

STARTING OUT RIGHT WITH YOUR NEW PUPPY!!

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CHOOSING YOUR PUPPY

Facing a crowd of cute and adorable puppies won't make your choice easier. Whatever breed or crossbreeds you may choose make sure the puppy is healthy. Examine eyes, nose, ears and coat: eyes should be bright and clear, nose moist and cool and the ears free of any debris. Mucus in eyes and nose may indicate a serious infectious disease. The coat should be clean, soft, smooth and free from parasites. Check the puppy's crate, is there any sign of diarrhea? This may indicate an intestinal infection. Beware of the sad-looking, timid puppy in the corner of the box, it may have some kind of defect. A healthy puppy is playful and energetic. Choose a puppy that suits best to your living conditions: how big dose this breed become, and how much grooming does the coat need once the puppy has grown up? The best age to purchase a puppy is at 6 to 8 weeks, when it is still young enough to bond easily with its new owners. Behavior problems later in life often have their roots in early puppy-hood; the puppy was weaned too early, it was taken away from its mother and littermates too quickly or it stayed too long in a kennel. As a result, the puppy lacks the necessary discipline of its mother and the necessary socialization with its own and other species and/or the different environments.

Once you have made the decision it is advisable to pay a visit to your Veterinary for a quick health check and to start the necessary medical treatments like vaccinations, de-worming and heartworm prevention.



PUPPY-PROOF YOUR HOUSE

Before the puppy arrives in its new home ensure it is puppy-proof. Dogs are curious by nature and like to explore by putting anything in their mouth. Therefore, put breakable or dangerous objects out of puppy's reach, such as electrical wiring, rat poison, chemicals, cleaning liquids, shoes, etc. Beware of trash-containers as they contain many potential hazards -from broken glass to empty toxic household bottles-.

Check your fence and gate for possible holes your puppy can squeeze through. Swimming pools and fish pounds should be covered or fenced as the sides may be too steep for the puppy to climb out, and thus can draw.

PUPPY'S NEEDS

And then the puppy-of-your-dreams arrive in its new home. At first, it may like to sniff around to familiarize itself with its new surroundings, followed by an introduction to its new family members. Be careful for too much excitement in the beginning as young puppies exhaust very easily.

On the market there are several good quality dogfood brands for sale, containing all the vitamins, minerals and trace elements necessary for the puppy's growth and development. For a better digestion and thus puppy's development, the total daily amount of food should be spread over several meals per day. Depending on breed and size the following can serve as a guideline:

8 to 16 weeks	4 meals per day
4 to ± 12 months	3 meals per day
12 months and up	2 meals per day

Feeding should occur at regular times and fresh drinking water must be available at all times, especially in hot weather. In case of doubt, please do not hesitate to consult your veterinary, who can give you all the advise and information you need about what is best for your puppy.

For a proper growth your puppy also needs a suitable place where it can sleep undisturbed and away of any draughts. Especially young children should be taught to leave the puppy alone when it sleeps.

An old box with inside a towel or cloth is adequate as bed, although a crate is better as it can be closed at times you are not able to supervise the puppy.

A very young puppy will get enough exercise and mental simulation of its own playfulness. But as it grows it needs more. Through playing with your puppy you will improve its physical and mental health, the bond between you and the puppy will become stronger and you can teach it who's the boss. However, too much exercise can harm the puppy's health, e.g. long-distance running (especially on hard surface) before the bones are completely formed can cause bone-and joint defects. Therefore, play and exercise frequently, but as soon as the puppy gets tired stop the game.



TRAINING

Toilet training should start straight away when the puppy arrives in its new home. A crate can be of help for toilet training your puppy as dogs have an instinctive dislike of fouling their own bedding and feeding places. Keep in mind that puppies have small bowels and bladders and, thus, need to urinate and defecate frequently, that is after every meal, play and sleep.

Problem behavior in grown up dogs can be prevented if the puppy is taught good habits from the first day on when it arrived in its new home. Be consequent in what the dog is allowed to do and what not for the rest of the dog's life. Do not tolerate unwanted behavior because it is such a cute puppy and then punish it once this behavior becomes less convenient, such as jumping up.

Training should be slowly, gentle but firm, repetitively and patiently. See the leaflet **“Guidelines towards a well-behaved dog”** for more information on this subject.