



The Ultimate

“Get-Ready-for-the-Christmas-Present Puppy” Guide



It's a life-changing event. The more you prepare, the less stressful and more rewarding it will be for you AND your newest furry friend.

There is a long list of things to consider when getting yourself, your family and your home ready to welcome a new puppy; what supplies you'll need, what to talk about with your family before getting the puppy, what the rules are going to be, scheduling, the type of training, type of food, type of toys, etc. And we're going to look at all of these things. But first, Rule # 1, Numero Uno, the most important thing to remember before you get started! Only give a puppy as a gift if you are 100% sure the recipient wants it and all the responsibility that goes with it. Generally speaking, the only household you should add a puppy to is your own. For the purpose of this guide, we'll assume the puppy is no surprise and begin by looking at the supplies you're going to need.

Get Shopping!

A new puppy means a trip to the pet store, and you're going to need a big cart! In no particular order, here's what you're going to need; a leash and a collar. There are some pretty neat designs out there so this is an opportunity to give a glimpse of your pup's personality - or yours. Next you'll need bowls for both food and water. Of course the size of all of these things will be determined by the size of your pup and how big they're going to get. If crate training is how you've decided to go, stands to reason you'll need a crate. It needs to be big enough to accommodate your full-grown dog, with partitions to section it off as they grow into it, with some soft, washable bedding. Also, make sure you get some toys to welcome them with. What kind they like will depend on their breed and personality. Remember, teething starts at about 12 weeks, so have some teething toys ready. Then there are pee pads, pooper-scoopers, poop bags, shampoo, I.D. tags ... the list goes on. Ask your retailer for advice and see if there is anything you missed. One item that deserves careful consideration is food.

Pack the Pantry

The type of food you choose for your puppy depends on several factors including size and breed. It is probably best, and easiest at first, if you stick with the food they were getting from the breeder. Breeders choose particular puppy foods for specific reasons so that may be a good food to continue. The puppy will be used to it and this doesn't preclude you from making dietary changes later - perhaps based on the advice of your veterinarian or pet store owner. If you want to change diets, you can transition your dog to a new food by mixing the old with the new in a 50-50 mix, and gradually over the first week reduce the old and increase the new percentage.



Creating Safe Spaces

Now that you've filled your house with supplies, it's time to make sure it's puppy proof. Any house or apartment provides many potential hazards for inquisitive puppies. Start by taking a walk around your home and looking for anything the new puppy might chew on, climb up or pull down - then get it safely out of the way. Get down on your hands and knees to see the world from their perspective. You might be surprised at what you didn't see standing up. After a general tidying up, there are some specific things to take care of (while this is by no means an exhaustive list, it's a pretty good start!):

- 1. Electrical** - puppies love licking outlets and chewing on wires - which is a serious hazard. Cover outlets where you can and get hard cable covers/organizers or deterrent sprays.
- 2. Garbage** - trash can aromas can really pique a puppy's interests! Make sure your garbage containers have secure covers. Better still, make sure they are in secure cabinets or cupboards. And not just in the kitchen, in every room. Some products that end up in bathroom garbage cans can be particularly harmful to pets.
- 3. Indoor plants** - get rid of all the plants that are poisonous to puppies - see the 10 most common here - and put the rest out of reach to prevent your pup from chewing them or digging in the dirt.
- 4. Medications** - human medications are the most common cause of pet poisoning. Puppy teeth can go through child-proof bottles in no time if they are left on counters or night stands. Make sure all medications are stored in secure cabinets or drawers.
- 5. Household Supplies** - from cleaners to detergents, pest poisons, anti-freeze and a host of others, many of your household supplies are highly toxic to animals and must be kept in cabinets or closets - preferably with latches or locks on them.
- 6. Set limits** - your curious puppy is going to explore as much as possible and see just how far they can get. Set up baby gates or pens and close doors to keep them from getting into (or out of) places that you don't want them to.

Finally, make sure your shoes are safely out of reach as they are so often the first casualty!

Make Time for “The Talk”

Bringing home a new puppy has a massive impact on the whole household. So the whole household needs to be on the same page. It is important that you discuss things like who is responsible for walks, feeding, grooming and exercising. It is unrealistic, and unfair, to think you can reap the amazing rewards of dog ownership without taking on a share of the responsibilities. Besides, you want your new puppy to bond with everyone in the family. It's a good idea to post a schedule of tasks to remind everyone of their responsibilities. You should also have a discussion about rules. Is the puppy allowed on the furniture? Where will they sleep? Where are they allowed in the house? Will they be fed treats from the table?, etc. As with when you set expectations for your kids, consistency is key, and if the whole family agrees on the rules, it's more likely they'll stick to them. Speaking of kids, if you have young children, you need to talk to them about how to treat the puppy when it comes home. It's not a toy and poking, pulling and prodding can lead to biting. Puppy's first homecoming is an inherently stressful event. Anything you can do to lessen this stress will make for a happier dog.

Choosing a Veterinarian

This is an important decision and should be treated the same way you would choose health care for any member of the family, with all the same considerations. You are looking to begin what will hopefully be a very long relationship.

Recommendations from friends, family, colleagues, etc. are an excellent place to start. You can also ask your breeder, local groomers, pet retail store managers or any of the very knowledgeable DogiZone® team members! Once you have a list narrowed down through these recommendations, you can look at the specifics that matter to you. Proximity is important. You don't want to be driving right across town every time your dog needs a shot. And hours as well. You want to make sure office hours are convenient and fit in with your schedule. Find out if they have emergency hours or are affiliated with an emergency clinic that can take care of issues that might crop up at all hours. Check out potential vets' websites. See what their accreditations are, how many staff they have, what their specialties are, etc. It's a good idea to make sure the clinic is a member of the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA). A website won't tell you everything you want to know, but it could help narrow things down. Also, you can usually find reviews online via Yelp or other sites that allow customers to rate businesses. Now that you've got it down to a reasonable number, go visit the clinics. See if you can get a quick tour to see the type of environment the vet and the staff create, and how they interact with you, the animals, and other people. Take your dog with you. It's most important that they are comfortable with the staff and the environment.

Other things to consider are costs and payment options. Find out what things cost - particularly givens like annual vaccinations - and whether or not they have payment plans, financial aid options should you need them, and if they accept your pet insurance plan, should you have one. Whether or not to get pet insurance is a whole other article unto itself. Luckily, our friends at The Penny Hoarder have put together such an article to help you decide if pet insurance is right for you. Worth the read.





There are no bad puppies!

Just puppies who need training! When to start the training is the question. Training a puppy starts as soon as you bring them home, which is typically about 8 weeks of age. So I guess the question isn't "when to start the training", but rather "who should start the training." You and your new pup are beginning a journey of learning together, and there will always be training that occurs at home. For instance, at this young age, you can teach them basic puppy training cues such as sit, stay, and come. Ultimately, the purpose of dog obedience training is to turn that puppy into a happy, well-adjusted, well-behaved adult dog. We humbly submit that leaving this to professional dog trainers will give the best results. Talk to a DogiZone® team member to learn what training program is best for your new puppy

A whole new world!

Adding a puppy to your family can add immeasurable happiness to your household for years to come. It's a lifetime of getting to know each other, of becoming best friends. So make sure you're ready for it. It will have its ups and downs (seriously, hide your shoes!), but there is little in life as rewarding.

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