

Getting a New Puppy? Here Are the Most Common Mistakes to Avoid

Bringing home a new puppy is a joy - especially for the new furry addition. But, it's easy to forget some of the essentials that can help set him up for success in his new life with you. Learn what to do before puppy comes home, and my view on a controversial issue.

Analysis by [Dr. Karen Shaw Becker](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Bringing a new puppy home is an exciting but often stressful time for everyone in the family
- Preparing ahead of time for the arrival of a new puppy can help set him up for success in his new life with you
- Crate training has many benefits for both puppy and owner, not the least of which is helping with house training
- Socialization and positive training are crucial to raising a confident, balanced dog, and should begin as soon as possible after your puppy arrives

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Bringing home a new puppy is a very exciting, fun time for family members (including the new furry addition). It's also typically a somewhat stressful period as everyone makes the adjustments necessary to integrate the new puppy into the household.

In order for things to go as smoothly as possible, I believe preparation is priceless. Planning ahead for your new arrival can make a huge difference in managing everyone's stress during puppy's first few weeks home.

Before Puppy Comes Home

You'll have your hands full from the moment your new pet arrives, so get all necessary shopping out of the way beforehand. This will leave you with plenty of time for bonding with your new pet, house training, socialization, and keeping him out of mischief! A new puppy shopping list will include:

- An appropriately-sized crate
- A collar, harness, and leash
- Bedding
- Dog brush
- Food and water bowls
- Nail clippers
- Nontoxic chew toys

- All-natural dog shampoo

You'll also need a supply of the food your puppy is currently eating, as well as the diet you plan to transition him to once he's settled in. It's very important to keep him on his regular food while he adjusts to his new home, family, and daily routine.

You don't want to add to his stress level by switching his diet immediately, which will almost certainly result in tummy troubles and diarrhea.

It's also important to puppy-proof your home before your pet arrives. For example, move cords and houseplants out of reach. If you have children, you can involve them by having them get down on the floor to take a puppy-eye view of all the temptations your new little guy might want to investigate. Pick up anything that has dropped on the floor like rubber bands or paper clips.

Pet-proofing your home before your new puppy arrives is the best way to prevent choking, vomiting, diarrhea, or another preventable crisis during those important first few weeks.

Additional Pre-Puppy Arrival Tasks

Before the big homecoming, it's also a good idea to decide where your new puppy will eat her meals, the best location for her water bowl(s), and sleeping arrangements — will she sleep in your bedroom, and if so, in your bed or in her crate?

I'm a big advocate of crate training dogs. You may have already watched my videos on crate training and know I consider it a very important part of keeping your new puppy safe when you're not at home or can't keep a constant eye on her.

If a crate seems like a jail cell to you, consider this: your puppy is, by nature, a den dweller. When properly introduced to her crate (which I discuss at length in the videos linked above), she will feel safe and secure in her own little "den" for the rest of her life. Think of it as a crib with a lid! There are huge benefits to having a crate-trained dog, for both you and your canine companion.

I also strongly recommend you have the crate ready for use when your puppy comes home. If she's allowed to sleep in your bed with you for several days and then you move her to a crate, she won't view it as a positive change. That's because she has already learned her nighttime sleeping spot is your bed.

Moving her to the crate may cause an exaggerated response (whining or crying, for example) over and above what you could have expected, had you crated her on her first night with you. So, I recommend purchasing the crate before the puppy arrives, and putting it to use her first day home.

Puppy's First Day Home

It's a good idea if you're picking up your puppy, to bring along his new crate for the ride home, along with his collar or harness and leash. Put something soft for him to lie on in the crate, along with a few all-natural treats. If you're picking him up from a breeder, see if you can take something with you that smells like his mom or littermates, and put that item in the crate as well.

When you arrive home, before you bring him inside, take puppy to a potty spot and encourage him to relieve himself. Have treats ready to reward him when he does.

Once inside, make sure he's supervised virtually every minute he's not in his crate. Giving a new puppy unrestricted access to your house is asking for trouble, and the focus should be on helping him succeed in everything he does in his new life with you.

Spend time with your puppy talking softly to him, petting and cuddling him, and getting him comfortable with your presence, the sound of your voice, and your touch. Take the opportunity to handle all his potentially sensitive zones, such as his paws, ears, inside his mouth, and his tail.

This will help him get used to being touched in those areas, and will make life much easier when it's time to brush his teeth, trim his nails, or inspect his ears.

Keep in mind that puppies are still developing control of their need to urinate and defecate, so make sure you stick to a schedule for potty walks. It's a given that puppy will need to pee and/or poop first thing in the morning, right before bedtime, after each meal, and typically after play sessions.

For more detailed information on this very important topic, take a look at my two-part video series on how to housetrain a dog of any age.

Day Two and Beyond

The first week or two of your puppy's new life with you should include an initial veterinary checkup. You'll want to insure the vet you select has a practice philosophy that meets your needs and goals as a pet owner. There are vets who practice strictly traditional, Western veterinary medicine. There are holistic veterinarians. And, there are practitioners who combine allopathic veterinary medicine and alternative therapies to treat their patients.

It's also important to begin to socialize your puppy as soon as she joins your family. A puppy cannot be socialized by staying inside the house or backyard, by the occasional ride in the car, walk down the street, or visit to the dog park. The presence of other dogs in the family doesn't mean your puppy is being socialized.

Proper socialization requires exposing your puppy to as many new people, animals, environments, and other stimuli as possible without overwhelming her. Over-stimulation can result in excessive fear, withdrawal, or avoidance behavior, so knowing how much is enough is important.

You should also begin obedience training your pup using positive behavior reinforcement techniques. You can take the do-it-yourself approach, or you can sign up for a local puppy class, which provides the additional benefit of socialization.

Regular, ongoing socialization and training will insure your adorable little puppy matures into a confident, balanced adult dog.

Sources and References

DogChannel.com