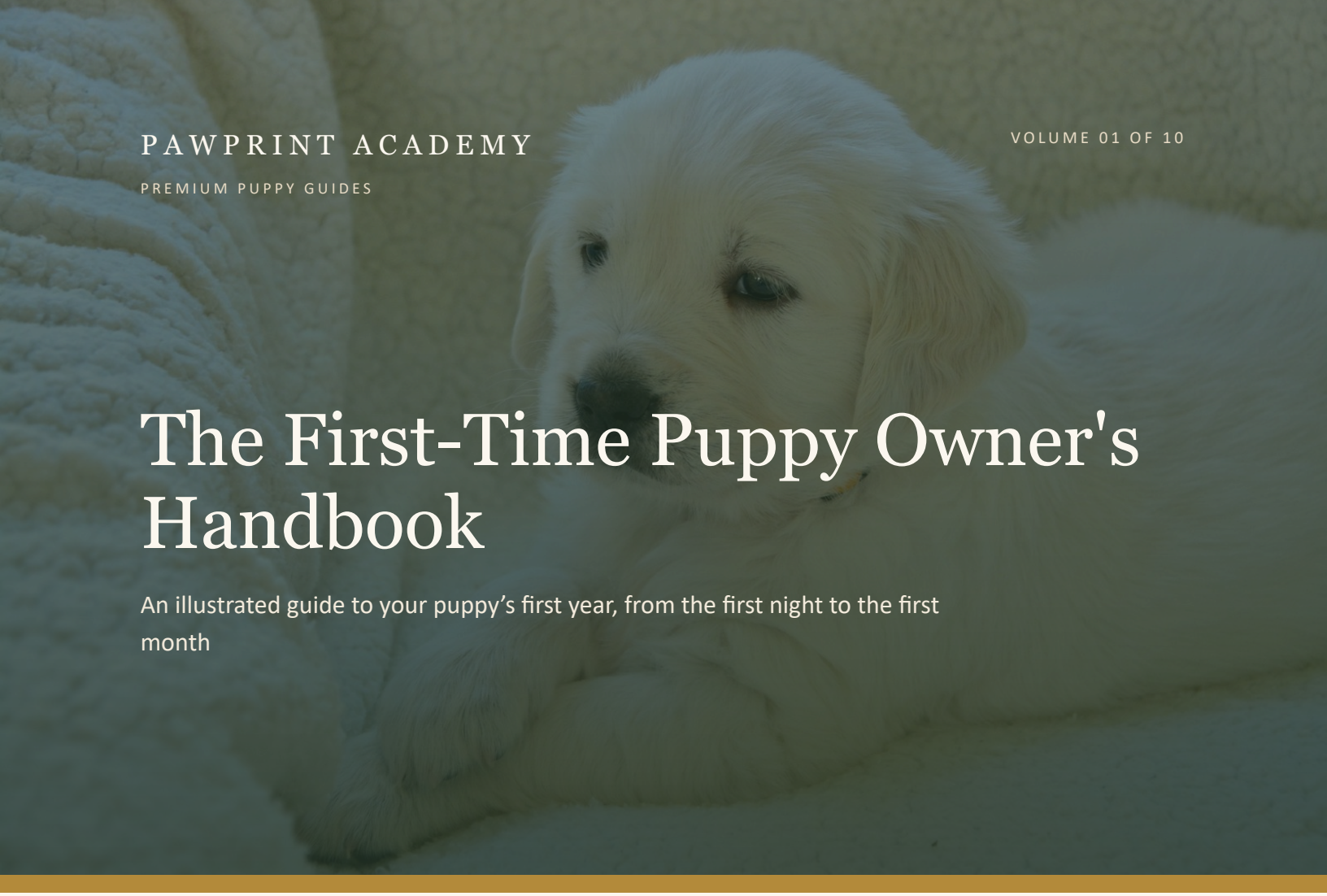

PAWPRINT ACADEMY

PREMIUM PUPPY GUIDES

VOLUME 01 OF 10

The First-Time Puppy Owner's Handbook

An illustrated guide to your puppy’s first year, from the first night to the first month

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

A practical, illustrated guide for new puppy owners. It covers preparation, the first days at home, daily routines, reward-based learning, house training, socialization, safety, and when to call a professional.

Part of The New Puppy Survival Kit.

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WELCOME

Welcome to puppy ownership

Bringing home a puppy is exciting, a little nerve-racking, and often more tiring than people expect. That is normal.

Most first-time owners remember the first few weeks as a mix of small joys and small surprises: the 3 a.m. toilet trip, the sock that went missing, the puppy who suddenly refuses to settle in the crate. This handbook is here to help you understand what is happening and what to do about it.

It follows the first year in a practical order. You will find chapters on getting ready, the first days at home, daily routines, reading your puppy, reward-based learning, house training, rest and play, grooming and handling, socialization, safety, common mistakes, and when to get professional help. Each chapter ends with a short summary, and the final pages give you quick-reference cards you can keep near the door.

The other workbooks in the Pawprint Academy collection go deeper on specific jobs, such as the Daily Planner, the Potty Training Tracker, and the Training Workbook. You do not need them to use this handbook, but they make record keeping easier.

> **WHAT THIS HANDBOOK IS NOT**
>
> This is educational material for everyday puppy care. It is not veterinary advice and cannot diagnose or treat a health problem. Your veterinarian knows your puppy's history and should guide vaccinations, parasite prevention, feeding, and any medicines. A qualified, reward-based trainer can help with behavior concerns.

01

PART ONE

Getting ready

Good preparation is mostly about the parts of puppy life that are easy to underestimate: time, sleep, patience, and the small details that keep a curious puppy safe.

- Setting realistic expectations
- Choosing supplies that fit your puppy
- Preparing the home before arrival

CHAPTER 1

What puppy ownership asks of you

A puppy changes the rhythm of a household. The changes are manageable when you see them coming, so it helps to think them through before the puppy arrives.

