

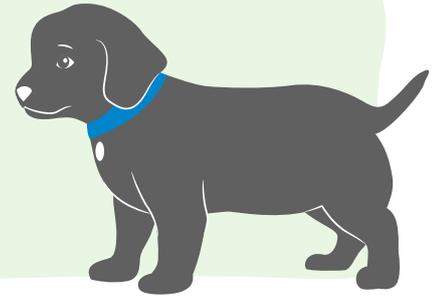
HELPING YOUR PUPPY GROW UP TO BE BRAVE AND HAPPY



1

THE FIRST FOUR MONTHS MATTER

- The first four months (16 weeks) are important for your puppy's mind.
- This is when they learn to feel safe and to trust people and other animals.
- Give them lots of gentle and happy times so they grow up feeling brave.



2

MAKE A SAFE SPACE

- Make a quiet place just for your puppy with their bed, water, food, and toys.
- Give them things to chew, lick, sniff, and tear like KONG toys, snuffle mats, toilet rolls, and cardboard boxes. This helps them relax.
- Let your puppy rest in their safe place when they want to. Don't bother them when they are resting.



3

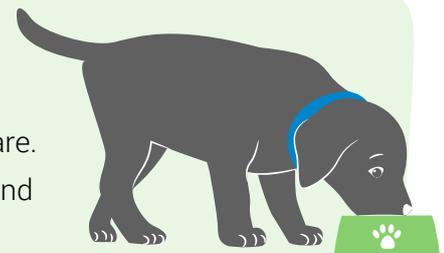
KEEP A ROUTINE

- Puppies like to know what will happen next.
- Feed, play, rest, and take your puppy to the toilet at the same times each day.
- Puppies sleep a lot – up to 20 hours a day! Let them sleep and don't interrupt them.

4

SAFE ACCESS TO THE THINGS THEY NEED

- Feed puppies in quiet places, away from other pets. They don't want to share.
- If you have more than one dog, give each dog their own food, water, toys, and bed. Dogs are happier when they have their own set of things.
- Leave your puppy alone when they eat. Don't put your hands in their food or try to take their food away.
- If you need to take a toy away, swap it for something even better!
- If you interrupt your puppy when they eat or take a toy away without replacing it with something better, they worry that this will happen again. This can be a big problem when they grow up.





5

GO SLOW

- Let your puppy explore new things slowly. It can be scary and confusing if they see too many new places, people or other animals at once. Try just one new experience each day.
- Teach your puppy to feel safe when it is alone. Set them up with toys, treats and calming music then leave them alone for short periods each day. This helps your puppy build the confidence to be alone over time.
- When you go slow with new things, your puppy will be more confident when it grows up.

6

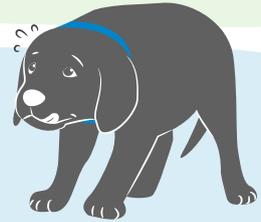
BUILD TRUST

- Let pups walk around when you are at home. They can feel trapped when you carry them, and this upsets them.
- Use gentle collars, harnesses and leads. Prong collars, check chains and bark collars should not be used.
- Speak kindly. Don't use a harsh tone of voice or yell at your puppy - this makes them scared.
- Reward them when they do what you want them to do. You can use treats or kind words.
- Punishing a puppy usually makes their behaviour worse. Try to think about how you can **show** them what you want them to do, instead of getting mad at them when they don't.

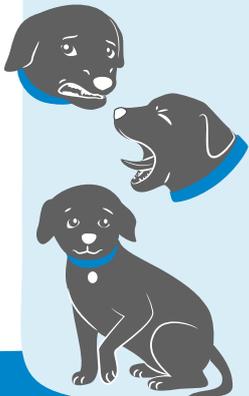


7

WATCH FOR STRESS OR FEAR



- It's normal to be stressed or scared sometimes.
- Signs your puppy is stressed include having really wide eyes, flattened ears, licking their lips when they aren't eating, holding up a front paw, yawning when they aren't tired or shaking their body like they have a wet coat (when they don't).
- Signs your puppy is scared include hiding, crouching, shaking, growling, blinking fast, or tucking their tail under their back legs.



- Growling is an important warning signal. When a puppy or dog growls they are telling us they feel uncomfortable, scared or unsafe.
- If we ignore the growl or punish them, they might skip straight to a bite next time. A growl gives us the chance to step back, reduce stress, and keep everyone safe.
- If you see signs of stress or fear, don't force your pup to stay or play. Let them move away. If you are at home, they may want to go to their Safe Space.
- If you are not at home when you see these signs, have a look around and figure out why your puppy is worried, then move them away. Your puppy will learn that you are looking after them, and this builds trust.

NEED HELP?

- If your puppy seems stressed or scared a lot of the time, this is not normal.
- See your local vet or contact the RSPCA's free Behaviour Hotline for advice by emailing: mail@rspcansw.org.au
- You can also book a visit with our behaviour vet at the RSPCA NSW. Call to book on: **(02) 9770 7555**