

The Ultimate Puppy Training Checklist

Your Complete Week-by-Week Guide to Raising a Well-Behaved Dog



Congratulations on your new puppy! The first 16 weeks are the most critical period in your puppy's development. This comprehensive checklist will guide you through each stage, ensuring you don't miss any important training milestones.

This guide is designed to give you a clear roadmap based on proven positive reinforcement techniques. Print it out, check off each accomplishment, and watch your puppy transform into a confident, well-mannered companion.

✓ What's Inside

Week-by-week training timeline (weeks 8-16) • Essential commands mastery checklist • House training success tracker • 100-item socialization checklist • Common problems & solutions • Daily routine template • Training session planner • Mental stimulation activities

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Please read this page carefully before using this guide.

General Information Only

This guide is provided for general informational and educational purposes only. The training techniques, schedules, and recommendations contained in this guide are based on commonly accepted positive reinforcement training principles, but they do not constitute professional advice for your specific dog. Every puppy is unique in temperament, health, breed characteristics, and learning pace; results will vary, and no specific outcome is guaranteed.

Not Veterinary or Professional Behavioral Advice

Nothing in this guide is intended to replace the advice of a licensed veterinarian, certified professional dog trainer, or veterinary behaviorist. Always consult your veterinarian regarding your puppy's health, vaccination schedule, diet, and readiness for socialization activities. If your puppy displays aggression, extreme fear, severe separation anxiety, resource guarding, or any of the warning signs described in the "Red Flags" section of this guide, seek help from a qualified professional promptly.

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Week-by-Week Training Timeline

WEEKS 8-10

Foundation & Bonding

Primary Focus: Creating a safe environment, establishing trust, and beginning basic socialization

★ Pro Tip

Keep training sessions very short (3-5 minutes) at this age. Puppies have limited attention spans, and ending on a positive note builds enthusiasm for future training.

- ☐ Set up a comfortable crate with bedding and toys
- ☐ Establish a consistent feeding schedule (3-4 times daily)
- ☐ Begin potty training - take puppy out every 1-2 hours
- ☐ Introduce puppy to their name using positive reinforcement
- ☐ Start handling exercises (touching paws, ears, mouth gently)
- ☐ Introduce puppy to household sounds at low volume
- ☐ Begin short, positive crate training sessions (5-10 minutes)
- ☐ Practice "come" command during play using treats
- ☐ Allow supervised exploration of home environment
- ☐ Schedule first veterinary check-up and vaccination

WEEKS 10-12

Basic Commands & Socialization

Primary Focus: Building foundation behaviors and safe socialization experiences

⚠ Critical Period Alert

Weeks 8–16 are the prime socialization window. Safely expose your puppy to various sights, sounds, people, and experiences. Under-socialized puppies often develop fear and anxiety issues later.

- ☐ Teach “sit” command using lure-and-reward method
- ☐ Introduce “down” position from sit
- ☐ Practice loose-leash walking indoors with lightweight leash
- ☐ Continue potty training with consistent outdoor schedule
- ☐ Introduce puppy to 5+ new people (safely, post-vaccination)
- ☐ Expose puppy to different surfaces (grass, concrete, wood, tile)
- ☐ Practice crate training with door closed for 15–30 minutes
- ☐ Begin “stay” command for 5–10 seconds
- ☐ Introduce gentle grooming routine (brushing, nail touching)
- ☐ Start bite inhibition training – redirect to appropriate toys
- ☐ Expose puppy to car rides (short, positive experiences)
- ☐ Practice handling exercises daily (examine teeth, ears, paws)

WEEKS 12-14

Impulse Control & Manners

Primary Focus: Teaching self-control and appropriate behavior

★ Training Technique

Use the “Nothing in Life is Free” approach – have your puppy sit or perform a command before meals, toys, or attention. This builds respect and reinforces that you control resources.

- ☐ Practice “leave it” command with treats on floor
- ☐ Teach “wait” at doorways and before meals
- ☐ Continue loose-leash walking practice outdoors
- ☐ Introduce “drop it” command during play
- ☐ Extend “stay” duration to 30–60 seconds
- ☐ Practice recall in low-distraction environments
- ☐ Work on eliminating jumping behavior – ignore until calm
- ☐ Introduce puppy to other vaccinated, friendly dogs
- ☐ Practice calm greetings with visitors
- ☐ Reinforce potty training – should have fewer accidents
- ☐ Eliminate mouthing/biting behavior completely
- ☐ Practice calm behavior around food preparation
- ☐ Introduce “quiet” command for barking

WEEKS 14-16

Advanced Skills & Reliability

Primary Focus: Increasing distractions and building command reliability

- ☐ Begin distance work – practice commands from 5-10 feet away
- ☐ Expose puppy to urban sounds (traffic, sirens) at safe distance
- ☐ Practice all commands in various locations (park, friend's house)
- ☐ Introduce distractions during training sessions
- ☐ Work on reliable recall with long-line training
- ☐ Practice “place” or “bed” command for settling
- ☐ Extend “stay” to 2-3 minutes with distance
- ☐ Perfect loose-leash walking with turns and pace changes
- ☐ Complete the 100-item socialization checklist
- ☐ Practice commands around other dogs and people
- ☐ Begin proofing commands – add duration, distance, distractions

✓ Milestone Achievement

By week 16, your puppy should know basic commands, be mostly house-trained, and show good social skills. Celebrate these accomplishments – you've built an excellent foundation!