Area	What it usually looks like	How to prepare
Time	Several short toilet trips a day, play, training, rest, and supervision. The early weeks take the most attention.	Look at your week and decide who is available for mornings, evenings, and any time you are out.
Sleep	Broken nights are common, especially if a young puppy needs a toilet trip overnight.	Agree on who handles night duty. Keep the sleeping area close to where you rest, if practical.
Money	Food, bedding, vet visits, training classes, and replacing chewed items all add up.	Use the budget worksheet in The New Puppy Shopping Checklist.
Patience	Chewing, mouthing, and house training accidents are part of learning, not defiance.	Plan calm responses in advance so you are not making decisions when you are tired.

QUESTIONS TO SETTLE BEFORE ARRIVAL

- [ ] Who does the morning and late-night toilet trips?
- [ ] Where will the puppy sleep, and who checks on it during the night?
- [ ] Which rooms or furniture are off limits, and does everyone agree?
- [ ] Who books and attends vet visits, and who keeps the records?
- [ ] If there are children, how will you supervise every interaction?
- [ ] If you have other pets, how will introductions happen, and who supervises them?
- [ ] What will you do if you have to work long hours or travel?

> **A REALISTIC EXPECTATION**
>
> Expect the first two weeks to be the hardest. Routines settle, the puppy learns the house, and you learn to read your puppy. Things usually get easier as both of you find a rhythm.

CHAPTER 1, CONTINUED

Your support team

You will be making decisions about health, food, behavior, and training. Most go better when you know who to ask and when.

Who	What they help with	When to contact them
Veterinarian	Health checks, vaccination and parasite plans, feeding advice, medicines, and any concern about illness.	Early and often. Contact them promptly about anything that worries you.
Breeder or rescue	The puppy's background, early care, and the food and routine the puppy is used to.	Before you change food or routine, and to ask about the puppy's history.
Reward-based trainer	Puppy classes and help with behavior, such as jumping, biting, fear, or reactivity.	When a behavior is repeated, escalating, or causing distress for the puppy or family.
Groomer	Bathing, brushing, and coat and nail care, once you know what your puppy needs.	When you are unsure about coat type or the grooming routine for your puppy.

CHOOSE A VET BEFORE YOU NEED ONE

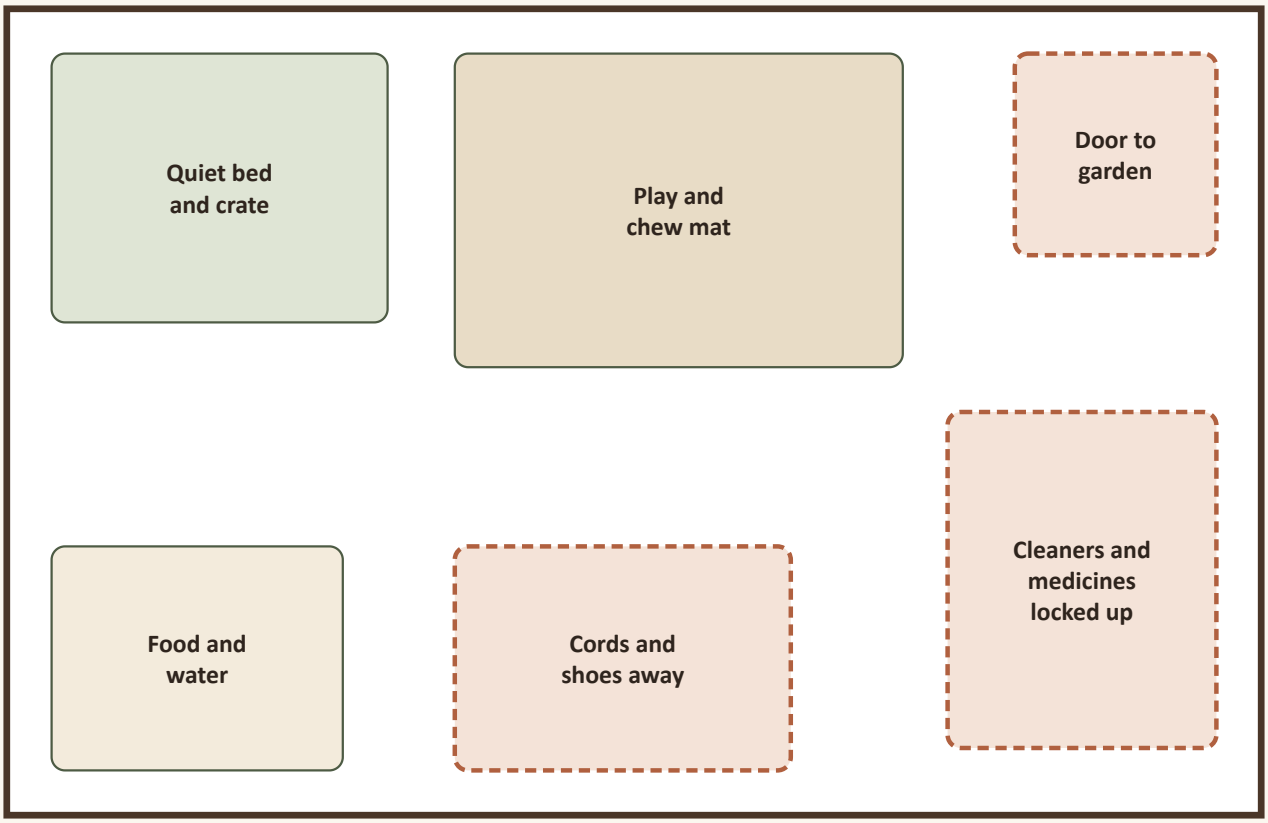
Find a veterinary clinic and an emergency veterinary service before your puppy arrives. Save both phone numbers and addresses in your phone and on the fridge. In an emergency, you should not be searching for a clinic.

> **TRAINER TIP**
> Look for a trainer who uses reward-based methods and explains what they are doing. Be cautious of anyone who recommends physical punishment, shock devices, alpha rolls, or intimidation.

CHAPTER 2

Setting up the home

Set up the home around how a puppy moves through the day: from rest to meal to play to toilet trip, then back to rest. Keep a quiet sleeping area, a water and food spot, a play zone, and a clear route to the outdoor toilet area.



Sample layout. Dashed red zones show hazards to block, lock, or move out of reach.

