands — just ask your vet for the best way to transition slowly.

When your pup first arrives home, his appetite might be a little less than it should be; this is common. He’s undergoing a big change and may just be a little tired! But rest assured, many puppies will bury their muzzles in the bowl after the first day in their new home.

It is important to feed a puppy-specific food until his first birthday, because they (both dry and canned) are specifically formulated for growth. But with seemingly endless options on the market, how do you know which to choose?

A few nibbles to help whet your pup’s palate:

**Little Nibbles:** Small pieces of dry kibble are easier for tiny mouths to eat, especially for toy breeds like Chihuahuas and Yorkshire Terriers.

**Giant Appetites:** If you have a new large or giant-breed furry friend, pick a food formulated for his special needs. Special formulations can help keep bone growth problems like panosteitis at bay.

**Fresh Start:** Fresh puppy food varieties are often available at grocery and pet stores. These can be found in refrigerated display cases and contain fresh real fruits, grains, vegetables and meats.

Puppies need three meals a day until they are 4 months of age — after that, most vets will advise you to scale back to two meals a day.

Small and toy breeds, like Malteses and Chihuahuas, are prone to low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) between meals when they are very young, so your vet might advise you to offer small, frequent meals every two to four hours until your pup is 4 months of age, and then switch to three meals a day.

**What else should your puppy eat?**

- **Puppy Multivitamin:** Just like people, pets can benefit from a daily dose of essential vitamins and nutrients. Look for a multivitamin rich in B vitamins, Vitamin D and E and minerals such as calcium, phosphorus, iron and zinc.

- **Treat All About It:** Treats are invaluable during your puppy’s first few months in training. But they can be too much of a good thing, which can set him up for weight issues. When giving your pup a treat, try to tie in a training exercise — even a very small one. Keep portion sizes small and incorporate fresh raw fruits and vegetables for a nutritious punch. Consider keeping a handful of Cheerios in your pocket during training and while out on walks for a quick, crunchy reward.
A good treat portion size for a puppy should be about the size of the end of your thumb, given two to three times a day. Offering low-calorie, high-fiber snacks like raw carrots, blueberries, raspberries, apple, pear and banana will have your puppy begging for more!

— Dr. Jules Benson

get into the swing of things

When is the best time to start establishing a daily routine for your puppy? If you guessed “Now!” you’re well on your way to earning a pet-parenting gold star. Puppies, like two-legged babies, need structure and scheduling to learn the ropes of their new home. Remember, when your puppy is this young, everything is new, and potentially scary — a routine will ease the transition and help the whole family feel more secure (and give you a paw-up on potty and obedience training!).

✔ kibble’s on! Establish regular feeding times, whether you start with small meals four times a day or offer larger portions twice a day. Talk to your vet about proper portions so puppy’s nutritional needs are met. (And don’t forget to brush after meals!)

✔ potty time: Potty training a puppy is no picnic, but starting a schedule early will help a lot! Try to always bring your puppy outside to relieve his bladder and bowels at regular intervals throughout the day — first thing in the morning, after each meal and right before bed are always good! Also make sure you always go to the same spot. Your puppy will get the hang of potty training more quickly the more consistent you are.

✔ play’s the thing: Exercise and playtime should also happen regularly, both to keep puppy’s body fit and to work out his mind. They can even be combined with training, like practicing leash walking and basic obedience, like “come.”

✔ night night: Deciding where your puppy will sleep every night is a decision the whole family should agree on and reinforce. That means if your puppy is meant to sleep in his crate, he doesn’t get to spend the night in a child’s bed, no matter how many times he whines or your child begs. He (the pup or the child) might cry a bit at first, but he’ll quickly learn where the pup’s proper bed is.
Your puppy is entering the equivalent of the ‘Terrible Twos,’ so think of him as a toddler. He might know what you’re asking, but obeying is quite another matter! Your puppy is still growling, jumping and putting his mouth on everything, learning about his world, so he needs frequent, gentle reminders about good behavior. Potty training is also continuing in earnest, as your puppy is physically able to ‘hold it’ longer and accidents are becoming a thing of the past. (Whew!) Soon, your puppy will be taking on the neighborhood with his tail held high — and maybe even developing some hobbies!

