

Bringing Home Your New Puppy

Your new puppy may not be excited about going home with you. You're taking him away from his family and all he's ever known, which can make for a stressful situation. But, with a little preparation, you can ease his mind and set the tone of your friendship from your first car ride together.

Before you pick him up

If you make a few arrangements before bringing home a new puppy, you'll be free to focus on what he needs to feel comfortable.

Plan to bring puppy home during a vacation or long weekend. Proper introductions, socialization, and house training take time. You should spend at least two or three days with a new puppy to get him settled in and set a foundation for training. Try to avoid bringing home a puppy during the holidays when guests and festivities make it difficult to give your pup the attention he needs.

Ask a friend to come along

You can have your friend drive while you occupy yourself with your new puppy. It's also good to have a second person listen to any instructions the breeder has for you. You could miss something in the excitement.

Write down questions

You'll probably have questions for the breeder or shelter staff when you pick up your puppy, including advice on feeding schedules and general care. Keep a list and take it with you so you don't forget anything important.

Ask the breeder not to feed puppy the day you bring him home, it's a common practice that can prevent carsickness, but you should ask in case your breeder forgets.

At the breeder or shelter

Make a morning appointment and show up early. You should spend ten or fifteen minutes playing with your puppy to introduce yourself and let some of the enthusiasm wear off. This is particularly important if the breeder has chosen him for you or you've never met the pup.

There should be an adoption contract and veterinary records. Don't forget the dog registration papers for purebred puppies and any other documentation the breeder promised.

Request a few days worth of puppy food. Sudden dietary changes can upset your puppy's stomach or cause him to lose his appetite. You can use the sample to ease his transition to whatever diet you've chosen. Also, if you forget to buy puppy food before bringing him home, this will save you a trip to the store.

The car ride home

If this is the puppy's first trip in a car, the strange sights, sounds, and smells can be frightening. Take some time to let your new puppy get his bearings before you head for home.

Cover your lap and upholstery with a towel or sheet. Even after you've taken every precaution, puppies can get carsick so be prepared.

Keep the car ride quiet and relaxed. If your puppy whines or cries, don't punish him or be overly affectionate. The later will only reinforce the behavior. Pet him softly and let the situation diffuse itself. If your puppy gets too noisy or unruly, set him in the floor at your feet. This area is den-like and the vibrations from the road may soothe him. For longer trips, stop for bathroom breaks and stretching.

Remember to keep your puppy away from areas frequented by other dogs. Until he's been vaccinated, your puppy is susceptible to numerous diseases. If you plan to bring your puppy home in a crate, have the breeder introduce him to it a few days before you pick him up.

Bringing home a puppy doesn't have to be a traumatic experience for him. A little preparation can make him feel welcome. Learn how to introduce a new puppy to your house after you arrive.

Introducing a puppy to your home

Once you've survived the car ride from the breeder or shelter, it's time to introduce your puppy to his new surroundings. Try to keep visitors or abrupt changes in the environment to a minimum until your puppy is settled in. You want to make your home as relaxed and stress-free as possible.

Start training on arrival

Initial introductions are the perfect time to start building habits for house training and obedience training. The first few days will offer lots of opportunities to praise good behavior and establish you as pack leader. One of the most important things to remember is do not punish your puppy. It's too soon to discipline for any behavior. Your puppy has no idea what you expect of him and punishing him will only create confusion and stress.

As soon as you bring puppy home, take him to the area you've established for bathroom breaks. He'll probably need to go after the car ride. If he does eliminate, praise him to start the housetraining process on a good note.

When you bring your puppy indoors, let him explore on his own for awhile. If you've taken the time to puppy proof your home, he should be safe but keep an eye out. If your puppy gets into something he shouldn't or chews on an object that's off-limits, don't punish him. Simply exchange the object for something you've designated as chewable, such as a rawhide or nylon bone.

Whenever your puppy focuses his attention on you, either by looking up at you or following you, say his name cheerfully. This connects his name to paying attention to you and marks you as pack leader, which is extremely important for obedience training.

Puppies, food, and potty breaks

A few hours after introducing your puppy to the house, he should be hungry. Offer him food, preferably the same type used by the breeder or shelter where you adopted him. When he's finished eating, head straight to the potty area and wait for him to eliminate. If nothing happens in ten minutes or so, take him back inside. If he does go, give him lots of praise.

Most puppies 8-16 weeks old need 3 to 4 meals a day and plenty of clean drinking water. Some dog breeds need more meals while some need less. Cut off all eating and drinking after six o'clock to make sure your puppy doesn't need to go out after bedtime.