Figure 2. A sample layout for a living area. Put the rest space away from busy traffic, and keep hazards out of reach.

Puppies need to be supervised, and a layout like this helps. You can see the whole space, reach the toilet route quickly, and block hazards with gates or closed doors.

> **KEEP IT SIMPLE**
>
> Start with one or two rooms your puppy can use. You can open up more space as your puppy shows it can be trusted there.

CHAPTER 2, CONTINUED

Supplies: essentials and optional

Buy the essentials before arrival. Add optional items once you know what your puppy enjoys and needs. Choose sizes that suit your puppy's breed, current size, and expected growth. Ask your breeder, rescue, or vet if you are unsure.

Item	Why it helps	What to check
Bed or crate	A den-like rest space helps many puppies settle and reduces the chance of chewing household items.	Room to stand, turn, and lie down. Consider a divider for a puppy that will grow.
Collar or harness, with ID tag	Basic identification and walking control.	Snug fit where two fingers slide under. Check fit often as the puppy grows.
Lightweight lead	Controlled walks and supervised outdoor time.	Comfortable to hold. Avoid retractable leads for training.
Food and water bowls	Stable, easy-to-clean feeding.	Heavy or non-tip. Stainless steel or ceramic is easy to clean.
Enzyme cleaner	Breaks down the proteins in urine so puppies are less drawn back to the same spot.	Labeled for pets. Test on a hidden area first.
Chew toys	Appropriate outlet for teething and chewing.	Too large or too small is a problem. Remove any torn or loose pieces.
Puzzle or treat toys	Mental work and a calm activity.	Supervise. Use appropriate size and avoid small pieces.
Pet gates	Block rooms or stairs when supervision is not possible.	Check fit, mounting, and gaps. Choose a model rated for your puppy's size.
Soft brush and comb	Early grooming and handling practice.	Matches your puppy's coat type. Ask a groomer if unsure.

ESSENTIALS VERSUS OPTIONAL

The New Puppy Shopping Checklist sorts supplies into essentials and optional items and includes a budget worksheet. Buy the essentials now, and let your puppy's behavior guide later purchases.

CHAPTER 2, CONTINUED

Puppy-proofing basics

Puppies explore with their mouths. Most accidents at home involve something the puppy could reach, chew, or swallow. Walk through each room at puppy height, on your hands and knees if you can, and look for what is easy to grab.

- [ ] Electrical cords are tucked away, covered, or unplugged when not in use.
- [ ] Medicines, cleaning products, antifreeze, and other chemicals are in closed cabinets that the puppy cannot open.
- [ ] Toxic foods are kept out of reach. See Chapter 10 for a list of common ones.
- [ ] Small objects such as coins, buttons, rubber bands, hair ties, and toy parts are picked up.
- [ ] Houseplants are checked. Many common plants can cause problems if chewed.
- [ ] Gaps behind furniture, under doors, and between gates are checked for a puppy to squeeze into or get stuck.
- [ ] Shoes, bags, and laundry are kept off the floor and out of reach.
- [ ] A safe, supervised area is ready for rest.

TEST THE SETUP

Once a week, watch your puppy for a few minutes in the space. Notice what it picks up, where it goes, and what it tries to chew. Each answer is a small fix to make before the next week.

02

PART TWO

The first days

The first day sets the tone for the first week. Keep things calm, predictable, and simple, and expect a little chaos anyway.

- The first 24 hours at home
- The first night
- A realistic first week

CHAPTER 3

The first 24 hours

Your puppy has just left its mother, littermates, and familiar smells. Even a confident puppy can find the first day overwhelming. Your job is to make the environment calm and predictable.

1. **Plan a quiet arrival.** Keep visitors to a minimum and avoid a busy schedule. Let the puppy explore a small area first.
2. **Go straight to the toilet area on a lead.** Stay quiet and wait. Reward the puppy right away when it toilets outside.
3. **Show the rest space and water.** Let your puppy find them at its own pace. Do not force it to sniff or explore.
4. **Offer a small meal.** Ask the breeder or rescue what food and schedule the puppy has been used to, then follow your veterinarian’s advice on changes.
5. **Mix short play and rest.** Puppies often play in bursts and then fall asleep quickly. Let them.
6. **Keep a simple note.** Write down toilet trips, meals, and sleep times. Patterns become clear faster than you expect.

WHAT TO AVOID ON DAY ONE

- [ ] Passing the puppy around to many people
- [ ] Long car trips or crowded places
- [ ] Strict rules you cannot keep up, such as "no accidents ever"
- [ ] Punishing a puppy for toileting indoors or for being scared

CHAPTER 3, CONTINUED

The first night

Crying at night is common. Your puppy has just lost its familiar sleeping companions. Plan for a few difficult nights rather than one bad night.

NIGHT ROUTINE THAT WORKS FOR MOST FAMILIES

1. Give the last toilet trip shortly before bed.
2. Keep the sleeping area close to you if you can, so the puppy feels less alone.
3. Use a bed or crate with a soft blanket and a safe chew item.
4. Consider a warm (not hot) water bottle wrapped in a towel, and a ticking clock. Use only if it is safe and supervised.
5. If the puppy wakes, take it out quietly, with dim light and a calm voice. Keep the trip boring and return the puppy to bed.

HOW LONG CAN A PUPPY HOLD ITS BLADDER?

A commonly cited rule of thumb is about one hour per month of age. Treat it as a rough guide only. Very young puppies need to toilet much more often, and many puppies need a trip soon after waking, eating, or playing. Waiting it out is not a training method.

> **DO NOT PUNISH NIGHT CRYING**
>
> Scolding crying or using the crate as a punishment teaches fear, not sleep. If your puppy cries, check the basics first: toilet, comfort, temperature, and whether it has been left too long. Then return it to bed with a calm response.

CHAPTER 3, CONTINUED

A realistic first week

Your puppy will not be fully settled by the end of week one. The goal is to build a steady routine, not to master every skill.

