

The Puppy Training Workbook

Ten positive-reinforcement lessons for your puppy's first months

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

A practical, positive-reinforcement workbook with step-by-step lessons for name recognition, sit, recall, settling, loose-leash walking, gentle handling, mouthing, calm greetings, reward timing, and short sessions.

Part of The New Puppy Survival Kit.



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Work through one or two lessons at a time. Each lesson has instructions and a tracker.

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Training that works with your puppy

Puppies learn quickly, but they learn what we reward, not what we intend. This workbook teaches the basics with positive reinforcement: rewarding the behavior you want, and using management and patience for the rest.

Each lesson has a goal, preparation, numbered steps, common mistakes, easier and harder versions, and a tracker. Do one or two lessons at a time. Puppies develop at different rates, so the pace is yours to set, and some skills will take weeks.

WHAT REWARD-BASED TRAINING MEANS

It means your puppy is rewarded for behaviors you like, such as sitting, coming, or walking calmly. Unwanted behavior is managed (for example, with a gate or a toy) rather than punished. Rewards can include food, praise, play, and access to something your puppy enjoys.

PLEASE AVOID

Physical punishment, shouting, shock tools, prong or choke collars used to correct behavior, and intimidation. These approaches can increase fear and stress, and they often make a puppy less willing to offer the behavior you want.

THE SCIENCE, SIMPLY

How rewards shape behavior

A reward makes a behavior more likely to happen again. The sequence below is the core of every lesson in this workbook.



The reward cycle. Clear timing makes it easier for your puppy to connect the behavior with the reward.

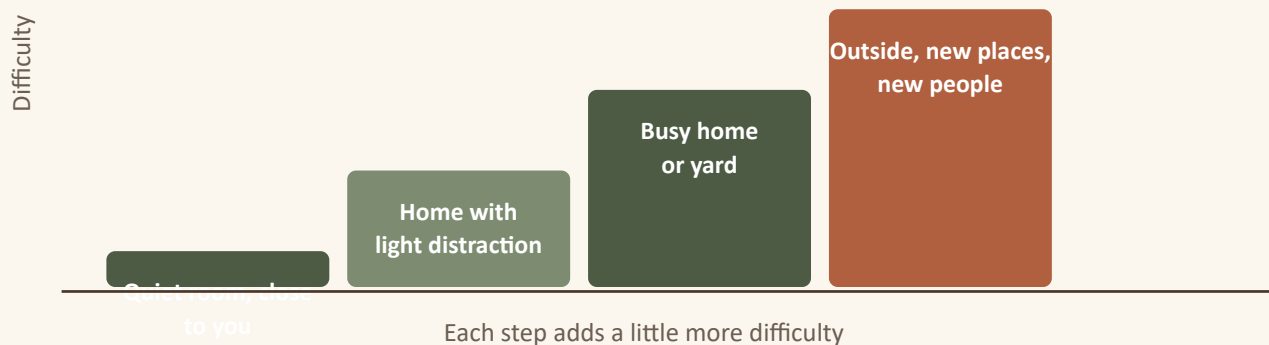
THREE THINGS THAT MAKE IT WORK

- ☐ **Clear marking.** A marker word or click tells the puppy the moment they got it right.
- ☐ **Quick rewards.** Aim to reward within a second or two of the behavior.
- ☐ **Consistent cues.** Use the same word and hand signal each time, and avoid repeating them.

PROGRESS

Training progression

Skills should move from easy settings to harder ones, one step at a time. Most puppies learn best when each new step is only a small increase in difficulty.



A training progression. Move up only when the skill is reliable at the current step.

SIGNS YOUR PUPPY IS READY FOR THE NEXT STEP

- ☐ Your puppy responds at least eight out of ten times at this step
- ☐ Your puppy stays relaxed, with loose body language
- ☐ You can reward quickly and consistently
- ☐ Your puppy is not showing stress, like panting, lip licking, or hiding

IF YOU NEED TO STEP BACK

Moving back a step is not a failure. It gives your puppy another chance to be successful, which builds confidence.

SESSION PLANNING

Planning short sessions

Two to four sessions of three to five minutes each often work better than one long session. Puppies have short attention spans, and they tire quickly.

Time of day	Possible session	Length
Morning, after waking and toileting	Name recognition or a skill already known	2 to 3 min
Midday	Sit, or a short settle on the mat	3 to 5 min
Afternoon, after a rest	Loose-leash foundations, indoors or in the garden	3 to 5 min
Early evening	Calm greetings or gentle handling	3 to 5 min

This is a sample pattern only. Adjust it for your puppy's age, energy, and daily routine.