— Dr. Jules Benson
Petplan Chief Veterinary Medical Officer

puppy kindergarten

In the last chapter, we mentioned puppy kindergarten, which should continue until your pup is 6 months old to ensure proper socialization. As your puppy becomes more engaged in his surroundings, new skills can be taught and mastered during these classes. Bonus? Your bond will deepen as you spend this quality time together.

“Basic training” at these classes can include commands such as:

“sit!” “stay!” “leave it!” “come!”

Before your puppy can read, he has to learn the alphabet! Watch this video that introduces three core commands — teaching your dog to come, how to sit and how to stay — that are easy for both you and your pup to master. Need another reason to practice them? They can literally save your best friend’s life!
munch, munch! toys & teething

Puppies need to chew. During much of your pup’s young life, he will be exploring the world using his mouth and finding relief during the teething period (thankfully only up to about 6 months of age). The perfect outlet is of course, TOYS! Shopping for your pup’s toys can make you feel like a kid again, but it’s important to know how to pick the paw-fect ones. A wide variety of toys will help give your puppy an outlet for appropriate chewing, physical and mental stimulation.

Toys are meant to be fun, but the wrong toys (or those that have been “well-loved”) could turn into threats to your puppy’s health. Selecting toys that can’t be ingested and watching the wear and tear of toys (stuffing comes out) can make all the difference. Edible toys can be a choking hazard and any type of toy that can have pieces chewed off can potentially block the gastrointestinal tract. It is always a good idea to supervise your puppy during play so playtime stays fun!

The wrong toys can also damage your puppy’s teeth. Raw and even synthetic bones can be too hard, causing puppy to break teeth when chomping down. Many veterinarians recommend trying a test when selecting a “smile-friendly” toy for your new puppy: If you can bend it with your hands OR dent the surface with your thumb nail, it’s safe.

Sometimes puppies and older dogs will get a toy and settle down to chew on it when they are feeling antsy or bored. They will even chew until they doze off to sleep! Keeping durable toys available in your pup’s crate will also help to keep him calm and provide distraction for when you’re not there.

If you want your puppy to chew more, select edible chew items. A favorite is the rubber Kong toy, which can be filled with the puppy’s kibble, capped with a tablespoon of peanut butter and frozen overnight. Your puppy will love the challenge of licking the cap off and devouring what’s inside!

teething tail: abby the shark

“When we adopted Abby from the shelter, they guessed she was part Shepherd and part Collie. She also seemed to be part shark when she was teething! Her razor puppy teeth were into everything: our dirty laundry, our surround-sound wiring, even our limbs. We tried various teething puppy toys, but she rejected them all. Then I learned an easy trick that saved us from those gnawing teeth — simply put a wet washcloth or rag in the freezer for a few hours and you’ve got a chew toy. Abby loved it! I’m sure it felt great on her sore teeth, and it made a fun crunching sound that she enjoyed as well. And we enjoyed no longer having holes in our socks!”

– Jackie Bouchard, PoochSmooches.com
A Walk in the Park

“Hey, what’s this around my neck? Is that a new tail or toy to play with?” All sorts of new sensations will be happening the first few times you introduce your puppy to a collar and leash, and his reaction is likely to be priceless! But Moms and Dads, don’t despair — your pup will get used to it in due time and will soon become excited every time the leash comes out.

Around 4 months of age, most puppies are more than happy to go out on a walk with you. The collar and leash are key “gear” for outdoor safety and training success. How to paw it forward:

- **Get your pup used to the collar or harness** while you’re still in the house, and fit it securely so there’s no slipping away!
- **Snap on a solid nylon, rope or leather leash.** (Retractable leashes don’t offer enough control.)
- **Keep practice sessions short and simple** — your puppy’s attention span is only about 15 minutes long!
- **Keep the leash loose,** coaxing your pup forward with treats and praise. Don’t pull him along — be patient and reward forward movement toward you.

Puppies will often get the hang of leash walking and want to take off, sniffing everything in sight and exploring their worlds. This pulling can be hard on your hands and on their little necks. If your puppy pulls, stop walking and have him stop and focus on you. Reward this “paws” with a small treat and repeat this process as regularly as needed. He’ll get the idea!

Crate Expectations

To crate train or not to crate train, that is one of the many questions pet parents face when they bring home a new puppy! And while some pet parents may have guilt about putting that sweet little puppy (and those big brown eyes!) behind bars, just imagine what could happen if you don’t.