Days	Focus	Helpful habits
Days 1 and 2	Settle in and learn the toilet area and the rest space.	Keep the routine tight. Expect accidents. Clean them with an enzyme cleaner and move on.
Days 3 and 4	Gentle handling practice and short training sessions.	Touch paws, ears, and mouth briefly, then offer a treat. Keep sessions to a few minutes.
Days 5 to 7	Build the routine and notice patterns.	Review your notes. Look at when toilet trips, naps, and play happen. Adjust one thing at a time.

BOOK THE FIRST VET VISIT

Ask your breeder or rescue for the puppy’s records, then book the first veterinary visit as early as your vet advises. Bring your notes, a list of questions, and any food packaging. The Puppy Health and Vet Visit Organizer has pages for this.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> If your puppy stops eating, seems unusually flat, or has vomiting or diarrhea that does not settle, contact your veterinarian promptly. Do not wait for the first scheduled visit.

03

PART THREE

Daily life and communication

A routine gives your puppy predictability. Learning to read body language gives you a way to understand what your puppy is telling you.

- Building a daily rhythm
- Reading body language
- Common behaviors and what helps

CHAPTER 4

A workable daily rhythm

Young puppies move in cycles. A simple rhythm is a sequence of events you repeat, not a clock you must watch. Many owners find it easier to think in terms of order: wake, toilet, eat, play, rest, toilet, and so on.

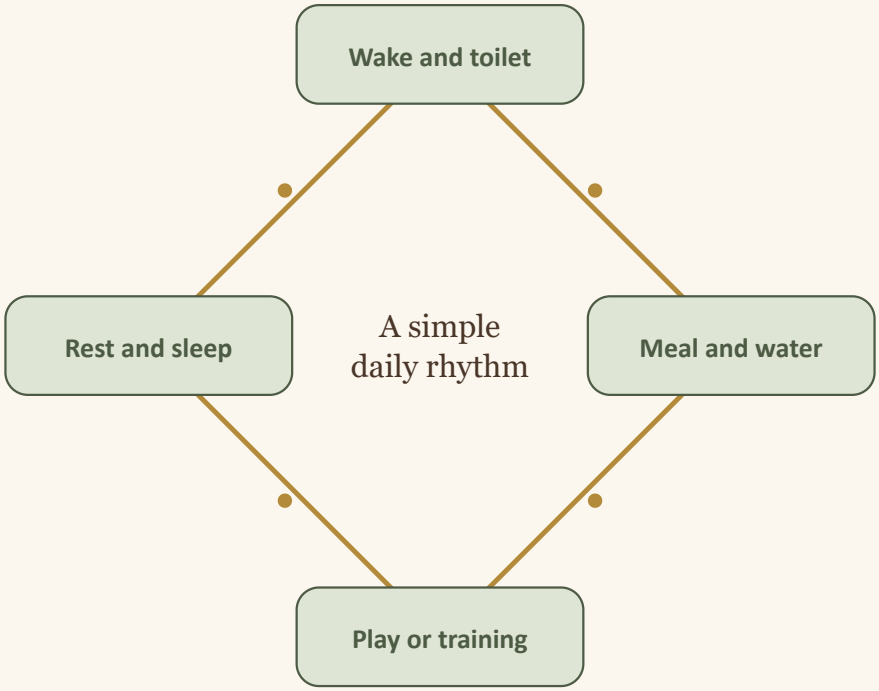


Figure 3. A daily rhythm. Toilet trips come after waking, eating, and play. Rest often follows activity.

ANCHORS THAT HELP

- Toilet trips after waking, meals, and play
- Short training or play before a rest, not after
- A quiet, consistent place to nap
- The same cue or word before each toilet trip

MAKE IT FIT

- Your puppy’s schedule will not match a chart. Use the order of events, not the exact times.
- Feeding frequency and amounts come from your vet, breeder, or rescue.
- Adjust one part of the routine at a time.

CHAPTER 4, CONTINUED

Reading body language

Puppies communicate constantly, even if they do not bark or growl. Looking at the whole body helps you see when a puppy is relaxed, curious, uneasy, or overwhelmed. Noticing early signs of stress lets you step back before a puppy feels it has to escalate.

Relaxed	Curious	Uneasy	Stressed
Loose, wiggly body	Ears forward	Lip licking	Freezing or hiding
Soft eyes, relaxed	Sniffing and looking	Yawning, not sleepy	Growling or snapping
Mouth open, easy	Head tilted, interested	Tail tucked low	Trying to leave

Signs vary between dogs. Look at the whole picture, not one signal alone.

Figure 4. Early signs of unease are easier to respond to than late ones. Work with the whole picture, not one signal.

WHEN THE PUPPY SHOWS UNEASE

Give space, lower the noise, reduce the handling, and let the puppy move away. Reward calm behavior. Do not keep pushing an interaction because your puppy looks cute and everyone wants a cuddle.

Frequent or intense signs of fear, such as hiding for long periods, avoiding people, or aggression, should be discussed with your veterinarian and, where needed, a qualified behavior professional.

CHAPTER 4, CONTINUED

Common behaviors and what helps

Many behaviors that frustrate new owners are normal for a puppy. The table below describes what they often mean and what usually helps. Persistent or sudden changes should be discussed with your vet.

Behavior	What it often means	What usually helps
Mouthing and nipping	Normal play and teething. Puppies explore with their mouths.	Offer a chew toy, stop play briefly if biting continues, and keep hands out of play.
Sudden bursts of energy	Excess energy, often after rest or excitement.	Offer a calm place to settle and a planned break. A tired puppy is often more bitey.
Barking at sounds	Alerting, curiosity, or uncertainty.	Notice what sets it off. Reward calm, and give more distance from the trigger.
Following you everywhere	Learning your routine and seeking company.	Normal. Teach the puppy to rest alone in a safe spot for short periods.
Chewing household items	Teething, exploration, or boredom.	Provide appropriate chews, supervise, and keep valuable items out of reach.
Jumping up	Greeting and excitement, often rewarded with attention.	Keep greetings calm. Reward four paws on the floor.
Hiding or freezing	Uncertainty or fear.	Give space and a retreat. If it persists or worsens, discuss it with your vet.

04

PART FOUR

Learning together

Puppies learn constantly, from you and from everything around them. Reward-based training teaches the behaviors you want and gives your puppy a reason to repeat them.

