



## Before the New Puppy Comes Home

### Canine Behavior Series

A new puppy is a big job and commitment, with a lot to do and plan in advance. Most of the preparations are the same for an adult dog as for a puppy.

Whether you are waiting for a planned canine family member from a breeder or scheduling a trip to a shelter to look for one, you'll want to be ready. It can make the difference between a smooth or rocky start with your new pup, or success or failure.

Use the following checklist to help prepare home, family, schedule, and more. So much to do!

### What to Buy, What to Do, Who to Ask

1. Check with your veterinarian's office to make sure you can get your puppy in for a check-up within 24 or at most 48 hours of bringing the puppy home.
2. Get your fence built, repaired, or redesigned for the type of dog who is joining your family.
3. Ask your veterinarian to recommend local puppy training classes, attend some as an observer to make sure they are acceptable, and get the information you need to be ready to enroll your pup at the right time.
4. Decide where your puppy needs to eliminate. This is the first place you want the puppy's feet to touch the ground at your home! You'll be spending a lot of time here at first. [Read [Potty Areas](#).]
5. Prepare your other dogs to be safe companions for the puppy: spay/neuter any who need it, get pain from any medical condition under control so the dog won't be cranky with a puppy, eliminate infection or parasite issues in your dogs and property with your veterinarian's help, and get all training in order. [Read [Fighting Dogs](#), [Food Guarding](#), and [Feeding Multiple Dogs at the Same Time](#).]
6. Evaluate and fix risks from neighbor dogs to make sure your puppy will be safe from attacks.
7. Research—thoroughly—the breed (or breeds in the case of a mix you are considering) of the pup. Now is the time to change your mind if you realize the breed characteristics don't fit your situation.
8. Find a dog groomer if the dog has anything other than a short coat. Make sure you know precisely what grooming the breed requires. Pups who need professional grooming later should start easy, introductory grooming visits when young.
9. Hook up with other dog owners who can help you find the dog services and resources you will need in your community. These folks can also help in various other ways such as practicing your class homework together. When you see someone out with a well-behaved dog and they don't appear to be in a hurry, a good way to strike up a conversation is to compliment the dog and the owner's handling.
10. Get everyone in the house together on what the house rules will be with the new puppy.
11. Teach the kids what they need to know to start off safely with the puppy. A breeder or rescue group might be willing to help with this in exchange for their dogs getting some controlled experience with children. [Read [Choosing a Dog for Children](#), and [Child Safety with Dogs](#).] Teach adults and older children how to pick up the puppy safely (ask your veterinarian to show you), and make sure young children know NOT to pick up the puppy. Dropped puppies often get horribly injured.
12. Purchase a crate, a portable exercise pen, baby gates and any other equipment you need to make sure your puppy will be in a safe place for forming good habits at all times.
13. Purchase about three quality chew items suited for the size and age of your puppy, along with a safe bittering agent such as Bitter Apple that you can use as a training aid. [Read [Destructive Chewing](#).]
14. Get a couple of weeks or more supply of the food the dog has been eating, as well as the new food if you will be changing. Food changes always need to be gradual with dogs, and this is especially true for puppies and for any dog who is going through the stress of adapting to a new home.
15. Purchase a suitable leash, and either buy a collar or know where you can buy one quickly.
16. Get an identification tag made in advance for your puppy with your name, phone number, address, and possibly email address. It need not have the puppy's name on it. Also get a small jingle bell and a

split ring to attach the tag and bell to the pup's collar. The jingle bell will help you keep up with the puppy in the house, and the split ring forms a more secure attachment than an "S" hook, making it less likely the tag will be lost.

17. Arrange to bring your puppy home at the beginning of some time off for you, such as a vacation or holiday weekend, to help get the puppy better settled.

18. Plan for lost sleep and noise. Puppies tend to cry at first when left alone, when crated, and when you're trying to sleep. If you give up and put the puppy in your bed (not recommended for the great majority of people), you have a playful, chewing puppy who may eliminate on your bed or get hurt jumping off the bed.

19. Get a medical notebook for the puppy, something sturdy and portable you can take to the veterinarian and use to note medications, symptoms, test results and your veterinarian's instructions. This book can follow your dog through life, and you'll be glad to have the notes for reference.

20. Work out a schedule for your puppy. Decide which household members will do which care tasks.

21. Consider safety of locations, times, ability and vulnerability of who is to walk the dog.

22. Buy the needed grooming tools, learn to use them, and include daily grooming in your puppy's schedule from the first day. [Read [Grooming - How It Affects Your Dog's Behavior](#).] If your veterinarian approves, bathe the puppy once a week or so as preparation for baths later in life. Trim toenails for the same reason.

23. Review or learn about housetraining, crate training, collar and leash training, eye contact/attention training, jumping-up training and training puppies not to put teeth on people. [Read [Housetraining Basics](#), [Crate Soiling](#), [Crate Training Puppies](#), [Defensive Dog Behavior](#), [Leash Training for Puppies](#), and [Jumping Up On People](#).]

### **Time Well Spent**

One thing that happens when you make these preparations for your puppy is that you carefully think about the decision to add this family member. You also think about what kind of puppy is best for you. And you'll be focusing on the day-to-day practical aspects of dog ownership—especially the puppy stage.

You also get your household, your extended family and your friends on board with the changes coming in your lifestyle. Your veterinarian, groomer, puppy class instructor and others help you get ready. You meet other dog owners in your community in a new way. This is all healthy, and builds a great network to support you and your dog. Some people even find that their friends give them puppy showers!

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*Kathy Diamond Davis is the author of the book [Therapy Dogs: Training Your Dog to Reach Others](#). Should the training articles available here or elsewhere not be effective, contact your veterinarian. Veterinarians not specializing in behavior can eliminate medical causes of behavior problems. If no medical cause is found, your veterinarian can refer you to a colleague who specializes in behavior or a local behaviorist.*

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