Free-roaming puppies can get into all sorts of trouble, including chewing power cords, falling down stairs or eating dangerous objects. And when you think about how pets under the age of one are actually two-and-a-half times more likely to have an injury or illness than older dogs, keeping your puppy safely in his crate when you’re not home seems like a good idea.

It is important that your puppy doesn’t associate the crate with punishment, but rather sees it as a secure, comfortable, den-like environment that keeps him safe from harm (and encourages better bathroom habits). Here are some tips to try:

- **Size matters:** Choose a crate that is big enough for your pup to turn around, lie down and stand up — but not so big that he can potty in one corner and lie in another! You might need to upgrade as your pup grows.
- **Create a ritual:** Just as at bedtime, make sure your pup has had plenty of water and used the potty before going into the crate.
- **Comfort me:** Put a soft, warm blanket in the crate along with a durable toy or two.
- **Give lots of praise and a treat:** Once the door is closed, so your puppy learns how delightful it is to be in the crate!
- **Slow and steady wins the race:** Let your puppy spend short periods of time in the crate at first, and then increase the duration gradually as he matures.
crate expectations (continued)

Playing games is a great way to teach your dogs to fall even more in love with her crate — and have some quality bonding time with you!

**Beginner: The party room!**

**Goal:** Teach your dog that crate = special treats.

- Every time she goes in, give her something that will knock her socks off: a bully stick, stuffed Kong or other delicious long-lasting snack.
- Praise her for eating it in the crate.
- As soon as she comes out, take the snack away. Your dog will soon learn that if she wants her wonderful snack, she needs to eat it in the party room!

**Intermediate: Crate retrieves**

**Goal:** Associate the crate with fun.

- During playtime, toss a tug toy into the crate.
- Use TONS of verbal praise when your dog goes into the crate after it.
- While your dog is in the crate, have an enthusiastic game of tug together. The second any of her paws step out, stop.
- If she steps back in, resume play. If not, toss the toy back in and start over. Your pup will soon learn that fun happens when she is fully in the crate.

**Advanced: Send outs**

**Goal:** Make the crate home base!

- Standing beside the crate, give a verbal cue (“kennel up,” “crate,” etc.) and toss a few tiny treats into the crate.
- Allow your dog to go into the crate to get the snacks, and toss more treats intermittently while she is in the crate.
- Once your dog knows the command, close the door with her inside the crate, but do not latch it. Slowly open the door, closing it all the way if your dog tries to bolt.
- When your dog can stand inside the crate and not break for the exit, give a release command (“okay,” “release,” etc.) and encourage her to come out, but do not praise or give a treat.
- Repeat, varying the distance from which you send the dog to the crate, the distractions going on outside of the crate, and the amount of time your dog remains in the crate.
Potty training a puppy can be a challenging time. After all, when you gotta go, you gotta go! (Even if it’s on your brand-new rug!) But don’t fear — the potty is near! Read on and make a pee — oops, bee! — line to potty-training success.

It’s important to decide if you are going to train your puppy with “puppy pads” inside or if you’ll encourage him to use the great outdoors only. This may depend on your lifestyle — after all, if you live eight floors up in an apartment building, going outside may not be practical every time it is time to, well, wee! But whether you are training inside or outside, the principles are the same.

**Pee, Treat, Repeat:** During the first 3-4 months of potty training, always take your pup to the exact same place when it’s time for a potty break. When your pup “goes,” he leaves a little signature there, so his smell (and sight) will naturally draw him back to the same location. As soon as your pup does his “business,” offer plenty of praise and a small treat or reward. This tells him, “Hey, you did a great job!” and he’s more likely to repeat the performance there the next time! Consistency is key for successful potty training.

**Stick to the Schedule:** When your pup is young, frequent breaks are necessary — the rule of paw is usually one hour for every month old your puppy is. However, as he gets older and is able to “hold it,” going out three to four times a day may be sufficient. (That includes at night!) Establish a schedule that works with your puppy’s body, taking potty breaks:

1. right after you wake up in the morning
2. 20 minutes after each meal (digestion helps things…move along!)
3. once in the middle of the day
4. right before getting in bed for the night

**Oops! Missing the Mark:** Accidents are bound to happen, and some of this isn’t your (or your puppy’s) fault. Puppies can’t fully, consciously control their bladder or bowel movements until they are 16 weeks of age, and even after, it’s okay if he has the occasional slip-up. But once they are a little older, or if the accidents happen consistently, we recommend a little potty-training trouble-shooting or a check-up with your veterinarian.
number 1 & number 2: potty adventures (continued)

**trouble-shooting**

Sometimes potty training doesn’t quite go as planned, and that’s okay! Take a deep breath and take things one step at a time. If you suspect your puppy is having trouble, talk to your veterinarian and check out our most common “trouble spots” that owners encounter during this time:

**Does your puppy urinate the moment you walk through the door or when meeting new people?**

Submissive urination may be the cause. Talk to your vet about the best ways to help your puppy gain confidence — and control of his bladder!

