



YOUR PUPPY'S DEVELOPMENT

ultimatepuppy.com

Development Stages of a Dog

Age

Learning and Development

What You Should Be Doing

Suggested Veterinary Care

Basic veterinarian guidelines will alter from clinic to clinic & region to region. This is intended as a loose guideline and NOT meant to take the place of what your vet recommends. Discuss your dog's care with your veterinarian.

Neonatal

Birth to 12 days

- Learning begins.
- Puppy can't see at all and he doesn't hear well. Mostly immobile, he stays very close to mother and litter mates.
- Breeder provides warm environment.
- Early stress is beneficial — a good breeder handles the pups regularly and gently. This enables the dog to cope with stress more easily later in life.
- Puppy's rate of mental development will quickly depend on how complex their environment is.
- You have approximately 12 weeks to find a well run Puppy Class. Classes fill quickly, so it is prudent to have your enrollment reserved in advance. Check the **Resources** section to learn more about selecting a good dog trainer.

- Breeder has puppies checked by vet at one to two days old to rule out birth defects.

Transition Period

13 to 20 days

- Eyes open, puppy can hear, begins to walk in a wobbly fashion.
- By the end of this period the puppy starts to eliminate spontaneously (without the mother licking him).
- The puppy starts to take in solid food. The mother may regurgitate food to the pup.
- A good breeder provides a complex environment. This helps develop the puppy's perceptual and learning abilities. Examples: A variety of different noises, surfaces to walk on, different people to meet and unique toys to play with.
- Visitors should remove shoes and wash hands thoroughly before handling the puppies.

- Usually none if the puppy is healthy.

Primary Socialization Period

3 to 7 weeks

- The sense of vision begins to develop; adult vision is reached at about 8 weeks of age.
 - Puppy is able to use senses of sight and hearing.
 - The puppy begins to learn from good experiences (i.e. with positive reinforcement).
- Responsible Breeder Checklist:**
- It is essential that the puppy remain with his mother and litter, at the breeder's location.
 - A complex, stimulating environment is essential to help develop the puppy's perceptual and learning abilities.

- Usually none if the puppy is healthy.
- Discuss appropriate vaccine program with your vet.
- Check with your vet to see if a stool sample is required.
- Research puppy food and nutrition.

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puppy learns species-specific behavior that makes him a dog (biting, chasing, barking, fighting, and body posturing). • Learns from litter mates not to bite too hard. • Learns to relate with other litter mates through play. • Mother guides the puppy's behavior. • Mother begins to wean puppies between 4 to 8 weeks. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear distinction between sleep and play area should be made. This ensures the puppy can leave his living area to eliminate. • Each litter mate should have one-on-one contact with humans. • Occasionally isolate puppies to prepare them for separation. This is an excellent time to employ the use of a crate. A puppy who has begun crate training at the breeder will have an easier transition when they move to their new home. The breeder ensures the experience is a positive one. • Exposure to a variety of noises and different floor surfaces is also important. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start reading up on handling exercises in Prevention. <p>First Visit Should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socialize puppy with vet clinic staff. Use yummy treats! • Do handling exercises with pup (ears, mouth, paws and body). • Make sure the last thing that happens before you leave the clinic is fun for the puppy! • With regular trips to the vet just for fun, you reduce the possibility of your adult dog developing an aversion to the clinic. |
| <h3>Human Socialization Period</h3> | <p>Starts week 7, ends somewhere between 12 and 14 weeks</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puppy should be completely weaned from mother. • This is the age when most rapid learning occurs. • Greatest impact on future social behavior will be made by any experience that happens at this point. • The window of opportunity is closing. Don't miss this very important learning opportunity for your puppy. Although puppies still benefit from continued socialization, it is never as effective after 14 weeks of age. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually a puppy goes to the new home after 8 weeks of age. • Absolute critical period in which puppy should be socialized — maximize this time! Enroll in a good puppy class. • Ideal time to capitalize on educating your puppy. • Take into account puppy's physical limitations and short attention span. • Typically, puppies can begin attending class after their second set of vaccines, some time around 12 weeks of age. Please read R.K. Anderson's position paper on this. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate treats throughout the visit. • Ensure socializing and handling exercises get done with vet staff. • Ask vet staff to show you how to clip your pup's nails. • Discuss your puppy's dental care. • The last thing you do prior to leaving clinic should be FUN for the pup (use treats and toys). |
| <h3>Fear Impact Period</h3> | <p>8 to 11 weeks</p> | <p><i>This period falls within the Human Socialization Period.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is when puppies start to learn from bad experiences, i.e., they remember bad things that happen to them. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trips to the vet need to be pleasant (take the puppy there just for fun!). Vet staff can give the puppy a treat. • Use fun, short sessions, and be positive because of "fear impact." This kind of mind set will enable you to be | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually none if the puppy is healthy. • Drop by the clinic with your pup just for fun! Don't forget to bring your treats and toys. • While you are at the clinic, don't forget to do handling exercises. |