- How reward-based learning works
- Practical rules for rewards
- House training fundamentals

CHAPTER 5

How reward-based learning works

Reward-based training means you make the behavior you want more likely by giving something the puppy values right after it happens. Over time, the puppy learns that the behavior leads to good things. Training with food, toys, praise, or play is effective and does not rely on fear or pain.

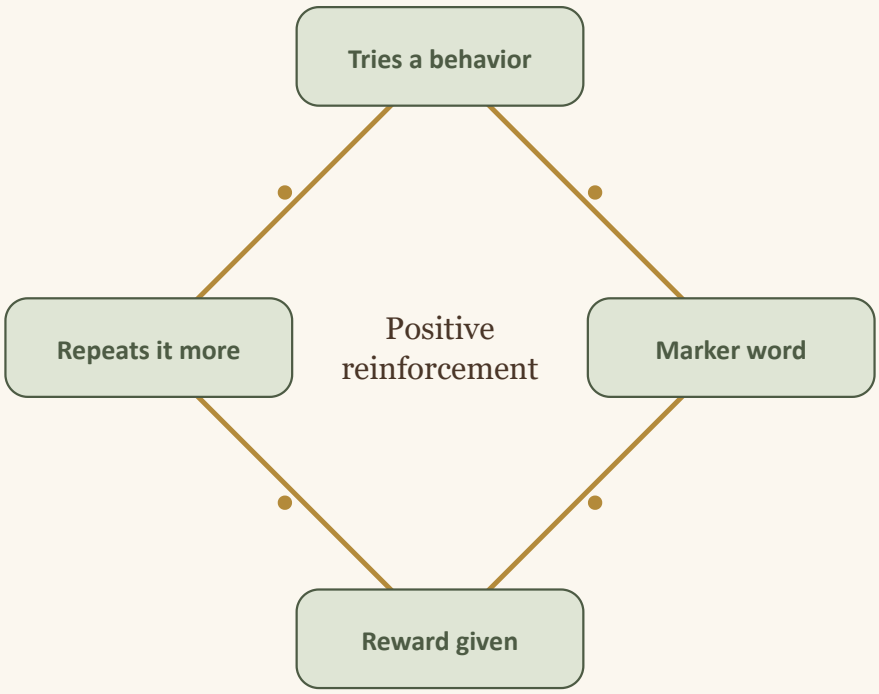


Figure 5. The reward cycle. The marker tells the puppy which moment earned the reward, and the reward makes repetition more likely.

THREE PARTS OF A GOOD REWARD

- **Timing.** Reward within a second or two of the behavior. Puppies link the reward to what they were doing at that moment.
- **Value.** Use something your puppy wants right now. Some puppies like soft training treats, some prefer a toy or a sniff.
- **Consistency.** Reward the same behavior the same way when you are asking for it. Inconsistent rewards make learning slower.

A marker word such as "yes" or a click from a clicker can bridge the gap when you cannot deliver the treat instantly. Use the marker, then the reward.

CHAPTER 5, CONTINUED

Practical rules for rewards

Most reward-based training problems come from the way rewards are delivered, not from the puppy being stubborn. The rules below help keep sessions productive.

Good practice	Why it matters
Use small, soft pieces of food	Small treats keep sessions going without overfeeding. Count training treats toward your puppy's daily food, and ask your vet how much is appropriate.
Ask for one behavior at a time	Puppies learn more when the task is clear. Add a second cue only after the first is reliable.
Keep sessions short	A few minutes, several times a day, is more useful than one long session. Stop while the puppy is still keen.
Reward calm choices	Rewarding the moment your puppy sits calmly teaches calm, not only tricks.
Set the puppy up to succeed	Practice in a quiet room first. Add distractions slowly, once the behavior is solid.
Use the same cue each time	Say the cue once, then wait. Repeating the word many times makes it meaningless.

COMMON MISTAKES

Rewarding a puppy after it has already walked away, asking for too much too soon, and using treats in a noisy place where the puppy cannot focus. If the puppy is not responding, make the task easier or the environment quieter.

The Puppy Training Workbook walks through specific lessons, including name recognition, sit, recall, settling on a mat, and loose-leash walking, with a progress tracker for each.

CHAPTER 6

House training fundamentals

House training is about predictable routines and good timing, not punishment. Your puppy learns the right place to toilet by being taken there often, by being rewarded immediately, and by having fewer chances to make mistakes indoors.

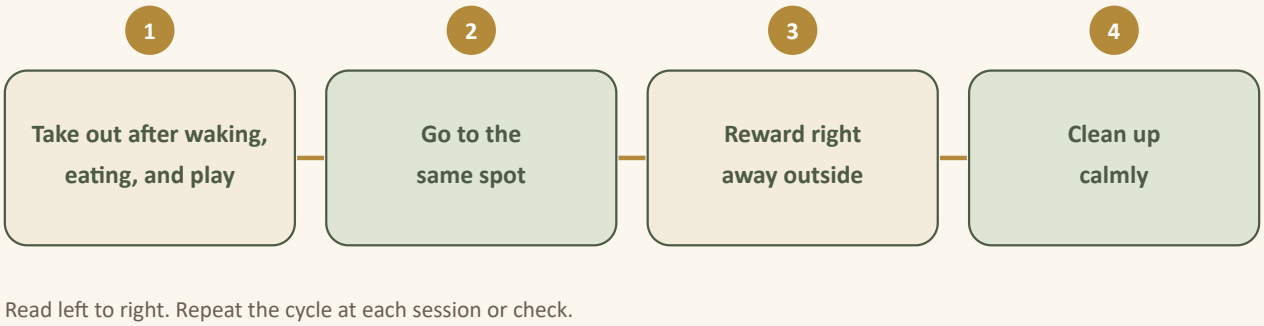


Figure 6. The core outing routine. Repeat it each time, including the middle of the night, when needed.

PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES

- [ ] Take your puppy out after it wakes, after meals, after play, and after a long rest.
- [ ] Use the same door and the same toilet area each time, so the scent helps guide it.
- [ ] Stay with your puppy outside, quiet and patient, and give a cue word once it starts.
- [ ] Reward and praise the moment it finishes outside. Give the reward outdoors, not on the way back in.
- [ ] Supervise indoors. When you cannot watch, use a pen, crate, or gated space as a management tool.
- [ ] Watch for signs of needing to go: sniffing the floor, circling, or wandering off.