ENDING ON SUCCESS

Finish each session with an easy behavior your puppy can do well, then reward and let them rest. This keeps training enjoyable.

LESSON 1 OF 10

Name recognition

Your puppy learns that their name means “look at me,” so they turn toward you when you call. This makes every later lesson easier.

PREPARATION

- ☐ Small, soft treats cut into pea-sized pieces
- ☐ A quiet room with few distractions
- ☐ Five minutes and a relaxed puppy

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Say your puppy’s name once, in a bright, friendly voice.
- 2 The moment your puppy looks at you, say “yes” or click, then give a treat.
- 3 Pause a second, then repeat. Ten repetitions is a good first session.
- 4 Say the name before something good happens, like a meal or a toy.
- 5 Once this is easy, try it from a few steps away.

NOTE

Say the name once, then wait. Repeating the name over and over teaches your puppy to ignore it.

LESSON 1 OF 10, CONTINUED

Name recognition: practice

COMMON MISTAKES

- ☐ Using the name only when you are cross or want the puppy to stop something
- ☐ Repeating the name many times in a row
- ☐ Expecting an instant response in a busy room
- ☐ Rewarding late, after the puppy has already turned away

MAKING IT EASIER

- ☐ Start in a quiet room with your puppy close to you
- ☐ Use very small, highly liked treats

MAKING IT A LITTLE HARDER

Try it in another room, outside in a quiet garden, or with light background noise. Move back a few steps between repetitions.

Session	Date	Minutes	Went well? (Y, Partly, N)	Notes

Ready to move on? ☐ Not yet ☐ Mostly ☐ Yes

NOTES

LESSON 2 OF 10

Sit

Your puppy sits when asked. Sit is useful on its own, and it gives you a calm position for greetings, leash walking, and waiting at doors.

PREPARATION

- ☐ Treats your puppy likes
- ☐ A clear, consistent hand signal (for example, a flat palm raised slowly)
- ☐ A calm, short session

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Hold a treat close to your puppy's nose, then move it slowly up and slightly back over their head.
- 2 As the head follows the treat, the bottom will often lower into a sit.
- 3 The moment the bottom touches the floor, say "yes" or click, then reward.
- 4 Once your puppy sits easily, say "sit" just before you begin the movement.
- 5 Repeat for five to eight rounds, then take a break.

NOTE

Never push your puppy's rear down to make them sit. Pressure teaches the puppy to resist, and it can make a nervous puppy less comfortable with handling.

LESSON 2 OF 10, CONTINUED

Sit: practice

COMMON MISTAKES

- ☐ Pushing the puppy into position
- ☐ Saying “sit” over and over
- ☐ Holding the treat too high, so the puppy jumps instead of sitting
- ☐ Rewarding a sit that happened after a long, messy wait

MAKING IT EASIER

- ☐ Lower the treat slightly, so the puppy’s head does not need to tip back
- ☐ Reward a partial lowering of the hips as a first step

MAKING IT A LITTLE HARDER

Ask for sit before meals, at a doorway, or while you stand a few steps away. Add gentle distractions only once the puppy sits reliably in a quiet room.

Session	Date	Minutes	Went well? (Y, Partly, N)	Notes

Ready to move on? ☐ Not yet ☐ Mostly ☐ Yes

NOTES

LESSON 3 OF 10

Recall (coming when called)

Your puppy comes to you quickly and happily when you call. Recall is one of the most valuable skills you can teach, and it is built through many short, positive practices.

PREPARATION

- ☐ High-value treats or a favorite toy
- ☐ A leash or long line in a safe area
- ☐ A quiet space to start, indoors or in a secure yard

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Start indoors. Crouch down, open your arms, and say your puppy's name followed by "come" in a happy voice.
- 2 When your puppy reaches you, give a generous reward and some praise.
- 3 Practice from very short distances, then gradually increase the distance.
- 4 Sometimes call and reward; sometimes call and then have a short game. Keep it fun.
- 5 Never call your puppy to end play, to go into the crate, or for anything they dislike.

NOTE

Keep your puppy on a leash or long line outdoors until the recall is reliable in distracting places. Many puppies learn that "come" means the fun ends, which makes recall harder over time.

