

Introducing your puppy to your home

Physical safety

- There are lots of things we need to be aware of in the environment that can be a risk to puppies. Please see the list of poisonous household items, plants and foods (such as batteries, medication, cleaning products etc):
[What's Poisonous To Your Dog | Plants & Household | Dogs Trust](#)
[Dog Diet & Nutrition | The Best Dog Diet | Dogs Trust](#)
Animal poisons helpline [Homepage » Veterinary Poisons Information Service \(vpisglobal.com\)](#)
- Ensure the bin has a secure lid or is behind a closed door – mould and other food stuffs can be very toxic to dogs.
- Secure cupboards with child locks or put anything dangerous up high and out of reach.
- Avoid strong smelling air fresheners and reed diffusers.
- Keep puppies away from cables, these are a favourite to chew and are a risk of electrocution.
- Remove your puppy's collar when they are in their pen, crate, when left alone especially where there are other dogs in the household that play together to avoid risk of strangulation.
- Fence off unsafe areas of the garden like gravel and chippings where your puppy will be tempted to pick up these.
- Baby gate off the stairs and other areas that have not been fully 'puppy proofed'.
- Provide washable rugs on hard flooring, slipping on flooring is not good for joint development.
- Always supervise children and dogs (at all times), do not allow children to pick up puppies, even if puppies are ok with this, their skeletal systems are very prone to damage. Have children sit on the floor to interact with puppies. Do not expect children to show self-restraint when it comes to handling of the puppy or expect them to be responsible for swapping stolen items with pup, removing them off furniture etc, this is the adult's job.
- Use fire guards where there is a risk of burning, dogs will lie against hot things without realising these will burn them.
- Use a pen, baby gate etc to secure the puppy when you are cooking.

Creating an emotional sense of safety

- Puppies need to feel safe emotionally to flourish, use positive reinforcement and guidance when helping pups understand the human world, avoid tactics that are aimed at scaring puppies into stopping doing something.
- Where was the puppy raised at the breeder's house? In the kitchen? It is helpful to be aware of what your puppy may already be the most used to when settling them into their new home. If your puppy was raised outdoors this obviously doesn't mean you should house your puppy outdoors but be aware that indoor noises and other sensory experiences will be new to them.
- Provide your puppy with their own safe space where good things happen and they are not disturbed.
- Let sleeping dogs lie.
- Educate all family members on dog body language [Understanding Dog Body Language and Keeping Safe | Blue Cross](#)
- Acclimatise pups to being alone, this means allowing social sleeping at least until they are settled in. Puppies are not supposed to be alone, the alarm circulatory in the brain is triggered when they are by themselves.
- Dogs are also social eaters, sit down nearby your puppy during their mealtimes.

Stolen items

- Puppies explore and learn through their mouth; research suggests they have separate sensory needs to explore textures through their mouth in comparison to exploring textures through their paws etc.
- Puppies do not know what is dangerous or an unsuitable item to chew and try to ingest, this needs to be taught using puppy friendly training and guidance.
- Don't be a thief and steal items from your puppy, these must be swapped.
- Reward chemicals in the puppy's brain are released when an item they want is identified, when this is taken from them this causes a drop in dopamine. This drop feels very negative to them and can result in a reflexive response, this is often not a conscious reaction, but an autonomic threat detected behaviour. This can lead to puppies thinking 'how am I going to get that item quicker or keep hold of it next time?'
- Have different textured chews, treats etc easily accessible to swap items with your puppy, this means having the bag open and ready to go. Tubs with treats in you can shake can be effective in getting your puppy's attention and then through repetition (if the reward is interesting enough) the puppy will spit out what they've got in order to eat the food reward you are offering. If the puppy comes with the item still in their mouth, start counting out food rewards onto the floor near them, if they let go of the item, continue counting out rewards away from the item, don't try and take it at this point. Engage your puppy in something else in another room and remove the item if it's not something safe etc. If it's an item that isn't going to do any harm etc, leave it down so pup learns that dropped items don't always disappear. For every item that your puppy drops and is removed, you need to practice 3-4 other occasions where the item remains accessible in their environment e.g. with safe toys etc.
- Sometimes swapping the item for a food reward isn't sufficient because it's about texture or odour that's the motivation for the puppy rather than food, so have toys on the side of varying textures to offer a swap with when required.
- Small children's toys and those that are soft wood or hard plastic are often a target for puppies, if children are playing with these on the floor, have pup the other side of a gate and pick these items up before allowing pup back in the room.
- It is ultimately the adult's fault if puppy gets hold of something they shouldn't. prepare children before the puppy comes home that things may get damaged if they are out and available to the pup.
- Some breeds like labs and spaniels are literally bred to enjoy carrying things in their mouth.

Other family members

- Provide cats with elevated escape routes, as soon as they enter the house. Cats over 5 years old may have the start of arthritis so provide things for cats to jump onto to get over baby gates etc. Provide elevated surfaces outdoors in the garden too. Provide visual escape by giving cats boxes and other covered hiding places.
- Do not allow things to progress where older dogs need to 'tell puppies off' supervise interactions, remove pup when things become too much for the older dog, separate and do not tell your older dog off for growling etc.

Early training

- Decide on house rules before pup arrives as practice makes perfect/permanent and what dogs learn first they learn best to set yourselves up for success here.