Want to accelerate your puppy's training with a proven system?

Adrienne Farricelli's Brain Training for Dogs program uses positive reinforcement and mental stimulation to eliminate problem behaviors while building obedience. Perfect for puppies and adult dogs alike.

[Learn More About Brain Training for Dogs →](#)

Essential Commands Mastery Checklist

Command	Goal Behavior	Achieved
Sit	Responds immediately without treats visible	☐
Down	Lies down on command from standing or sitting	☐
Stay	Remains in position for 3+ minutes with distance	☐
Come	Returns immediately when called, even with distractions	☐
Leave It	Ignores items on ground when commanded	☐
Drop It	Releases item from mouth willingly	☐
Wait	Pauses at doorways and before meals	☐
Loose Leash	Walks beside you without pulling	☐

House Training Success Tracker

★ House Training Keys

Consistency is everything. Take your puppy out: immediately after waking, after meals, after play sessions, before bed, and every 1-2 hours in between. Reward outdoor elimination with high-value treats and enthusiastic praise.

Potty Training Milestones

- ☐ Puppy signals when needs to go outside
- ☐ Goes 4+ hours without accidents during day
- ☐ Can hold bladder through the night (6-8 hours)
- ☐ Understands specific potty area in yard
- ☐ Eliminates on command ("go potty" cue works)
- ☐ 7 consecutive days with zero accidents

The 100-Item Socialization Checklist

Safe, positive exposure to these experiences during the critical socialization period (8–16 weeks) helps prevent fear and anxiety later in life.

People to Meet

- ☐ Men with beards
- ☐ People wearing hats
- ☐ Children (various ages)
- ☐ Elderly people
- ☐ People in wheelchairs
- ☐ People with canes/walkers
- ☐ People of different ethnicities
- ☐ Delivery personnel
- ☐ People in uniforms
- ☐ Joggers and cyclists

Surfaces & Textures

- ☐ Grass (wet and dry)
- ☐ Gravel and rocks
- ☐ Wood floors
- ☐ Tile and linoleum
- ☐ Carpet
- ☐ Sand
- ☐ Metal grates
- ☐ Stairs (up and down)
- ☐ Slippery surfaces
- ☐ Uneven terrain

Sounds to Experience

- ☐ Vacuum cleaner
- ☐ Doorbell
- ☐ Phone ringing
- ☐ Car horns
- ☐ Thunder (recording if needed)
- ☐ Fireworks (recording)
- ☐ Lawn mower
- ☐ Blender/food processor
- ☐ Children playing/screaming
- ☐ Other dogs barking

Places to Visit

- ☐ Pet store
- ☐ Friend's house
- ☐ Veterinary office (happy visits)
- ☐ Car rides to various locations
- ☐ Outdoor café (dog-friendly)
- ☐ Park with playground
- ☐ Busy sidewalk
- ☐ Parking lot
- ☐ Near train/bus station
- ☐ Different neighborhoods

Common Puppy Problems & Solutions

Biting & Mouthing

Solution: Never allow puppy teeth on human skin. When puppy bites, say “ouch!” sharply and immediately stop play. Redirect to appropriate chew toy. If biting continues, leave the room for 30 seconds. Consistency is key – everyone in household must follow same protocol.

★ Why This Works

Puppies learn bite inhibition from their littermates through this exact feedback. You're teaching that biting = fun stops immediately.

Jumping on People

Solution: Never reward jumping with attention. Turn away, cross arms, and ignore completely until all four paws are on floor. Then immediately reward calm behavior with attention and treats. Teach “sit” as alternative greeting behavior.

Excessive Barking

Solution: Identify the trigger (boredom, attention-seeking, alerting). Never yell at a barking dog – they think you're joining in. Teach “quiet” command by rewarding silence. Ensure adequate physical exercise and mental stimulation daily.

Separation Anxiety

Solution: Practice short absences (1–5 minutes) and gradually increase duration. Make departures and arrivals low-key. Leave puzzle toys with treats. Never punish anxiety-related behaviors. Consider crate training for security.

Leash Pulling

Solution: Stop moving the instant leash tightens. Only move forward when leash is slack. Change direction frequently to keep puppy focused on you. Reward walking beside you with treats every few steps initially.

