

Your puppy's first year

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Giving your puppy the right experiences in his/her first year of life will build a firm foundation for good behaviour in the future.

Toilet training

- Use a range of places, such as grassed areas, concrete, areas with or without trees and plants. Puppies toilet trained only on newspaper or on grass may develop a preference for this and refuse to use alternatives, causing difficulties if travelling or being kennelled.
- Vary the routine and vocal cues. Dogs trained always to go at certain times, or after specific visual or vocal cues, can experience problems when routines are changed for any reason, or they are cared for by an unfamiliar person.

Handling

- Puppies need regular checks to ensure they are fit and well and to identify any health changes early. Getting them used to being handled and examined, all over the head and body, with special attention to the mouth, ears, feet and perianal areas, and by a variety of people in different places, will help in this.
- Cooperation can be reinforced with rewards such as food, praise and affection.

Noise

- Your puppy should experience a wide range of noises:
 - Indoors: vacuum cleaners, hairdryers, TV, radio, doors slamming, doorbells, etc.
 - Outdoors: traffic (motorbikes, trucks, bicycles), sirens, bird scarers, crowds of people, fireworks, etc.
- It is vital that the exposure is done in a controlled way, without causing alarm to the puppy.

Smells

- Your puppy should experience a wide range of smells: people-related, animal-related, common household odours (both pleasant and unpleasant).
- This will help develop his/her sense of smell and help prepare the puppy for unpleasant or unusual smells that may be encountered in later life.

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Other dogs

- Your puppy should meet a variety of dogs of different age, breed, sex and reproductive status.
- Exposure should be supervised and carefully managed so puppies are neither fearful nor over-confident during interactions.

Other animals

- Introduce your puppy to a range of animals, such as cats, rabbits, horses, sheep, cattle, chickens, etc.
- Irrespective of whether the puppy is likely to be living in close contact with other species, it is important that they can get used to them so they are not fearful or aggressive in later life.

People

- Your puppy should meet a variety of people of different age, sex and appearance (skin colour, wearing glasses, with a beard or moustache) and in a variety of clothing (hats, uniforms, carrying cases, bags, umbrellas).
- Exposure to children of varying ages is of particular benefit, irrespective of whether the puppy is likely to be living in a household with children.
- Exposure should be supervised and carefully managed so puppies are neither fearful nor over-confident during interactions.

Transport

- Puppies can get used to car travel from an early age. They must be positioned safely and securely, and provided with a comfortable sitting/lying area.
- Start with short journeys, progressing to longer journeys depending on the puppy's response.
- Use of public transport, such as buses, trains and ferries, can be an enriching experience.

Being alone

- Puppies must learn to spend time on their own and to stimulate or entertain themselves with or without the aid of toys and chew items. This teaches self-reliance and independence while settling quietly in a safe location.
- Spending time with family or friends in the absence of their owner helps puppies develop coping mechanisms for being cared for by others should the need arise.

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Pleasant experiences

- These will include:
 - A variety of toys and chew toys
 - Play (alone, with other dogs, with people)
 - Visiting novel places
 - Exercise and the freedom to explore, dig, sniff, swim and engage in positive experiences
 - Rewards for good behaviour (praise, tactile affection, food treats).
- Mental stimulation, whether working for rewards on his/her own or as part of training/agility exercises with you, can provide benefits for both you and your dog.

Unpleasant experiences

- These may include:
 - Wearing a collar, lead, headcollar or muzzle
 - Bathing, grooming, nail clipping, tooth brushing
 - Administration of tablets, creams, topical treatments
 - Punishment
 - Frustration
 - Veterinary surgeries and treatments
 - House moves.
- Early exposure to small amounts of unpleasant experiences, with rewards for cooperation and good behaviour, will help reduce stress and help develop coping strategies for potentially unpleasant experiences in future life. Remember: all have the potential to cause your puppy stress and you will need to consider, and prepare for, his/her response.

Confinement

- Crates and kennels at home should only be used for appropriate periods. The puppy should be provided with a comfortable lying area and appropriate stimulation, such as toys and chews.
- Positive experiences visiting boarding kennels and veterinary clinics during puppyhood help to reduce problems with confinement away from home.