LESSON 3 OF 10, CONTINUED

Recall (coming when called): practice

COMMON MISTAKES

- ☐ Calling for something unpleasant, like a bath, nail care, or going home
- ☐ Chasing the puppy when they do not come
- ☐ Repeating the call again and again
- ☐ Going off-leash in a busy or unsafe area before the skill is reliable

MAKING IT EASIER

- ☐ Practice in a single room, with a short distance
- ☐ Have a helper hold the puppy gently, then release them as you call

MAKING IT A LITTLE HARDER

Add distance, outdoor areas, and distractions. Keep the leash on, or use a long line, until you have consistent success in each new setting.

Session	Date	Minutes	Went well? (Y, Partly, N)	Notes

Ready to move on? ☐ Not yet ☐ Mostly ☐ Yes

NOTES

LESSON 4 OF 10

Settling on a mat

Your puppy learns to lie down and relax on a mat or bed. A settle skill helps at mealtimes, visitors, and busy family moments.

PREPARATION

- ☐ A mat or bed that is always the same
- ☐ Treats or a chew that lasts a few minutes
- ☐ A calm household, if possible

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Toss a treat onto the mat. When your puppy steps onto it, say “yes” and reward.
- 2 Repeat until your puppy steps onto the mat on cue, with a word such as “place.”
- 3 Once your puppy stays on the mat for a moment, reward them for lying down.
- 4 Gradually ask for longer periods. Give a chew or lick mat to extend the time.
- 5 Practice stepping a short distance away, then return to reward the calm behavior.

LESSON 4 OF 10, CONTINUED

Settling on a mat: practice

COMMON MISTAKES

- ☐ Asking for a long stay before the puppy understands the mat
- ☐ Placing the mat in a busy spot before practice in a quiet one
- ☐ Scolding the puppy when they step off
- ☐ Giving treats only occasionally, so the behavior is less reinforced

MAKING IT EASIER

- ☐ Start with short durations and a treat close to the mat
- ☐ Practice when the puppy is calm, such as after a short walk

MAKING IT A LITTLE HARDER

Practice with the television on, with family members moving around, or with a visitor. Stay in the room, then move a little farther away.

Session	Date	Minutes	Went well? (Y, Partly, N)	Notes

Ready to move on? ☐ Not yet ☐ Mostly ☐ Yes

NOTES

LESSON 5 OF 10

Loose-leash foundations

Your puppy walks beside you without pulling, checking in with you from time to time. Early loose-leash practice is about setting up a relaxed walk, not about perfect heeling.

PREPARATION

- ☐ A well-fitting harness or collar and a standard lead
- ☐ Small, easy-to-eat treats
- ☐ A quiet area with minimal distractions for the first sessions

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Stand still with the lead loose. Wait until your puppy is near you.
- 2 When your puppy moves ahead and the lead tightens, stop walking and wait.
- 3 The moment the lead goes slack, say “yes” and reward at your side.
- 4 Take a few steps, then reward again when your puppy is close.
- 5 Change direction often, so your puppy learns to check in with you.

NOTE

If your puppy pulls hard, a well-fitted harness can make walks more comfortable. Ask a qualified trainer to check the fit and the approach, rather than correcting pulling with jerks on the lead.

LESSON 5 OF 10, CONTINUED

Loose-leash foundations: practice

COMMON MISTAKES

- ☐ Dragging the puppy along
- ☐ Walking long distances before the puppy can keep the lead loose for short ones
- ☐ Pulling sharply or jerking the lead to correct the puppy
- ☐ Stopping only when the puppy is frustrated

MAKING IT EASIER

- ☐ Practice in a quiet garden or hallway
- ☐ Use treats more often and move slowly at first

MAKING IT A LITTLE HARDER

Practice on a quieter street, add a few distractions, or practice near other safe and calm dogs at a distance.

Session	Date	Minutes	Went well? (Y, Partly, N)	Notes

Ready to move on? ☐ Not yet ☐ Mostly ☐ Yes

NOTES

LESSON 6 OF 10

Gentle handling

Your puppy accepts gentle touch on their body, paws, ears, mouth, and tail. Handling practice helps with grooming, nail care, and veterinary visits later.

PREPARATION

- ☐ Treats your puppy enjoys
- ☐ A calm, quiet time after a walk or nap
- ☐ Your hands clean and dry

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Touch your puppy's shoulder briefly, then give a treat. Repeat a few times.
- 2 Move gently to the ears, then the chest, paws, and tail, giving a treat after each touch.
- 3 Hold each area for only a second or two at first, then release.
- 4 Watch for early signs of discomfort, like turning the head away, stiffening, or lip licking. Pause and go back to an easier touch.
- 5 Practice with a helper, so your puppy learns that a touch is followed by a treat.

