



Don't 🦆 Up Your Puppy Guide

OPPORTUNITY BARKS



Life with your new puppy is filled with pure bliss and lots of, “what was I thinking?” moments. We got you. Let’s ditch the overwhelm and not 🦆 it up.

Fourth trimester

So with babies, we tend to “get” it a little more clearly. Babies newly born, are still very much developing and need a soft landing into the new world around them. They are dependent upon us for survival. Ok, so your puppy, is definitely not a baby, but the burgeoning responsibility and the idea that they are an entirely different species can be daunting. Ok, deep breaths. Take this time to get to know your puppy, bond with your puppy, and help them get its bearings in your home.

Play and touch

Play and petting are super important for the development and stimulation of their senses and for bonding. Tactile stimulation is the first sense that develops with your pups and it’s super important to communicate with your pup in their native language- touch! Getting your dog used to being held, relaxing into petting or gentle restraint also helps them develop frustration tolerance and familiarity with things that will be unavoidable as a pet- grooming, putting equipment on, Vet visits, yadda Also, play can be a contact sport, the use of a **tug toy** is a great idea at this stage too.

You are their tour guide and they don't speak the language yet

For starters, management is a mainstay in your real-life strategies with your new pup. Management means watching your dog like a hawk, having them drag a leash in the house, and giving them downtime in an exercise pen or a crate when not supervised.

Why? This is all about the prevention of potty accidents and helping them build confidence to chill in a space of their own. Remember "accidents" are really just your dog knee-deep in incomplete muscular development and you will have to pro-actively get your dog outdoors or to a potty pad a LOT for them to make this connection of where to go. Do not expect them to be able to "alert you". Remember, words are our deal and aren't meaningful until we do a lot of association-building.

Prioritize developmental needs, not obedience

In terms of what's important with a wee puppy, basic word association to help them figure out the lay of the land is a good idea. Let's face it, humans are talkers, so dogs will have to have a grasp of what we're looking to communicate. So let's begin building associations with words, starting with marker words. You can start to pair up words like "good" with hand-feeding meals 1-2 times a day. These words will become your indication for encouraging more of a behavior.

For confidence building, and strengthening your baby's recall, we'd recommend playing lots of "find it" games for exploring. You can do this by saying "find it" and tossing treats/food and encouraging your dog to go sniff and eat said treats, then calling them back to you "come" and reward them with "good". This is an excellent way to encourage curiosity and return to you.

Life-saving words, like working on a speedy return back to you or a thoughtful pause at a door, aka "wait" are well worth talking about early on in life with your puppy. Puppy folks are infamous for teaching sit, down, stay, and paw. Look, no harm done, but obedience is often or can be performative and not contextually going to make much sense to your puppy. So, we'd recommend starting to build your marker words, like "good", "come" and "wait" at doors, gates, or crates for building reliable safety for everyday life.

A photograph showing a person's hands gently holding a black and white puppy. The person is wearing a dark green top. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a fence and some plants.

**Take this time
to get to know
your puppy**

Potty habits

Imagine you're in France, you don't speak the language and you just want to know where the bathroom is. Same deal with your puppy, except the concept of asking for the bathroom, isn't really totally baked yet. So what do you do?

- Give your puppy frequent access (overkill is fine) to the potty area.
- Name this ritual as it starts "outside?". If you begin to head toward the door to go outdoors, talk to your pup.
- If they do not go when you are out and after you said "potty otty otty" 15 million times, return to the house, use a management technique- choose your own adventure-leash drag, crate, watch like a hawk, and try again in 20 minutes.
- Wash, rinse, and repeat until you can extend the time between your trips outside. Things will get more predictable and sticking to a feeding schedule will help predict peeing and pooping.

Note: For puppies that are super fearful, potty training will be harder. They just aren't as apt to prioritize potting when they are outside if their body is busy scanning and in survival mode outside. For these guys, it's important to crouch often, and socially reassure them and try things like find it games to build confidence day to day. This is a journey, not a sprint.

Normalize biting and give it an outlet

Puppies bite, it's developmentally normal for them to exercise their super weak jaws, and teeny teeth and to be baby alligators. So here's what you can do.

Make sure you have 24/7 access to long-lasting chews- in the crate, in the exercise pen, or on the floor. Like what? **Natural or sterile bones**, yak chews, and **Nylabones**, all available in **our store**. These are things that will last a long time, small bits may be consumed but these are generally going to be around for a long time.

If you want an edible chew, stuff and freeze a Kong toy, give your dog a bully stick (in a holder, **like this**, to make it last way longer).

Also....there are play toys and long-lasting chews. They are NOT the same. So the 3-inch rope toy and the rubber bone are not long-lasting chews. The squeaky toy or tug toy is not a long-lasting chew. Your old shoe is debatable. When you want to play **fetch, tug**, etc. this is an activity that happens with you- so create meaningful interactions by tossing, and tugging, then wrap up sessions and remove the toy, so that it's like a special toy treat that can turn on and turn off.

Downtime

Also on that note people miss this idea entirely 99% of the time. Give your puppy downtime, they are young, they are growing at a rapid rate and they need lots of sleep. Overstimulation is easier than you think and here's the kicker, once you get the dip when they need rest, they just get a kick of adrenaline to power through until they can sleep again- which means wackadoodle time for you. So, even if your dog doesn't seem super cranky, it's a great idea to create a structure to help them settle in and rest.

Whelp, my friends, you are well on your way to not 🦆ing it up! Enjoy these warm, fuzzy potato days with your pups. They will go by quickly. Enjoy each other, get to know each other, explore together, and when you are ready to dive into **training** we're here for it - drop off training, boarding school or classes/lessons, come on down. If you need a kit to keep your baby alligator rolling with house rules and skills, check our **Puppy Starter Kit**- we've included a drag leash for around the house to keep your pup out of trouble, a treat pouch to keep those treats close and handy, and a tug toy for teaching how to tug with rules. PS Teaching your dog how to tug will be a game-changer and your dog won't become aggressive no matter what the internet tells you. We've also added a long-lasting chew for downtime and treats to get your training mojo working.

Love you, mean it. Muah!

Leigh



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SINCE 2003