

BRINGING PUPPY HOME

Bringing home your new little bundle of joy can be a stressful time for you and your new 4-legged best friend. He'll be in a strange environment away from his littermates and mother for the first time. There'll be new people and new expectations. That's why it's important to take some time to prepare for your puppy. You'll need to make your house and yard safe and set rules for yourself and your family about how to care for your pup. You'll also need to pick up any last-minute items on your puppy supply list. The more structured you can make this transition, the easier it will be for your puppy to adapt.

First night home with puppy

The first night home with your new puppy can be a trying experience for both of you. It's the first time your puppy has spent the night away from his mother and littermates. Because dogs are pack animals, your puppy knows instinctively that being separated from the pack is dangerous. Whining and crying at night is your puppy's way of calling for his pack to find him. Of course it does nothing to comfort you.

What to do before bedtime

Take up any food or water after six or seven o'clock to make sure your puppy is running on empty when it's time to sleep. Otherwise, you'll be making trips to the bathroom all night, or worse, your puppy will eliminate in the house. Shortly before you go to bed, spend some time playing with your puppy. You want him to be tired enough to sleep soundly. Definitely don't let him nap within an hour or two of bedtime or else your puppy will be ready to play when you're ready to sleep. Just before bed, take your puppy outside to his soiling area and wait for him to go. When he does, praise him and bring him back inside. This reinforces good behavior and begins the house training process.

Tip for crying at night

If and when your puppy starts crying at night, you need to decide if he has to go to the bathroom or if he's looking for attention. If he's been quiet for a few hours and suddenly starts to cry or whine, he may need to go out. Puppies have small bladders, so you'll likely have to take him out at least once during the night. A good rule of thumb is to add one to your puppy's age in months and that's generally how long he can go without a trip outside. So a two-month-old puppy can wait three hours. That means your puppy will probably need to go out at least twice during the night. If your puppy is crying and you're sure it's not for need of relieving himself, reach down and soothe him a little. Don't be too doting or coddle your puppy. This will only reinforce the behavior and he'll cry even more. If he continues to whine, a gruff "Quiet" might work. If all else fails, ignore him. Tough love may be difficult, but eventually your puppy will learn that crying at night gets him nowhere. The more persistent you are in your approach, the quicker the situation will be resolved. If you're stern one minute and sympathetic the next, your puppy will only be confused and his behavior will continue.

In the morning

Get up right away and take your puppy outside to his soiling area. Carry him. Don't let him walk there or he may be tempted to go before he gets outside. Let him empty everything out, and praise him when he's finished.

As with any new baby, you may not get much sleep the first few nights with puppy. If you're patient and understanding, your puppy will learn what you expect of him when it's time to sleep. You both should wake up rested and ready for the day after a few nights together.