Daily Routine Template

Consistency helps puppies learn faster and feel secure. Adapt these times to your schedule:

Time	Activity
6:00 AM	Wake up → Immediate potty break → Praise
6:15 AM	Breakfast (measured portion) → Wait 15 minutes → Potty break
6:45 AM	Short training session (5–10 minutes) + play time
7:30 AM	Crate time/nap while you prepare for day
9:00 AM	Potty break → Play/exploration time → Training games
10:00 AM	Crate time/nap (puppies need 18–20 hours sleep daily)
12:00 PM	Potty break → Lunch → Wait 15 min → Potty break
12:30 PM	Training session → Interactive play → Socialization activity
2:00 PM	Crate time/nap
4:00 PM	Potty break → Play session → Chew toy time
5:30 PM	Dinner → Wait 15 min → Potty break
6:00 PM	Training session → Family interaction time
7:30 PM	Potty break → Calm evening activities
9:00 PM	Final potty break → Settle into crate for night
During Night	One potty break if under 12 weeks old (set alarm)

Training Session Planner

Use this template to structure your training sessions for maximum effectiveness.

Ideal Training Session Structure (10-15 minutes)

1. Warm-Up (2 minutes)

- ☐ Review 2-3 commands puppy knows well to build confidence
- ☐ Use high-value treats and enthusiastic praise

2. New Skill Introduction (5 minutes)

- ☐ Work on one new command or behavior
- ☐ Break into tiny steps – reward progress, not just perfection
- ☐ Keep sessions short and positive

3. Practice & Variation (5 minutes)

- ☐ Practice new skill in different positions/locations
- ☐ Mix in previously learned commands
- ☐ Gradually reduce treat frequency (intermittent reinforcement)

4. Cool Down (2 minutes)

- ☐ End with easy, fun command puppy loves
- ☐ Jackpot reward (multiple treats + play)
- ☐ Always end on positive note, even if session was challenging

★ The 3 D's of Training Progression

Duration: How long puppy performs behavior (stay for 10 seconds vs. 3 minutes)

Distance: How far away you are from puppy during command

Distraction: Environmental challenges (quiet room vs. busy park)

Only increase ONE element at a time. If you add distance, reduce duration and distractions.

Mental Stimulation Activities

A tired puppy is a well-behaved puppy. Mental exercise is as important as physical exercise!

Indoor Games

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Hide and seek with treats | ☐ Shell game (which hand?) |
| ☐ Food puzzle toys | ☐ Indoor obstacle course |
| ☐ Name that toy (teach toy names) | ☐ Tug-of-war (with rules) |

Training Games

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ "Find it" scent work | ☐ Target training |
| ☐ Trick training (spin, bow, shake) | ☐ Following cues with toys |
| ☐ Impulse control games | ☐ Problem-solving puzzles |

✓ **Brain Training Benefits**

Mental stimulation is incredibly powerful for puppies. Just 15 minutes of brain games can tire a puppy as much as 30 minutes of physical play. Mental challenges also reduce destructive behaviors born from boredom.

Looking for more brain games and advanced training techniques?

Adrienne Farricelli's Brain Training for Dogs includes 21 progressive games that eliminate behavior problems and build intelligence. The program combines obedience training with fun mental challenges that dogs love.

[Discover Brain Training for Dogs →](#)

Red Flags: When to Seek Professional Help

⚠ **Contact a Professional Trainer or Veterinary Behaviorist If:**

- Puppy shows aggression (growling, snapping, biting with intent to harm)
- Extreme fear that doesn't improve with positive exposure
- Severe separation anxiety (self-harm, destruction, non-stop vocalization)
- Resource guarding that escalates despite training
- Complete lack of bite inhibition after 14 weeks
- Obsessive behaviors (tail chasing, shadow chasing, excessive licking)

Early intervention prevents problems from becoming ingrained. Don't wait until behaviors escalate.

Your Puppy Training Success Plan

You now have a complete roadmap for your puppy's first critical months. Here's how to ensure success:

1. **Print this checklist** and post it somewhere visible
2. **Check off accomplishments** to track progress and stay motivated
3. **Stay consistent** – training works when everyone in household follows same rules
4. **Be patient** – puppies learn at different rates, celebrate small victories
5. **Keep it positive** – punishment damages trust; rewards build it
6. **Practice daily** – even 5-10 minutes makes a huge difference
7. **Adjust as needed** – every puppy is unique

★ **Remember**

The effort you invest now will give you 10-15 years with a well-adjusted, obedient companion. You're not just training a puppy – you're building a lifelong relationship. Every moment of patience, every training session, every positive interaction is an investment in your future together.

Want Expert Guidance Every Step of the Way?

Adrienne Farricelli is a certified professional dog trainer (CPDT-KA) and best-selling author. Her Brain Training for Dogs program has helped over 250,000 dog owners eliminate problem behaviors using positive, science-based methods.

The program includes: 21 progressive brain training games • Complete obedience training modules • Problem behavior solutions (barking, jumping, pulling, etc.) • Video demonstrations for every exercise • Lifetime access and updates

[**Learn More →**](#)

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Remember: Every puppy is unique. Adjust this plan as needed for your individual puppy's temperament and learning pace.