**Does your puppy like to “clean up” a poopy accident? Or pillage the litter box?**

This nasty habit is called “coprophagia,” but most of us know of it as “poo eating.” It is fairly common in puppies and older dogs, but contrary to pup-ular belief, it is rarely caused by a nutritional deficiency. Most dogs simply like the smell and taste! Eww! The best way to prevent this is crate training and avoidance. Pick up after your pup diligently and keep litter boxes out of reach.

**Does your male puppy feel inclined to make his mark?**

So your older male puppy has been doing GREAT with the potty training until one day you find a spot here or there. What’s going on? Urine marking may be the answer, especially if you catch him hiking his leg up on your recliner! The urine of male dogs leaves a “scent trail” in order to communicate with other dogs. It can be curbed (or prevented) by neutering your puppy around 6 months of age and incorporating training measures. Continue to reinforce proper potty habits and use an enzymatic cleaner to help prevent return trips!
At this age, your puppy is continuing to grow in size and intelligence alike. He will also be entering puberty at this age, which means he is finished with his vaccines and won’t need a booster until 12 months of age. It’s also the perfect time to schedule a spay or neuter procedure. At home and when at play, it is important to keep a watchful eye, as your fearless puppy can be more accident-prone than before. This age can be the most fun for puppy parents, as you can take training to the next level!

– Dr. Jules Benson
Petplan Chief Veterinary Medical Officer

the big snip: spay & neuter

These days, most pets adopted from rescues are already spayed and neutered. Why so? Thirty years ago nobody seemed to care, so what’s changed? The main factor behind encouraging sterilization today is the accumulation of data regarding how it affects the health and behavior of dogs and cats, as well as an increased effort to control population numbers.

When it comes to when to spay a puppy, most veterinarians recommend spaying females before the first heat cycle, which happens between 4 and 8 months of age. The benefits are clear:

- Female dogs who are spayed prior to their first heat have a drastically reduced chance of developing mammary cancer. Compare that to a 25% chance of an unspayed dog developing mammary tumors (and 50% of these will be malignant) and you already have a strong case for sterilization.

- Spaying also eliminates the chances of ovarian and uterine cancer, as well as the risk of pyometra, a sometimes life-threatening uterine infection that often occurs in middle-aged unspayed females.

Male dogs, similarly, can be neutered between 4 and 8 months of age or can wait a little longer. Many veterinarians recommend neutering sooner, as behavioral urine marking increases in frequency as the male puppy grows older. Neutering also removes the risk of testicular cancers and limits the development of prostate disease in male dogs.

And of course, spaying and neutering are effective means to help control the animal population. Puppies may be adorable, but unwanted litters can be avoided with some forethought.
ID me: microships & tags

chip on the shoulder: microchipping

It’s a staggering statistic, but one in three pets will get lost during his or her lifetime. Without identification, 90% of them will not return home. In fact, according to the Humane Society of the United States, only about 17% of lost dogs and 2% of lost cats ever find their way back to their original owners.

Though there are many identification systems available to pet owners, microchipping and tattooing are the only real forms of permanent identification. The “microchip” is actually a tiny transponder encased in a special type of plastic or surgical glass, which is easily implanted at your veterinarian’s office. The standard site for implantation is underneath the skin between the shoulder blades. This procedure does not require anesthesia, but many puppies are chipped while undergoing their spay or neuter procedures.

The chips are detected by a special scanner that picks up a unique combination of numbers and letters that can be traced back to your pet. In order for this trace process to be successful, make sure that any microchipped pet has been properly registered with the chip manufacturer. And be sure to update the information if your address changes!

the bling: collars & tags

While microchipping is a highly recommended permanent source of identification for your pet, having a collar and tag on your puppy at all times greatly increases the chances of reunion if you are separated.

tips for tags & collar fitting

✔ get fit: Pick a collar that will fit your puppy snugly. You should be able to fit one to two fingers between the collar and your pup’s neck for a perfect fit. Check the fit often as he continues to grow!

