

# Everything You Wanted To Know About Puppies But Just Forgot To Ask

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***OK, maybe not everything, but here are 30 of our best random tips for new puppy owners. They're all the things learned from experience. And, experience comes from making mistakes! Feel free to add other tips you've collected over the years. If you are a trainer, attach a business card and use this laundry list as a handout at your next puppy socialization or kindergarten class. If you are a breeder, add one to your puppy packet. And, of course, don't forget to ask your clients to share their best suggestions, too.***

***1. Make a puppy tote bag and take it with you whenever the pup goes along:***

- ***Soft wet rag(s) in a ziplock baggie***
- ***Soft dry rag(s) in a ziplock baggie***
- ***Empty ziplock baggie to contain a "mess"***
- ***Leash/collar or harness***
- ***Treats/toy/tug/water***
- ***Copy of shot record***

***2. Support system: Start a list of the names and numbers of experienced dog people you can call for advice, referrals or just to brag. Start this list using your breeder, veterinarian, trainer, feed store and then collect cards from "dog people" you meet during outings with your pup.***

***3. Is this the vet for me? For each visit, prepare one or two questions for your veterinarian. After two or three appointments, ask for a copy of your dog's records. Then, read them. If they seem complex, or if your pup has been ill, ask a knowledgeable dog-person to review them with you. If you've had the pup in for check ups and shots and the written history only lists inoculations, search for another vet. Good records should include the pup's weight, appearance, and vital signs, etc. plus any questions or concerns you've raised. A good medical history is worth its weight in gold as a future diagnostic tool.***

***4. Chew treats: Puppies are chewing machines. That's how they explore their world. Much like human infants, everything goes in their mouths. Especially at teething time, provide your pup with a variety of textures for chewing pleasure. Some of my favorites are:***

- ***Ice cubes - made with water or low sodium broth***
- ***Large carrots - especially nice if dipped in water and placed in the freezer***
- ***Kong toy with natural peanut butter rubbed inside - leave a little extra for***

- *the pup's exploring tongue*

**5. Pup meets cat:** *Separate the new pup from your house cat until the pup is tired. Make the initial, supervised introduction or get-acquainted visit when the pup is energy depleted. If your cat is extremely testy, consult with your veterinarian about mild sedation for the feline.*

**6. Be mentally present:** *When you can't be with the pup mentally and physically, the pup should be crated. Years ago, my 10-week old poodle managed to chew an Indian rug that was sitting under my chair - while I rubbed her back with my foot! I was physically present, but my mind was concentrating on the computer screen and not the pup's mouth. Her slurps were coming from a frozen carrot - right? Wrong!*

**7. Internet advice:** *The Internet is a great place to meet other pet owners, do research on your breed of choice, and pick up health and training tips. However, do not believe everything you read on the Internet, in books or in dog magazines. Use common sense and when in doubt, consult your veterinarian or members of your support group.*

**8. Puppy poop:** *As often as possible, especially if your pup is not totally housebroken, clean up puppy poop while it is fresh. This gives you the opportunity to check for parasites or possible foreign materials. If you notice these, blood, mucous or extremely foul odor, it's time for a trip to the veterinarian for the pup and the stool sample.*

**9. Not in front of the puppy:** *Be careful what you do around your pup. Spading weeds from your flowers may be a chore for you. However, the dog may find it's a great way to learn about digging holes.*

**10. Poke privileges:** *All family members must be able to handle any part of the pup - including feet, teeth, under the tail and genitals. From the first day your pup becomes part of your household, make certain to practice gentle handling of all body parts.*

**11. What's normal?** *To determine normal ranges for your pup's temperature and pulse, practice taking these readings. Ask your veterinarian or technician to show you the proper method of taking a rectal temperature and where to find pulse points. That way, if your pup isn't acting quite right, you have a baseline from which to judge illness.*

**12. Different strokes for different dogs:** *It is possible, and often desirable, to have different rules for different dogs living in the same household. My toy poodle is allowed on furniture. My German Shepherd Dogs are not. This isn't unfair. The rules are consistently trained and always enforced.*

**13. Kodak moments: Take a photo the day your bring the puppy home and weekly, thereafter, for the first year. What a great way to chart growth and create a scrapbook. An album of these pictures makes a wonderful gift from family or friends.**

**14. Dear diary: If the pup exhibits periodic behaviors or symptoms, begin a diary. List the day, time, symptom, what happened a few days before, etc. From skipping meals to occasional scratching, your diary can provide important information and clues to your veterinarian, as well as helping you decide when to seek professional help. This is also good for training issues.**