NOTE

Stop if your puppy shows fear, growls, or snaps. Calmly give space and speak with a veterinarian or a qualified trainer. Growling is communication, and it should be taken seriously.

LESSON 6 OF 10, CONTINUED

Gentle handling: practice

COMMON MISTAKES

- ☐ Holding the puppy too long before they are ready
- ☐ Forcing the puppy to stay still
- ☐ Ignoring early signs of stress
- ☐ Handling only during grooming or nail care

MAKING IT EASIER

- ☐ Start with the shoulder and chest, which many puppies find easier
- ☐ Use a treat for every touch

MAKING IT A LITTLE HARDER

Add longer holds, more body areas, and light handling by a second person. Practice paw and mouth handling before grooming sessions.

Session	Date	Minutes	Went well? (Y, Partly, N)	Notes

Ready to move on? ☐ Not yet ☐ Mostly ☐ Yes

NOTES

LESSON 7 OF 10

Redirecting mouthing

Your puppy learns that hands and clothing are not chew toys, and that a toy is the right thing to mouth. Puppies explore the world with their mouths, so this takes patience and planning.

PREPARATION

- ☐ Several safe chew toys kept within reach
- ☐ A calm moment when your puppy is not overtired
- ☐ A baby gate or a closed door for breaks, if needed

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 When your puppy starts to mouth you, stop moving and stay still.
- 2 Offer a chew toy. When your puppy takes it, praise and keep the toy in play.
- 3 If mouthing continues, stand up calmly, turn away, or pause the game for a short break.
- 4 Reward calm, gentle behavior and calm play.
- 5 Between play sessions, put toys out and tidy away anything you do not want chewed.

NOTE

Puppies who are tired or overexcited often mouth more. A calm nap or quiet time can reduce the problem more than any training trick.

LESSON 7 OF 10, CONTINUED

Redirecting mouthing: practice

COMMON MISTAKES

- ☐ Yelling or hitting, which can increase excitement
- ☐ Using fingers, hands, or socks as toys
- ☐ Playing rough games that encourage biting
- ☐ Not having toys ready when mouthing starts

MAKING IT EASIER

- ☐ Practice when the puppy is calm and well rested
- ☐ Offer more toys, so there is always a good alternative

MAKING IT A LITTLE HARDER

Practice with visitors, in more rooms, and during longer play sessions. Teach the puppy to take a toy from your hand gently.

Session	Date	Minutes	Went well? (Y, Partly, N)	Notes

Ready to move on? ☐ Not yet ☐ Mostly ☐ Yes

NOTES

LESSON 8 OF 10

Calm greetings

Your puppy greets people with four paws on the floor, or with a sit, instead of jumping up. Calm greetings make life easier when visitors arrive.

PREPARATION

- ☐ A helper who is willing to practice
- ☐ Treats kept in a pocket or nearby
- ☐ A leash, if your puppy is excitable

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Ask your helper to stand still and ignore the puppy until four paws are on the floor.
- 2 When the puppy is calm, your helper says “yes” and gives a treat, then greets briefly.
- 3 If your puppy jumps, your helper turns away and waits.
- 4 Practice a sit as an alternative. Reward the sit with a short greeting.
- 5 Repeat many times, then increase the number of people who take part.

LESSON 8 OF 10, CONTINUED

Calm greetings: practice

COMMON MISTAKES

- ☐ Letting the puppy jump, because it seems harmless
- ☐ Pushing the puppy away with hands, which can become play
- ☐ Greeting in a loud, excited way
- ☐ Using a long, rough hug as a greeting

MAKING IT EASIER

- ☐ Practice in a quiet room, with one calm person
- ☐ Keep greetings short

MAKING IT A LITTLE HARDER

Practice at the front door, with the doorbell, and with more people. Build up gradually, and keep sessions positive.

Session	Date	Minutes	Went well? (Y, Partly, N)	Notes

Ready to move on? ☐ Not yet ☐ Mostly ☐ Yes

NOTES

LESSON 9 OF 10

Reward timing

You learn to mark the exact behavior you want, then reward quickly, so your puppy knows what earned the treat. Timing is one of the most important skills in reward-based training.