Generally, you should take your puppy outside after each meal, after he wakes up from a nap, and after a long play session. A simple rule to remember is to take your puppy's age in months and add one to get the number of hours he should be able to wait before going out. So a 2 month old puppy can wait around 3 hours before he has to use the bathroom. Use the same area each time and be patient. If he doesn't go, bring him back inside. If he does, then praise him. These are the beginning stages of house training.

Your puppy needs to sleep

Your puppy will need a few naps each day. You should establish different areas in your home for different puppy activities including nap times. Create a confined area somewhere close by to keep an eye on him, such as the kitchen or den. If you're crate training your puppy, put the crate in this area with some comfortable bedding. Don't force him into his crate. He'll go in when he's ready. Check on him often, and when he wakes up take him outside to the soiling area.

Introducing a new puppy to your home is a simple but effective way to start your relationship with him and establish good training habits for the future.

Once you've survived the first day, it'll be time for your first night with puppy. With a little knowledge and patience, you can get through it with no problem.

First night home with puppy

The first night home with your new puppy can be a trying experience for both of you. It's the first time your puppy has spent the night away from his mother and littermates. Because dogs are pack animals, your puppy knows instinctively that being separated from the pack is dangerous. Whining and crying at night is your puppy's way of calling for his pack to find him. Of course it does nothing to comfort you. With a little preparation and patience, you can make the most of the first night with your puppy.

What to do before bedtime

Take up any food or water after six or seven o'clock to make sure your puppy is running on empty when it's time to sleep. Otherwise, you'll be making trips to the bathroom all night, or worse, your puppy will eliminate in the house.

Shortly before you go to bed, spend some time playing with your puppy. You want him to be tired enough to sleep soundly. Definitely don't let him nap within an hour or two of bedtime or else your puppy will be ready to play when you're ready to sleep.

Just before bed, take your puppy outside to his soiling area and wait for him to go. When he does praise him and bring him back inside. This reinforces good behavior and begins the house training process.

Where puppy should sleep

If possible, you should let your puppy sleep in your bedroom to reduce the chances of whining or crying at night. Also, the constant contact throughout the night will help your puppy adjust to you and establish you as pack leader. One note of caution: Don't let the puppy sleep in the bed with you. He'll eventually expect to be allowed in the bed, and it can lead to numerous behavioral problems as your puppy grows.

If you or the breeder have started crate training, you should put the crate in your room and use that to confine him while he sleeps. If your puppy isn't used to a crate, then tether him to your bed or close by and put down an old blanket or sheet. Keep the tether short. Puppies usually won't soil the area where they sleep, but if he has the opportunity to wander he may get up and go during the night.

As a last resort, you can keep your new puppy somewhere other than your bedroom. Make sure you puppy proof your house first and put a sweatshirt or other article of your clothing with him for your scent. A ticking clock or a radio set to a low volume can also help soothe a puppy the first night home. You should check on him throughout the night for bathroom breaks.

Households with multiple pets should only let their animals sleep together after properly introducing a new puppy to your dog, cat, or other pets.

Stop puppy crying at night

If and when your puppy starts crying at night, you need to decide if he has to go to the bathroom or if he's looking for attention. If he's been quiet for a few hours and suddenly starts to cry or whine, he may need to go out. Puppies have small bladders, so you'll likely have to take him out at least once during the night. A good rule of thumb is to add one to your puppy's age in months and that's generally how long he can go without a trip outside. So a two-month-old puppy can wait three hours. That means your puppy will probably need to go out at least twice during the night.

If your puppy is crying and you're sure it's not for need of relieving himself, reach down and soothe him a little. Don't be too doting or coddle your puppy. This will only reinforce the behavior and he'll cry even more. If he continues to whine, a gruff "Quiet" and a quick, but gentle, shake by the scruff should settle the matter. If all else fails, ignore him. Tough love may be difficult, but eventually your puppy will learn that crying at night gets him nowhere. The more persistent you are in your approach, the quicker the situation will be resolved. If you're stern one minute and sympathetic the next, your puppy will only be confused and his behavior will continue.

In the morning

Get up right away and take your puppy outside to his soiling area. Carry him. Don't let him walk there or he may be tempted to go before he gets outside. Let him empty everything out, and praise him when he's finished.

As with any new baby, you may not get much sleep the first night with puppy. If you're patient and understanding, your puppy will learn what you expect of him when it's time to sleep. You both should wake up rested and ready for the day after a few nights together.

