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# Adopting a Puppy

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Adopting a puppy is a very exciting time! If this is your first puppy, there are lots of things to learn. Raising a puppy is a challenging but rewarding job that requires lots of patience, empathy, and time. Starting from day one, you want to envision the life that you want your puppy to live as an adult dog and start training with those goals in mind.

## Potty training

Puppies will need to potty many times throughout the day, including after they wake up, after eating or drinking, and after playtime. Puppies take lots of naps during the day so make sure that you put your puppy in an area where you can keep an eye on him while sleeping.

As soon as your puppy wakes up, take him to the desired potty area, and wait patiently. As soon as he eliminates, reward him with lots of affection and a yummy treat. After your puppy eats, he will need to go potty about 5-10 minutes later. After mealtimes, take your puppy out to the potty area and wait. When you are in the potty area, do not engage with your puppy other than to give a cue such as “go potty.” You don’t want to send any messages to your dog that outside time is playtime until your pup has eliminated. Once your puppy’s business is taken care of, then you can interact with playtime or a walk.

Your puppy will also need to go potty after a short play session. When you are playing with your puppy or while you are watching your puppy play, look for signs that they might need to go. They will suddenly become less interested in play, start looking around or sniffing around, and then start to squat. If you notice that they become less interested in play, this is the time to take them out, even if it is a false alarm.

**Never scold your puppy for accidents;** this can be scary and confusing for them. They probably won’t understand that they are in trouble for the accident but instead start to think that relieving themselves when you are watching is a scary thing. Scolding for accidents can result in the puppy hiding from you when they need to go potty, which means that they will also be nervous to potty in front of you, even when they are in the right place.

For more information, take a look at our articles on [Potty Training](#) and [Crate Training](#)

## **Training**

It is important to start training right away. If your puppy is awake, he is learning. If there are things that you don't want your puppy to do, such as be on the furniture or sleep in your bed, don't start those habits now thinking you will change them when they get older.

It is much easier for the dog to understand the rules if you are consistent all the time. Start teaching your dog the things you want them to do using positive reinforcement. If you would like your dog to go in their crate, offer them a treat or a toy when you put them inside. If you would like them to sit nicely when they are getting their leash on, start teaching them "sit" by giving a treat when they do and then leash them.

Puppies are very curious and like to explore things with their mouths. If your dog puts something in his mouth that he isn't supposed to, give him something in exchange that he can have.

For more information, read our article on [Managing a Mouthy Puppy](#) and [Destructive Chewing](#).

## **Socialization**

A puppy's brain is in rapid development for the first year of their life. During that time, they will form new memories and may even forget some old ones. When you are socializing your puppy, you want to expose them to as many positive experiences as you possibly can.

Expose your puppy to anything that you think they might experience later in life. For example, take trips to the vet. Visit the vet when you don't have an appointment to meet the staff and get some snacks, which creates a positive association with the vet. You should also take walks around the neighborhood, go for car rides, and have your puppy stay home alone.

Create experiences where your puppy can meet different types of people both inside your home and outside of your home. There are many retail establishments that will allow you to bring your dog, such as hardware stores and crafts stores. Be sure to call ahead of time to make sure that your pup is welcome and take advantage of this unique opportunity for your dog. Even if your puppy has not yet been fully vaccinated, you can carry them around a store or let them ride on a blanket in a shopping cart to see new places and people safely.

It is always a good idea to take a training class as soon as you and your dog are ready. Learning basic obedience or other fun skills will not only teach your dog how to be a better version of themselves, but it will also build your bond stronger as you learn to work on new things together.

If you have questions about raising your puppy, reach out to our Behavior Team.

For behavior and training advice, please contact Operation Kindness at [behavior@operationkindness.org](mailto:behavior@operationkindness.org) or visit [www.operationkindness.org/training](http://www.operationkindness.org/training).