

“First 48 Hours” Checklist: Welcoming Your New Puppy



1. Prepare Your Home and Puppy Zone

- Secure a safe “puppy zone” using a crate or pen in a quiet area for your puppy’s comfort.
- Puppy-proof by removing electrical cords, chemicals, small objects, and toxic plants. Use baby gates to block off unsafe areas.
- Gather essentials: a comfortable crate (ideally near your bed for the first nights), bedding, water and food bowls, high-quality puppy food, chew toys, grooming tools (especially puppy rated wipes), leash, collar, and ID tag.

2. Establish a Routine

- Stick to a predictable cycle of sleep, potty breaks, training/feeding, play, and then back to sleep.
- Offer meals three times a day, using most of the food for short, fun training sessions and the remainder in a bowl.
- Take your puppy outside to potty frequently (every 10 minutes when active, and always after naps, eating, or playing).

3. Emotional Security (LEGS® Model)

- **Learning:** Teach name recognition, simple commands like “sit” and “come,” and reward desired behaviors right away.
- **Environment:** Limit guests and new experiences at first. Keep things calm and allow your puppy to settle before broader socialization.
- **Genetics:** Learn about your breed’s unique needs for exercise, play, and stimulation, tailoring activities appropriately.
- **Self:** Observe your puppy’s personality and adapt routines to help them feel secure and confident.

4. First Veterinary Check

- Schedule a wellness check with your vet within the first 48 hours for vaccinations, microchip information, and a health assessment. Ideally your puppy should see your Veterinarian within 10 days of coming to live with you.
- Continue the breeder or shelter’s diet for a few days to a week before slowly transitioning to your chosen food, to avoid stomach upset. This should be discussed with and directed by your Veterinarian.

5. Supervision for Success

- Closely supervise your puppy at all times; use the crate or pen when you can't actively supervise. Remove collars in the pen for safety. Evaluate toys for choking hazards and remove them from unsupervised play.
- Don't let your puppy roam freely until both potty and behavioral routines are well established.
- Record notes on your puppy's behaviors, potty schedule, and responses to different situations for future guidance in a "Puppy Journal" or notebook. This information can be invaluable to you for training.

6. Calm Introductions and Settling In

- Limit new environments to just home and yard in the first days.
- Keep visits from friends and family to a minimum for the first few days so the puppy is allowed to ease in to the new home and lifestyle.
- Make new experiences positive; let your puppy approach at their own pace without being overwhelmed.
- Comfort your puppy at night, sleeping nearby can help reduce stress and foster bonding.

7. Paperwork and Community

- Organize paperwork: vet records, microchip information, breeder or rescue instructions, and registration materials.
- Register with the AKC or appropriate breed organization to access lifelong resources and support.

Daily Habits for Success

- Play short, positive training games throughout the day to foster attention, confidence, and bonding.
- Be patient: avoid punishments and use gentle guidance and redirection.
- Connect with trusted breeder or breed community for ongoing support.

Disclaimer

All information provided in this checklist is for general guidance only and is subject to review by each owner. Always consult your own Veterinarian and a Certified Professional Dog Trainer before applying any advice or routines to your puppy.

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