✔ tag along: Fun, colorful tags may be eye-catching, but just make sure there’s room for at least your dog’s name and your cell phone number, so you can be contacted if your best friend wanders off.

getting mouthy: biting and “mouthiness”

Puppies are naturally “mouthy,” meaning that just like babies, they like to put everything in their mouths — this is how they learn about their world and begin to communicate with their littermates. (Plus, teething can often drive the need to chew!) Some breeds, such as Border Collies and Labrador, can be a little more “orally fixated” than others.

It may be a natural behavior, but it’s up to you to teach your puppy when biting and mouthiness are not acceptable. Here are some basic tips on how to stop puppy biting:
getting mouthy: biting and “mouthiness” (continued)

- **Take away attention when he is being mouthy.** This can be as simple as setting him down and walking away. If the mouthiness happens during play or petting, one of the best tactics to employ is to simply remove all attention from your puppy when he puts his mouth on you.

- **Punishing, yelling or trying to pull away quickly may condition your puppy to think that being mouthy is a fun game.** Gently, but firmly, say “no bite” as soon as the behavior starts.

- **Give your dog something else to do with his mouth — that means toys, toys, toys!** Toys provide an excellent outlet for chewing and are a great substitution for human skin or your sofa leg. With gentle encouragement, over time your pup may start to prefer a toy if he is excited and feeling mouthy. A good tip is to have a toy at the ready during times that your pup is excited, such as when you first arrive home. It will help him direct his energy (and his mouth) away from your hands!

- **Your puppy might just be bored or have too much energy to burn,** so leash up and head out for a walk! Many times, this will help tone down the mouthiness and shape up his behavior all around.

play it safe: toy safety

Your dog’s toys are worth every penny. Day in and day out, these virtually pup-proof products stand up to tug-of-war, backyard fetch-a-thons and super slobber. But even the toughest toys need maintenance from time to time. To keep your dog’s top toys in fighting shape and safe for play, it is a good idea to occasionally audit your puppy’s toy box.

Examine your dog’s toys every month or so to see what needs to be washed and what needs to be replaced. If stuffing is missing or if there’s unidentified dried gunk on the rope toy, it’s time to clean up or clean out. Routine care can prevent bacterial infections or choking accidents.

Use these recommendations for cleaning your pup’s toys:

- **Hard rubber, nylon or plastic toys:** Hand wash, then wash in your dishwasher’s top drawer.
- **Tennis balls, stuffed toys, blanket:** Cycle through the washing machine.
- **Rope Toys (no metal parts):** Wet them down, then microwave for 1 minute.
amped up activities

You’ve likely been working on basic puppy obedience training commands (sit, stay, down, etc.) for a couple of months now, and you both may be craving more intensive training!

Your puppy, just like a child, has talents and preferences based on his personality and genetic makeup. It is important to consider your puppy’s breed and temperament before selecting an activity. Calmer, social puppies may be very good at therapy and obedience, while very active breeds may enjoy the challenge of sports.

Consider these great ideas to keep your puppy engaged, learning and most of all — having fun!

✔ hiking
   Enjoying the great outdoors with your new best friend can be a workout for both of you.

✔ agility
   Learning an obstacle course engages your pup’s (and your own!) body and mind.

✔ swimming
   Great for water-loving breeds like Labradors. (Just don’t assume your pup can dog-paddle! Start slow.)

✔ obedience
   Requires precision and focus, which can be very satisfying for brainy herding breeds.

✔ flyball
   An exciting relay race of sorts, which requires speed and teamwork.

✔ pet-facilitated therapy
   Now’s a good time to look into getting your dog certified to spread the puppy love to those in need.
I’m all grown up, but I’m still a puppy at heart — and will be for a while! I’ve got a lifetime of learning and loving ahead of me. I still want to follow you wherever you go — especially if we’re going to Grandma’s house! — and the bigger my world is, the more I will learn. Barking of which, when do I get to see my friends again?

Your puppy is not such a puppy any more, but he will act like it for a few months (or years!) to come. Most of his growing should be done, though — puppies are usually at their full size by the time they reach 18 months. While the tips below aren’t necessarily tied to a certain time in your puppy’s life, they are good to have on hand. Routine veterinary care needs to be kept up at least once a year, and safety is of paramount importance. Prevention is the key to a long, healthy life and we are here to guide you along your way!

