

# ADOPTER TIPS: Puppies



Congratulations! You have a new puppy — now what? The early months of your puppy's development will set the stage for their behavior later in life, so we've put together some tips to set you and your new canine companion up for success.

## Create a Proper Setup

Set up a safe "no fail" zone for your puppy where they can relax and spend time when you're unable to supervise closely. This space should include:

- **A barrier**, such as an X-pen or baby gate. If your puppy climbs or jumps barriers, a closed room may be safest.
- **A soft bed.**
- **A variety of enrichment activities and toys** that are rotated every couple of days. Socialization tip: Introduce different styles of toys, textures, sounds and smells!
- **A puppy pad (for very young puppies) and or a crate** to begin house training. Pro tip: See our resource library and YouTube channels for more housetraining help!
- **Food and water bowls.**



## Feed a Healthy Diet

We'll send you home with a free bag of Purina food (if available)! This is what your puppy has been eating in our care. As your puppy grows, feeding will depend on the age, size and breed of the dog. Puppies may need to eat up to three times a day, often tapering down to two servings once they reach 9-10 weeks. Read the label on their food to determine serving sizes. Remember to check their weight regularly, as puppies grow quickly! They may go through phases when they're either less hungry or completely ravenous. This often correlates with growth spurts. Adjust servings as appropriate and check with your veterinarian if you have questions.

## Start a Vaccination Schedule

Puppies should receive their first vaccination, DHPP (for Distemper, Adenovirus, Parvovirus, Parainfluenza), at 6-8 weeks of age. The vaccine should be given again every 3-4 weeks until 16-20 weeks of age. Booster vaccines are typically required every 1-3 years. A puppy's first rabies vaccination is typically given at 3 months of age and is valid for 1 year. All subsequent, booster rabies vaccinations are valid for 3 years. Your puppy can be vaccinated at any veterinary office or vaccine clinic! San Diego Humane Society offers low-cost vaccines and microchipping clinics at multiple campus locations (visit [sdhumane.org/vaccinations](http://sdhumane.org/vaccinations)). Until your puppy is fully vaccinated, keep them away from animal waste, including surfaces where other animals may have eliminated.



## Socialization

Exposing your pet to new sights, sounds and experiences during their first 3 months of life is essential to their development. And you don't need to wait until your pet is fully vaccinated to begin! Start by interacting with similarly vaccinated puppies under 16 weeks or fully vaccinated, healthy and known adult dogs. Good socialization decreases the potential for behavior problems (such as fear and aggression) in the future.



## Training

Rewarding desired behaviors helps our pets learn expectations so they can learn to behave and interact successfully with the world around them. We offer a wide range of training resources, including a free Behavior Helpline, in-person Puppy Playgroups and free weekly Well-Socialized Pet Chat via Zoom.

In addition, San Diego Humane Society offers online and in-person training classes to get puppies started on the right paw! Puppy Preschool is for puppies between 8-15 weeks and Awesome Adolescence for adolescents between 16 weeks and 1 year of age. Learn more at [sdhumane.org/trainingclasses](https://sdhumane.org/trainingclasses).

## 10 Tips for Puppy Success

1. **Chewing and digging are natural dog behaviors!** Give your puppy appropriate items to chew and ways to dig without destruction.
2. **Reward positive behaviors** that you want to see continue, including simple ones like sitting quietly.
3. **Many attention seeking behaviors** (jumping, mouthing, grabbing items and barking) occur because the smaller, polite and quieter behaviors didn't get your attention. Ignore unwanted behavior and reward the very next thing your puppy does that is more appropriate!
4. **Your pet's behavior is a communication tool.** A puppy might run towards a hand to invite petting or pull away from one reaching over their head (which can be scary!). Thinking about behavior in this way helps us communicate more effectively with our pets.
5. **Teach your pet to enjoy body handling.** It helps them be comfortable with family and friends, as well as vets and groomers. Combine handling with the introduction of grooming and veterinary tools like nail clippers, oral syringes and gloves.
6. **Set up playdates or attend playgroups** with puppies of similar ages and vaccination statuses or with healthy adult dogs known to be social. The more individuals our puppies meet, the more they understand and respond to social cues ... just like humans!
7. **Introduce as many new experiences as possible** (safely and always at your puppy's pace), ideally before 16 weeks of age. Older puppies can also become well-socialized, but you might need to go slower and more mindfully.
8. **Rotate toys on a random and regular basis** to keep your puppy from becoming frustrated or bored. This also gives them a chance to play with different types, textures and styles of toy!
9. **Teach your pet to focus on you.** Build strong focusing behavior at home first, then introduce it on walks and in more distracting environments. Ask your pet for focus before asking for more challenging behavior requests like "come," "sit," or "leave it."
10. **Start training early.** You'll be less likely to struggle with puppy behaviors that grew to be less controllable or pleasant during adolescence. In fact, most dogs relinquished to shelters are between 6-18 months old!

## We're Here to Help!

San Diego Humane Society is your go-to resource for the life of your pet. Our website offers plenty of behavior and training resources for pet owners, and we invite you to follow us on social media to stay up to date on tips, information and community resources. Thank you for adopting your new family member!

For all return appointments, post-adoption medical issues or behavior questions, please call **619-299-7012**.

Browse available services and resources at [sdhumane.org](https://sdhumane.org).