> **CRATES AS A TOOL**
> A crate or pen used for short, supervised periods can help with house training and rest, if it is the right size and the puppy has learned to settle in it. It should never be used as punishment or left for long periods.

CHAPTER 6, CONTINUED

Accidents and setbacks

Accidents will happen, even in a well-planned home. Respond calmly and focus on prevention. Scolding after the fact does not teach a puppy where to go. It usually teaches the puppy to hide, or to toilet when you are not around to see it.

Situation	What usually helps
Caught in the act	Interrupt quietly with a neutral sound, then take the puppy outside to finish. Reward if it finishes outside.
Found after the fact	Clean it up without fuss. Use an enzyme cleaner so the smell does not draw the puppy back.
Stops toileting outside	Go back to more frequent trips and more supervision for a few days. Check whether the puppy is being rewarded for finishing outside.
Sudden accidents after weeks of success	Check for a change in routine, stress, a new food, or a health issue. Contact your vet if it persists.
Frequent accidents or straining	Book a veterinary check. Changes in how often or how easily a puppy urinates or defecates need professional assessment.

KNOW WHEN IT IS MEDICAL

Contact your veterinarian if your puppy strains to urinate or defecate, has blood in urine or stool, seems to be in pain, drinks and urinates much more than usual, or has diarrhea or vomiting that does not settle. These can be signs of health problems and should not be trained away.

The Potty Training Tracker includes a log, a weekly chart, and a cleanup checklist if you want a record to show your vet or trainer.

05

PART FIVE

Growing up well

Rest, play, handling, and new experiences all shape how a puppy grows. Each one is easier when you go slowly and watch your puppy closely.

- Sleep, play, and enrichment
- Grooming and gentle handling
- Socialization, step by step

CHAPTER 7

Sleep, play, and enrichment

Young puppies need a great deal of sleep, and they often fall asleep in the middle of play. Overtired puppies can become frantic, bitey, and unable to settle, so rest is part of the training plan, not a reward for good behavior.

SIGNS A PUPPY NEEDS REST

Sudden bursts of nipping or wild running, yawning, whining, or a puppy that keeps walking away from play and then gets frantic again. When you see these, move to a quiet space and offer a chew or a short nap.

ENRICHMENT THAT DOES NOT NEED A LOT OF EQUIPMENT

Activity	How to try it
Sniffing games	Scatter a few pieces of food on a rug or in a snuffle mat. Let your puppy search. Sniffing is calming and mentally tiring.
Cardboard boxes	Stuff a clean box with paper and a treat. Supervise, and remove tape and shredded pieces.
Puzzle toys	Start with an easy version so the puppy learns the idea. Make it harder as the puppy succeeds.
Short walks in new places	Keep the first outings short and quiet. Let the puppy look and sniff, rather than pulling it into many new things.
Gentle play with you	Use toys your puppy can grab and tug. Stop the game before your puppy becomes overexcited.

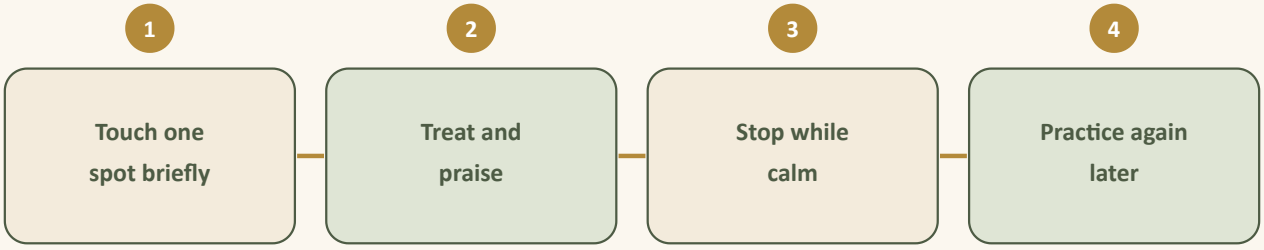
ASK ABOUT EXERCISE

Your vet can advise on walks and exercise for your puppy’s age, breed, and growth. Avoid long runs, jumping from height, and repeated stair climbing for young puppies unless your vet says it is appropriate.

CHAPTER 8

Grooming and gentle handling

Early handling makes later care easier. A puppy that learns that paws, ears, mouth, and body are touched gently, followed by a treat, is more likely to accept brushing, bathing, nail care, and vet exams.



Read left to right. Repeat the cycle at each session or check.

Figure 7. Keep handling practice short and positive. Build up gradually, one body area at a time.

PRACTICE HANDLING EVERY DAY

- [ ] Touch the paws, ears, mouth, tail, and belly for a second or two, then treat.
- [ ] Lift a paw gently, touch it, and release with a reward.
- [ ] Brush for a few strokes with a soft brush, then stop before the puppy gets fussy.
- [ ] Get your puppy used to being handled while standing, sitting, and lying down.

GROOMING NEEDS DEPEND ON THE COAT AND BREED

Coat type, length, and breed affect how often a puppy needs brushing, bathing, and trimming. Ask a groomer or your vet which routine suits your puppy. The Puppy Grooming and Care Planner has records for each task.

> **LEAVE SOME TASKS TO A PROFESSIONAL**
>
> Nail care, ear cleaning, and anything that involves cleaning solutions or sharp tools should be shown to you by your vet or a qualified groomer first. Do not learn these from a video alone, and do not use products that are not labeled for dogs.

CHAPTER 9

Socialization, step by step

Socialization means helping your puppy learn that the world is mostly safe and interesting. It is not the same as forcing contact. The aim is calm, positive experiences with people, sounds, places, and animals, with the puppy always able to step back.

