

HOUSTON PETS ALIVE!

Bringing Home Your New Puppy

A detailed guide to help you start off strong and build a lifelong bond.

1. The Decompression Period (First 3–7 Days)

Think of your home as a new universe to your puppy — they need time to adjust.

DO:

- Keep the environment quiet and predictable.
- Allow free access to one or two rooms at first.
- Provide a designated “safe zone” like a crate or playpen.
- Use calm voices and slow movements.

AVOID:

- Overwhelming them with new people or places.
- Rushing introductions to kids, pets, or visitors.
- Free roaming of the entire house.

Learn more from the [ASPCA: Bringing Home a New Dog](#)

2. Potty Training: Building Good Habits from Day One

Key Rule: Supervise + Schedule + Reward.

Step-by-Step:

1. Set a consistent schedule:

- First thing in the morning
- After eating or drinking
- After playtime
- After naps
- Before bedtime
- Every 1–2 hours for puppies under 12 weeks

2. Choose a designated potty area outdoors.

- Take your puppy to the same spot every time.
- Use a phrase like “Go potty” as a cue.

3. Reward IMMEDIATELY after they go outside.

- Treats and praise should come *within 3 seconds* of finishing.

4. Accidents? Stay calm.

- Never punish. Interrupt gently if you catch them in the act.
- Clean thoroughly with an **enzymatic cleaner** (like Nature’s Miracle) to remove scent.

5. Supervise or confine indoors.

- Use baby gates, leashes, or crates to prevent unsupervised roaming.

Read more: [AKC Potty Training 101](#)

3. Crate Training: Creating a Safe, Happy Space

Why it matters:

Crate training helps with potty training, prevents destructive chewing, and gives your puppy a space of their own.

Choosing the right crate:

- Just large enough to stand up, turn around, and lie down.
- Use dividers if it's too big to prevent pottying inside.

Steps to train:

1. **Introduce slowly.**
 - Toss in treats and toys, leave the door open at first.
2. **Feed meals inside the crate** to build positive association.
3. **Start short sessions with the door closed.**
 - Gradually increase duration, starting with 5–10 minutes.
4. **Use for naps, bedtime, and short absences.**
 - Never use the crate as punishment.
 - Don't crate longer than puppy's age in months = hours (e.g., 3-month-old = 3 hrs max during the day).

Crate training guide from [Humane Society: How to Crate Train Your Dog](#)

4. Leash Training & Collar Basics

Start leash training indoors once your puppy is comfortable in the home.

Basic Steps:

1. Let them wear a collar or harness for short, supervised periods.
2. Attach the leash and let it drag behind them indoors at first.
3. Reward when they walk with a loose leash.
4. Use short sessions outside with few distractions.

Training Tips:

- Don't pull — use treats to guide them toward you.
- Stop walking if they pull. Resume when the leash loosens.
- Reward for checking in and walking by your side.

Collar & Harness Types:

- **Flat Collar** – Basic, for ID tags; not for walking/training.
- **Martingale Collar** – Safer option for escape-prone dogs.
- **Back-Clip Harness** – Gentle for young puppies.
- **Front-Clip Harness** – Helps discourage pulling.
- **No-pull Head Halters** – Only for older puppies under supervision; requires proper fit.

Learn more about collars from [PetMD: Dog Collars: Types and Uses](#)

Learn about leash manners from the [AKC: Loose Leash Walking](#)

5. Socialization & Confidence Building

The ideal window for socialization is **8–16 weeks**, but exposure should be gentle and positive.

Expose them to:

- Different surfaces (grass, tile, carpet)
- Noises (vacuum, doorbell, music)
- People (kids, adults, people with hats or umbrellas)
- Other vaccinated dogs in controlled settings

Make every new experience positive with treats, toys, and calm praise.

[AVSAB resource: Puppy Socialization Guidelines](#)

6. Grooming & Handling

- Handle ears, paws, mouth gently every day to prepare for vet visits and grooming.
 - Introduce brushing, nail trims, and baths early and positively.
 - Reward with treats, go slow, and never force.
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7. Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Letting the puppy roam unsupervised
- Punishing accidents or crate whining
- Skipping socialization during the critical window
- Using retractable leashes or prong/choke collars with young pups

HELPFUL LINKS:

Decompression Period

- ASPCA – Bringing Home a New Dog:
<https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/dog-care/general-dog-care>

Potty Training

- AKC – How to Potty Train a Puppy:
<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/training/how-to-potty-train-a-puppy/>

Crate Training

- Humane Society – Crate Training 101:
<https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/crate-training-101>

Leash Training & Collars

- AKC – Train Your Dog to Walk on a Loose Leash:
<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/training/train-loose-leash-walking/>
- PetMD – Dog Collars: Types and Uses:
https://www.petmd.com/dog/general-health/evr_dg_dog_collars

Socialization & Confidence Building

- AVSAB – Puppy Socialization Guidelines:
<https://avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/AVSAB-Position-Statement-on-Puppy-Socialization.pdf>