– Dr. Jules Benson
Petplan Chief Veterinary Medical Officer

Out & About

Many pet parents can’t wait to start traveling with their puppy. Most older puppies are keen for adventure and enjoy a change of scenery and a chance to spend more time with you. If you’ve been socializing your puppy all along, going on a trip and meeting new people may not be any big thing. However, this doesn’t mean that all dogs enjoy traveling. Some can even suffer from motion sickness, just like us!

Once your puppy is safely vaccinated, start out by going on short trips across town, maybe to a new dog park or pet store. As your puppy grows in size and confidence, consider taking a daytrip to see friends and family.

Follow these tips for safer and easier puppy travel:

- **Tag, you’re it!** Always make a collar tag that has either the number of where you will be staying or your cell phone number so that if your pet wanders off, you are immediately reachable by phone. (And make sure your puppy is also microchipped as an extra precaution!)

- **Vet the vets:** Find a vet close to where you’ll be staying, as well as an emergency clinic, in case your puppy becomes ill or is injured. To help find the vet closest to your home away from home, check out Petplan’s VetFinder.

online: GoPetplan.com/expecting-puppy-guide.aspx
pack mentality: Make sure you travel with enough food and medications to last a few days beyond your anticipated stay, in case your return is delayed.

destination vaccinations: Make sure that your puppy is up to date on all vaccines and parasite preventives. Some areas of the country have higher risks for certain diseases, so check with your veterinarian before you leave to make sure your pet is covered.

all abroad: If you are planning to travel internationally, make sure you investigate what documents and vaccines your puppy may need. Different countries have a range of rules and regulations for animals that cross over their borders. Some may even require quarantine periods.

car safety

From the Labrador hanging halfway out the back window to the Yorkie sitting on the driver’s lap, dogs left unrestrained in moving vehicles are in danger of being seriously injured in an accident. They also pose a threat to humans in the car, too, by distracting the driver. Several states have laws regarding pet restraint in vehicles, so buckle everyone up to avoid hefty fines and unnecessary injury!

strap in: Purchase a pet safety harnesses for your pet to wear in the car. Most models can be clipped or otherwise fastened to the existing seatbelt in your car.

size right: The right harness is important, so shop around and compare different designs in order to find the best one for your puppy. It should adjust to fit securely and grow as he does.

crate expectations: Another option is traveling with pets secured in a carrier or crate. A crate will keep a pup contained during the drive, but will itself turn into a projectile object unless it is tied down.

motion sickness

Puppies are more likely to suffer from motion sickness than older dogs because of their center of balance (which is within the ear structure) isn’t fully developed. The good news is that many puppies will outgrow motion sickness as their systems mature.

sick of the car: Pups with motion sickness may drool excessively, yawn, act restless, vomit or dry-heave. In extreme cases, they may defecate. Talk to your vet for recommendations on making your puppy more comfortable, or discuss leaving him home.

slow and steady: Prevention is the key here: Once you decide to take a trip, start acclimating your puppy to the car slowly, first just sitting in it in the driveway, then with short, treat-filled trips around the block.

bumpy ride: If your pup’s first birthday passes and he’s still experiencing the same old puppy motion sickness with the shortest, smoothest of rides, talk to your veterinarian. Certain medications have been developed specifically for dogs with motion sickness; some owners have luck with a ginger home remedy.
Every year, children and pets die because they are left in hot cars. These accidents are tragic and often preventable. It is important to realize that dogs heat up a lot faster than adults do, with heatstroke damaging organs or taking lives within the course of minutes. During the winter, cars can cool down fast too — leaving your dog exposed to harsh or uncomfortable temperatures.

Experts have shown that leaving the windows cracked is not sufficient and does not allow for enough air flow to cool a hot car. The inside of your car experiences a “greenhouse effect” and heats up much faster than outside, even on mild, cloudy days. Leaving the windows down poses an escape risk for your puppy, even if he is secured by a safety belt or harness.

The next time you just want to pop into the grocery store on your way home from a puppy vet visit, take a look in your back seat, into those big brown eyes. Take your puppy home first and then return to the store. If you have a busy day of errands to do and don’t want to leave your puppy alone, look into enrolling him in a doggy daycare for a few hours.
feeling hot: fire safety

Your puppy is naturally curious, which means he can sometimes be attracted to unsafe objects, much like a moth to a flame. It is up to you to protect your pet from one of the most common household disasters — fire. According to the United States Fire Administration, around 500,000 pets are affected by fires every year.