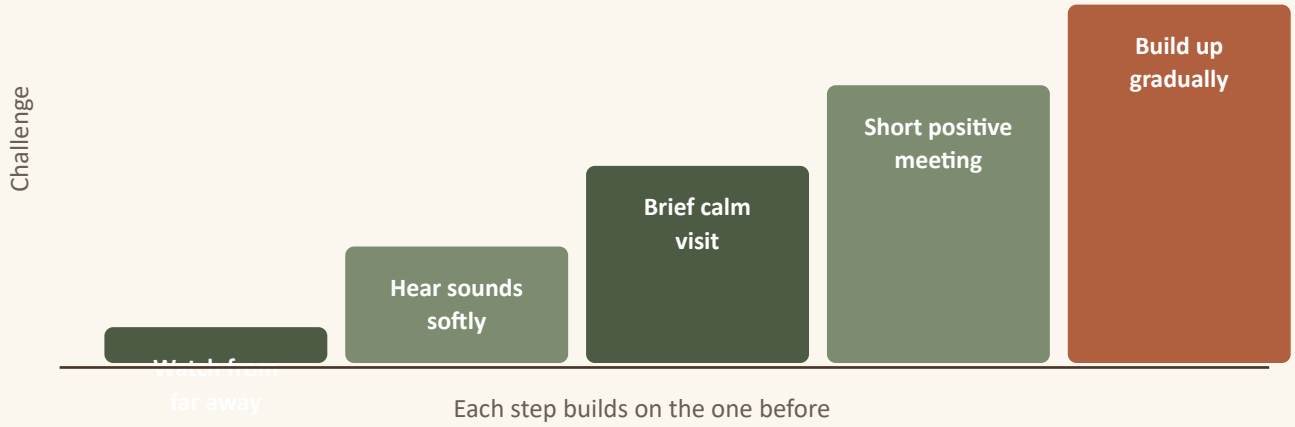


Figure 8. Move to the next step only when your puppy is relaxed at the current one. Go back a step after a bad experience.

PRINCIPLES TO KEEP IN MIND

- [ ] Keep experiences short and end them while your puppy is still comfortable.
- [ ] Let your puppy choose how close to approach. Allow it to move away.
- [ ] Pair new things with food, play, or calm praise.
- [ ] Respect signs of fear or stress. Stop, give space, and try again later at an easier level.
- [ ] Never pick up a puppy that is trying to escape, or make it greet strangers.

Early weeks are an important period for social learning, and experiences during it can shape how a puppy reacts later. Learning does not stop there, so keep introducing gentle new experiences as your puppy grows.

CHAPTER 9, CONTINUED

Safe experiences and vaccines

Puppies need to be socialized, and they also need protection from infectious diseases while their vaccination course is still in progress. Balancing those two needs is a conversation to have with your veterinarian, because the right plan depends on the diseases present in your area and your puppy's vaccination status.

Usually lower-risk options	Ask your vet before
Carrying or sitting in a friend's car, with a known, vaccinated family	Visiting places where many unknown dogs gather, such as dog parks or pet shops
Walking on clean streets and sidewalks, away from other dogs' waste	Puppy classes and daycare, including whether a facility requires proof of vaccination
Meeting people of all ages, at a distance and calmly	Meeting unknown dogs, including close greetings
Sounds, household objects, and new surfaces indoors	Sharing toys or water bowls outdoors

Your vet can help you choose safe places and experiences for your puppy. Ask what precautions apply in your area, when it is safe for your puppy to attend group classes, and what to do if your puppy has been exposed to a sick dog.

> GOOD QUESTION TO ASK
> "Where can my puppy safely experience the outside world before its vaccinations are complete, and which places should we avoid?"

06

PART SIX

Safety and support

Most puppy emergencies are preventable with a safe home, supervision, and a clear plan for when something goes wrong.

- Puppy-proofing the home and yard
- Common beginner mistakes
- When to call the vet or a trainer
- Your first-month plan

CHAPTER 10

Puppy-proofing the home and yard

Puppy-proofing is ongoing. A new chew, a dropped sock, or a growing puppy that can reach the counter can change the risks overnight. Check the home and yard regularly.

GARDEN AND YARD

- [ ] Fencing and gates are secure and without gaps.
- [ ] Garden chemicals, slug and snail baits, and fertilizers are stored out of reach.
- [ ] Plants are checked against a list of toxic plants.
- [ ] Water features and pools are covered or fenced.
- [ ] Tools and sharp items are put away.

INSIDE THE HOME

- [ ] Bins have lids that the puppy cannot open.
- [ ] Cords and charging cables are out of reach.
- [ ] Medicines, supplements, and cleaning products are locked up.
- [ ] Small items and toy parts are picked up.
- [ ] Shoes, bags, and clothing stay off the floor.

FOODS THAT ARE NOT SAFE FOR DOGS

Food or item	Why it is a concern
Chocolate, especially dark and baking chocolate	Contains compounds that dogs process poorly. Risk depends on amount and type.
Grapes and raisins	Can cause kidney damage. The toxic amount varies between dogs, so do not test it.
Xylitol (artificial sweetener)	Found in some sugar-free gum, candies, peanut butter, and baked goods. Can cause a rapid drop in blood sugar and liver damage.
Onions, garlic, and chives	Can damage red blood cells, including in cooked and powdered forms.
Macadamia nuts	Can cause weakness, vomiting, and other symptoms.
Alcohol, caffeine, and cooked bones	Alcohol and caffeine are toxic. Cooked bones can splinter and cause injury.

PLAN FOR AN EMERGENCY

If your puppy eats something it should not have, contact your veterinarian or an emergency clinic. Save both numbers and a pet poison control service in your phone. Keep the packaging if it helps identify what was eaten.

CHAPTER 11

Common beginner mistakes

Most first-time owners make at least one of these. None of them is a disaster. Each has a simple alternative that works better.

Common mistake	Better approach
Waiting for the puppy to ask to go outside	Take the puppy out on a schedule, especially after waking, meals, and play.
Letting every visitor hold and carry the puppy	Let guests sit quietly and offer treats. The puppy chooses to approach.
Punishing accidents or crying	Clean up, reward outdoor toileting, and adjust the routine.
Expecting perfect behavior at a few weeks old	Practice short sessions often. Consistency matters more than perfection.
Using the yard as a substitute for supervision	Supervise outdoors as well. A yard can still hold hazards and gaps.
Skipping vet visits because the puppy seems healthy	Keep scheduled visits and ask about the preventive care plan.
Long walks or hard exercise for a young puppy	Keep activity short and low-impact. Ask your vet what suits your puppy.
Changing food often or suddenly	Ask your vet or breeder before making changes. Make transitions gradual.