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- Anything that frightens the puppy during this period could have a more lasting effect than if it occurred at any other time.
- This is also a time when puppies are particularly easily frightened.

successful, as you continue to socialize your puppy.

- Avoid any potentially overwhelming circumstances you cannot personally oversee, such as shipping your pup in the cargo bay on an airplane.

Concentrate on weak spots (hind legs often get forgotten).

Week 14

The time to easily socialize your puppy is coming to a close.

Juvenile Period

Occurs between the socialization period and puberty

- Puppy has been in the home for approximately four weeks.
- Pups will attempt to clarify and resolve their boundaries.
- Most of height growth occurs during this period and ends by puberty.
- Puppy begins to mature sexually: male begins to lift leg, and female has first heat period, usually between 6 to 12 months. Some dogs may be earlier, some later than that.
- Puppy coat being replaced by more distinctive adult coat. Timing depends on the breed.
- He will be uncomfortable because his adult teeth are growing in.

- So long as you provide structure and healthy management of your puppy's time, this transition should be relatively painless.
- Puppy should be attending a socialization class by now.

If all of the above things have not been provided for, all heck is about to break loose!

- Discuss rabies vaccine with your vet.
- Check with vet to see if a stool sample is required.
- Discuss heartworm prevention program with your vet.

Adolescent Period

Starts with puberty and ends with social maturity

A puppy will test his wings.

- He may test to see if all the rules are still the same.
- He may not come when called.
- He may not play fetch even though he once did.
- Your consistency and predictability are essential right now.

It is because of this stage that prevention over cure is advocated — you must start socializing and training before now! When you notice a change in your dog during this time, he is probably going through adolescence. Like a teenager going through puberty, your puppy is changing physiologically. Your awareness of these changes in behavior will help you get through this commonly difficult period.

- Discuss spaying or neuter of your dog with your vet — book an appointment!
- Consider micro-chipping your dog.
- Check with vet to see if a stool sample is required.

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Second Fear Impact Period

Lasts approximately 3 weeks

Can occur before puberty, but may occur between 5 and 12 months

- Your dog may suddenly be apprehensive about new things or shy or timid of new people or situations.

This is the time when obedience schools get most of their calls. Puppies that have not been socialized and worked with take a different path in life than pups that have.

- Your dog will still go through this period regardless of your good early work — be aware of the change and ride it out.
- Be prepared with appropriate chew bones (large enough so that the pup will not choke) to help with your pup's need to chew. Use a long line in the park if your dog is not coming when called.

- If your dog appears apprehensive, avoid confrontation.
- Building confidence through training is a worthwhile effort.
- Avoid any potentially overwhelming circumstances you can not personally oversee, such as shipping your dog in the cargo bay on an airplane.

- Drop by vet clinic for handling exercises (ears, mouth, paws and body) and just for some fun.
- Your dog should be comfortable going into the vet clinic.

Maturity

1 to 4 years

- Refers to social maturity.
- Smaller dogs mature earlier, larger dogs later.
- If you were lax in your work earlier on, you may now see the things you have missed: object guarding, unfavorable reactions towards unfamiliar people, animals, or things that your dog missed during socialization stage.

- Until this period has been reached, it is recommended that your dog remains crated or the equivalent (structure) when you are not available to supervise his behavior.
- You will know when your dog is trustworthy by testing him for short periods (10 to 15 minutes) while you leave the house. If your dog is damaging property while loose, he is not ready.

- Return for yearly check up. Check with your vet clinic to see if a stool sample is required.
- Possible X-ray for hip dysplasia.