**15. One set of rules, please: Make certain all household members agree on the rules for the new puppy. From the minute your pup joins the family, everyone should be using the same command, enforcing the same boundaries and rewarding positive behavior.**

**16. What's the plan? What do you plan to do, long term, with your new dog? Are you going to do tracking? Agility? Schutzhund? Many of these activities require basic work, now, while the pup is young. Make a game plan and a training schedule. Start a notebook to chart your progress.**

**17. Just dropping by the vet: Take your pup to the vet's office just to say "hi." That way, the pup will have less animosity when its time for shots or a check up. Familiarity with the smells, sounds, etc. makes the visiting the vet more routine and less traumatic.**

**18. Look: isn't that sweet? Some things you may find cute in a pup can be problems in a grown dog. A 10-week old Fido playing tug with your socks is cute. But when Fido is two years old and eating your shoes...it's not cute; it is destructive. Stop a problem before it becomes a bad habit.**

**19. You ought to be in pictures: Take lots of videos of your pup when he/she is young. You'll really appreciate this later. And, as an added bonus, reviewing the video will allow you to objectively assess not only the pup, but also your behavior while training, playing, etc.**

**20. Take it easy: Pups are little balls of energy. Yet, they need lots of rest. Don't set your expectations too high. Let your pup have plenty of "down time." If you have children, make sure they understand the pup must have "time and space" to rest and be left alone.**

**21. Back off, kid: Kids and pups can be the greatest pals in the world, or the dog can learn to hate children. Supervise your children when they play with the pup. Make certain they never tease or torment. When the puppy has had enough play, give it "space" and a quiet place to nap.**

**22. Rubber ducky: Make bath time lots of fun. Get the puppy used getting wet and having a bath early on. Speak to the dog in a happy tone, rather than a soothing one. This is fun, no reason to be afraid. Heck, you may end up with a dog that tries to jump in the shower or tub with you!**

**23. No begging: Don't allow the puppy to get away with begging. If you don't reward the pup for this behavior now, you will not have to deal with it when company is present. Consistency, consistency, consistency.**

**24. Go for a walk? Soon these words will be magic. Take your pup for short walks. Exploring the world together is a terrific way to expose your pup to new experiences. But remember: they tucker-out easily, so don't overdo.**

**25. Stress is contagious: Puppies are sensitive to your emotions. If you are upset or having a bad day, do not introduce new commands or objects. For example, if you've had an argument with your boss and then start introducing the pup to loud noises, the pup may easily interpret the stress emanating from you to mean that loud=scary. Wait until you are in "neutral" and can be patient and encouraging.**

**26. Don't push it: Puppies learn better when you don't try to teach too much at one time. Make the sessions short and always end on a good note. Make sure the training is fun for the puppy and he/she will learn faster and will be more eager to please. If the pup is having difficulty with one exercise, end on a good note and try again another day.**

**27. Keep them occupied: A bored dog can be a destructive dog. Give your pup something to keep it occupied. Toys are important to stimulate a puppy's brain activity. Choose items that won't confuse the pup. Chew toys that look like shoes are not a good idea.**

**28. The baby's crying: When you bring your new puppy home, try not to over-pamper it, especially the first night. Don't run in and offer comfort or tell the pup to be quiet each time it whimpers or whines. If you do, your pup will learn that crying brings attention. Bad message.**

**29. Gotta go: Don't forget that pups have to go potty more often than adult dogs. Make frequent trips outside. Also, when going outdoors, go to one area of your yard and wait for the pup to do his/her "business" before playing in other spots. This will aid in housebreaking and make clean up easier.**

**30. Love lasts: Your pup will be a full-grown dog before you know it. A dog is a long-term commitment. Some breeds live 15 years or longer. That adorable puppy still needs love and care when it is full-grown. If you care for your pets, they will return the love many times over.**

**And, in closing, a few thoughts:**

***Bringing your pup home is a wonderful, exciting time. It's the beginning of a life-long friendship. Plan to bring your pup home at a time when the household is calm and not a lot of activities are scheduled. Holidays and stress-filled periods are a "no-no."***

***Never be afraid to ask for help. Should your pup become aggressive towards people or other animals, or exhibit any traits that make you feel uncomfortable, immediately seek help from a professional. This behavior will neither improve nor will it go away without expert evaluation and training. Be responsible. Make certain your pup knows the rules for being in public and is a welcomed member of your community.***

***Good luck and good training!***

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