PREPARATION

- ☐ Treats in a pocket or treat pouch
- ☐ A marker word such as “yes” or a clicker
- ☐ A quiet space and a few minutes

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Practice your marker word. Say it, then give a treat, several times, so the marker means “a treat is coming.”
- 2 Wait for a simple behavior, such as your puppy looking at you, then say the marker and reward.
- 3 Reward within one or two seconds of the behavior.
- 4 Try marking a few different behaviors, such as standing up or stepping forward.
- 5 Practice fading treats gradually, using praise and play as well.

LESSON 9 OF 10, CONTINUED

Reward timing: practice

COMMON MISTAKES

- ☐ Rewarding late, after the puppy has moved on
- ☐ Rewarding a behavior you did not mean to reward, such as jumping
- ☐ Using treats that are too big or too filling
- ☐ Treat-hunting after every reward, rather than returning to the training

MAKING IT EASIER

- ☐ Practice in slow motion, with a pause between the behavior and the reward
- ☐ Use a single, very small treat

MAKING IT A LITTLE HARDER

Practice with quicker behaviors, while walking, and while playing with a toy.

Session	Date	Minutes	Went well? (Y, Partly, N)	Notes

Ready to move on? ☐ Not yet ☐ Mostly ☐ Yes

NOTES

LESSON 10 OF 10

Short, manageable training sessions

You plan sessions that are short enough to keep your puppy interested, and you end each one on success. Several short sessions a day work better than one long, tiring session.

PREPARATION

- ☐ One skill to practice for the session
- ☐ Treats and a timer
- ☐ A quiet space and a clear plan for ending the session

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Pick one skill from the lessons above. Decide what success looks like.
- 2 Warm up with a skill your puppy already knows well.
- 3 Practice three to five short repetitions of the new skill.
- 4 End on a success, then give your puppy a break, play, or a nap.
- 5 Repeat two to four short sessions a day, adding notes to your tracker afterward.

NOTE

Puppies need a lot of sleep. Stop training before your puppy becomes tired or distracted, and do not push through frustration.

LESSON 10 OF 10, CONTINUED

Short, manageable training sessions: practice

COMMON MISTAKES

- ☐ Training sessions that run too long
- ☐ Practicing when your puppy is tired or hungry
- ☐ Stopping on a failure rather than ending on something that went well
- ☐ Expecting a skill to be perfect in one session

MAKING IT EASIER

- ☐ Shorten the session to one minute
- ☐ Repeat the easiest version of the skill

MAKING IT A LITTLE HARDER

Lengthen the session slightly, add a new distraction, or practice a second skill at the end.

Session	Date	Minutes	Went well? (Y, Partly, N)	Notes

Ready to move on? ☐ Not yet ☐ Mostly ☐ Yes

NOTES

OVERVIEW

Progress overview

Use this page to see the whole workbook at a glance. Mark a lesson as started or complete when your puppy is consistently successful in a quiet room.

Lesson	Started (date)	Ready at home (date)	Ready outside (date)	Still practicing?
1. Name recognition				
2. Sit				
3. Recall (coming when called)				
4. Settling on a mat				
5. Loose-leash foundations				
6. Gentle handling				
7. Redirecting mouthing				
8. Calm greetings				
9. Reward timing				
10. Short, manageable training sessions				

SUPPORT

When to get professional help

Many puppies learn with simple, consistent training. Some need more support. Get help early rather than waiting for a problem to become established.

- ☐ Persistent fear, such as trembling, hiding, or freezing, that does not improve with time and space
- ☐ Growling, snapping, or biting, especially when your puppy is handled or approached
- ☐ Ongoing distress when separated from you, or when left alone
- ☐ A sudden change in behavior that is out of character
- ☐ Lessons that stall for many weeks despite consistent practice

WHO TO CONTACT

Start with your veterinarian, because pain or illness can cause behavior changes. Then look for a qualified, reward-based trainer or a certified behavior professional. Ask what methods they use, and avoid anyone who recommends physical punishment or intimidation.

STOP AND SEEK HELP IF

Your puppy shows signs of significant fear or aggression. Do not wait to see if it resolves. Keep distance, give your puppy space, and contact a professional.

REVIEW

Training review

Complete this page at the end of each month. Review what is working, what needs more time, and where you would like extra help.

Date reviewed _____

Puppy's age (weeks or months) _____

Lessons I have completed _____

SKILLS MY PUPPY HAS LEARNED WELL

SKILLS THAT NEED MORE TIME

WHAT I WILL TRY NEXT