CHAPTER 12

When to call the vet or a trainer

This table is a general guide, not a diagnostic tool. If you are unsure, call your veterinarian. Trust your instincts. If something seems wrong, it is always reasonable to ask.

Level	Examples	What to do
Emergency: act now	Collapse, trouble breathing, unresponsiveness, seizure, suspected poisoning, a swollen or hard belly with unproductive retching, bleeding that will not stop.	Contact an emergency veterinary clinic immediately. Do not wait to see if it passes.
Call your vet soon	Vomiting or diarrhea that persists, not eating, unusual lethargy, straining to urinate or defecate, blood in urine or stool, limping, eye or nose discharge, a persistent cough, or skin changes.	Call your clinic the same day, describe what you have seen, and follow their advice.
Discuss with a trainer or behavior professional	Biting that causes injury, growing fear, aggression, reactivity to people or dogs, or a sudden change in behavior.	Ask your vet to rule out health causes, then contact a qualified, reward-based trainer or behavior professional.

MEDICAL REASONS FIRST

Sudden changes in behavior, such as hiding, irritability, or a loss of interest in food or play, can have a medical cause. Check with your veterinarian before assuming it is a training issue.

CHAPTER 13

Your first-month action plan

This plan is a starting point. Keep the items that fit your puppy and your household, and skip any that do not.

Week	Focus	Action items
Week 1	Settle in and set the routine	Book the first vet visit. Set up the toilet area and the rest space. Start your daily notes.
Week 2	Start simple learning and handling	Begin name recognition and short reward sessions. Practice gentle handling each day. Look for a reward-based puppy class if your vet agrees it is appropriate.
Week 3	Add safe new experiences	Introduce new sounds, surfaces, and calm people at a distance, using the step-by-step approach. Keep rest time protected.
Week 4	Review and plan ahead	Read your notes. Check the puppy-proofing and collar fit. Decide what to change, and write down two questions for your next vet visit.

TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

- [ ] Toilet routine is clear and mostly successful
- [ ] Rest and quiet time happen every day
- [ ] Gentle handling practice is part of the day
- [ ] Puppy-proofing has been checked this week
- [ ] Next vet visit is booked, and questions are ready

QUICK REFERENCE

The ten rules for the first year

Keep this page near the door. Most of what matters during the first year can be summarized here.

1. Plan the toilet trips. Take your puppy out often, especially after waking, meals, and play.
2. Reward outdoor toileting right away. Never punish accidents or crying.
3. Supervise, or use a pen or crate for short, safe periods.
4. Keep rest sacred. Overtired puppies bite more and settle less.
5. Use short, positive training sessions and stop while your puppy is still keen.
6. Practice gentle handling every day, one body area at a time.
7. Let new experiences be gradual. Respect fear, and let your puppy retreat.
8. Puppy-proof the home and yard, and check it again as your puppy grows.
9. Keep food, medicines, and toxic items out of reach. Know your emergency numbers.
10. Keep vet visits, and ask your vet before changing food, routine, or exercise.

QUICK REFERENCE

Daily checklist card

Photocopy this page and keep it near the toilet area or the kitchen. Use the Daily Planner for detailed logs.

- [ ] Toilet after waking
- [ ] Toilet after meals
- [ ] Toilet after play and rest
- [ ] Fresh water available
- [ ] Rest space quiet and ready
- [ ] Two or three short training sessions
- [ ] Gentle handling practice
- [ ] Enrichment or sniffing game
- [ ] Hazards checked and out of reach
- [ ] Notes written down for the day
- [ ] Concerns noted for the vet
- [ ] Enough rest for the puppy

WRITE IT DOWN

Notes about toilet trips, meals, sleep, and behavior are the most useful information you can bring to a vet visit or a trainer.

RESOURCES

Where to go next

This handbook draws on general, widely accepted guidance from veterinary and animal welfare organizations. These are good places to read more, and they are worth checking if you have questions.

Topic	Where to look
Puppy socialization	The American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior (AVSAB) position statement on puppy socialization.
Toxic foods and plants	The ASPCA website, which publishes lists of toxic and non-toxic plants and foods for dogs.
Vaccines, parasites, and feeding	Your veterinarian. Advice depends on your puppy and your area.
Reward-based training	Credentialed, reward-based trainers and behavior professionals, and the trainer directories of recognized organizations.

COMPANION WORKBOOKS

- [ ] The Puppy Daily Planner: daily and weekly routines
- [ ] The Potty Training Tracker: house training records
- [ ] The Puppy Training Workbook: step-by-step lessons
- [ ] The New Puppy Shopping Checklist: supplies and home prep
- [ ] The Puppy Feeding and Growth Journal, the Puppy Health and Vet Visit Organizer, the Puppy Socialization Adventure Book, the Puppy Grooming and Care Planner, and the Puppy Milestones and Memory Journal

A FINAL REMINDER

This handbook is educational. It does not replace veterinary care or individualized advice from a qualified professional who knows your puppy.

SOURCES

References

Sources checked while preparing this handbook. Guidance changes over time and varies by region, so confirm current advice with your veterinarian.

1. American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior (AVSAB). Puppy Socialization Position Statement. avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Puppy_Socialization_Position_Statement_Download_-_10-3-14.pdf
2. World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA). 2024 Guidelines for the Vaccination of Dogs and Cats. wsava.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/WSAVA-Vaccination-guidelines-2024.pdf
3. ASPCA Animal Poison Control. People Foods to Avoid Feeding Your Pets. aspca.org/pet-care/aspca-poison-control/people-foods-avoid-feeding-your-pets
4. ASPCA Animal Poison Control. Toxic and Non-Toxic Plants. aspca.org/pet-care/aspca-poison-control/toxic-and-non-toxic-plants

This list is not a substitute for veterinary advice. Vaccination schedules and disease risks depend on your puppy and your area.