While most home fires are not caused by pets, it’s best to be prepared and understand the temptations. Puppies will check out anything that smells good, including scented candles, appliances or a fire in the hearth. Open flames should be kept well out of reach of all puppy parts — you wouldn’t want a furry tail knocking over that decorative votive on the coffee table.

Help firefighters help your pets:

✓ calm in the chaos: A fire scene is hectic and someone may not notice if your puppy slips out the door. Be sure your puppy is microchipped and wearing a collar with updated ID tags. If he flees the scene, these precautions will make him easy to identify.

✓ plan ahead: Include your puppy in your family’s fire evacuation plan. Be sure your puppy’s leash and carrier are easily accessible and near an exit. Also keep the number and address of your nearest emergency vet clinic handy, in case your puppy shows signs of distress.

✓ the more you know: Download and customize a pet alert window cling, which includes your puppy’s name, favorite hiding place and photo, and affix it near your main entrance. This will help firefighters find your puppy if a fire should break out while your family isn’t home.

pet 911: pet first-aid kit

Emergencies can happen at any time, so it’s important to be ready for anything. As your pet’s personal “Pet First-Aider,” it’s your responsibility to keep a handy pet first-aid kit well-stocked and ready at a moment’s notice.

Start by assembling a simple, easy-to-carry kit, complete with the most useful items for common pet emergencies.

### essential items
- extra collar and leash
- disposable gloves (non-latex)
- digital thermometer
- vaseline
- gauze
- absorbent gauze pads
- clean cloth or towel
- medical tape
- medicine dropper
- blunt-end scissors
- antibiotic wash, wipes or ointment
- tweezers
- karo syrup (for diabetic pets)
- saline wash
- hydrogen peroxide
- chemical ice pack
- blanket (or foil emergency blanket)
- non-stick pet bandages

### other items to include
- your pet’s vaccination and medical history
- contact numbers for your vet
- the location and phone number of the nearest emergency vet clinic
- pet poison reference guide (or app) with poison hotline information
- pet carrier, to easily move pets safely

![Download our safety fur-st survival guide!](https://www.gopetplan.com/expecting-puppy-guide.aspx)
Consider taking a pet first aid course. Do you want to increase your knowledge about pet first aid? The American Red Cross has resources and offers pet first-aid certification classes in many areas. Just type in your zip code at www.redcross.org to find class listings for your local chapter. You can also download their mobile pet first-aid app for your smartphone or stop by the Red Cross store to pick up their comprehensive dog and cat first-aid guides complete with DVD demonstrations.

Spotting an emergency

In a perfect world, our four-legged family members would never experience pain, illness or injury. Unfortunately, puppies are often afflicted with illnesses and injuries that are all too real. Get up to speed now so you can use your pet first-aid kit effectively in a time of need.

Take a deep breath, stay calm and assess the situation:

- **Seeing red**

  **Is your pet bleeding?** If so, use the clean cloths, towels and/or gauze in your emergency kit to apply direct pressure and adhesive tape to hold the temporary bandage in place while you transport your pet to the vet. Don’t tape too tightly, just enough to be snug.

- **Poison control**

  **Did your puppy eat something he shouldn’t have** from your medicine chest or candy dish? First, try to identify what and how much your puppy ate. Call your veterinarian or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Hotline, and make sure you have your first-aid kit nearby in case you’re directed to induce vomiting. With suspected poisoning, the sooner you can transport your puppy to the veterinarian, the better.

- **Shaken up**

  **Is your puppy having a seizure?** Do not attempt to hold your puppy down — just clear away anything that could injure him if he hits it, and try to track how long the seizure lasts. Call your vet or an emergency vet, and they will be able to guide you on the next steps.

If your pet just seems “off,” and you aren’t exactly sure what is going on, call your vet. Remember, you know your puppy best, and if something doesn’t seem right, don’t wait for it to get worse. Sometimes simple lethargy is a cause for concern, but your vet will be able to tell you more.

When all is said and done, the most important things to remember are:

- Make sure you and your pet are safe from harm.
- Don’t try to do too much. Your goal is to make your pet safe to travel to your vet. Always remember to call a neighbor or a friend if you need assistance.
- Keep your first-aid kit up to date.