

Your Puppy's Developmental Stages

Developmental Stage	Age	What's Going On	What You Should Be Doing
Neonatal Period	Birth to 12 days	<p>Puppy responds only to warmth, touch, and smell</p> <p>Cannot regulate body functions, such as temperature and elimination</p> <p>Stays close to mother and littermates</p>	<p>Early development and reflexive behavior</p> <p>Begin early neurological stimulation (Battaglia)</p>
Transition Period	13 to 20 days	<p>Ears and eyes are open but hearing and sight are limited</p> <p>Tail wagging begins and puppy begins to control body functions</p> <p>Begin wobbly walking</p>	<p>Introduce novel stimuli to the whelping box (plastic objects, towels, cardboard boxes, etc.)</p> <p>Introduce to dog friendly cats</p> <p>Pick up the puppies every day, spend time with them individually, cuddle with them, talk to them, touch all over</p>
Awareness Period	21 to 28 days	<p>Sight and hearing function well</p> <p>Learning begins</p> <p>Needs a stable environment; do not overwhelm puppies with stimulation</p> <p>Rapid sensory development</p>	<p>Primary socialization begins; continue daily individual contact, but may need to work with puppies two at a time to reduce separation stress</p> <p>Keep puppies with mother and litter</p> <p>Introduce new surfaces to walk/lay on: carpet, wood, tile, concrete</p> <p>Begin mild auditory stimulus, such as a radio playing quietly</p>
<p>Canine Socialization Period</p> <p>Keep puppies with mother and littermates during this period!</p>	21 to 49 days	<p>Learning canine behaviors by interacting with mother and littermates</p> <p>Awareness of differences between canines and humans</p> <p>Critical period for development of a stable emotional temperament</p>	<p>Plenty of playtime with littermates</p> <p>Make clear distinction between sleeping area and elimination area or play area</p> <p>Continue one-on-one human attention and sensory stimulation</p> <p>Isolate puppies for short periods to prepare them for separation</p>

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Human Socialization Period See "Socialization Do's and Don'ts" and "What is Normal Puppy Behavior" below	7 to 12 weeks	Brain waves are the same as a mature dog, but without the baggage Complete weaning from mother Most rapid learning occurs, making the greatest impact on future social behavior with any experience at this point Learning by association Building confidence This is the prime socialization period. While puppies can learn new things and adapt to new experiences after 12 weeks, it is not as easy	Commit yourself to a rigorous socialization effort through a huge variety of people, animals, places, sounds, surfaces, activities Always ensure these experiences are safe and rewarding Start training those important life skills and do not indulge behavior you don't want to continue into adulthood (jumping on people, mouthing, etc.) Keep in mind your puppy's physical limitations and attention span Do NOT wait until your puppy is fully vaccinated
Fear Imprint Period See "Socialization Do's and Don'ts" below	8 to 11 weeks	Any traumatic/fear-inducing experiences during this time are quickly generalized and may affect the puppy his entire life Development of avoidance responses to "The Scary Thing" While we believe dogs should <i>never</i> spend time in cargo holds of planes or trucks, this is especially true at this time	Keep training fun – use only positive reinforcement-based methods Put off any elective surgery (spay/neuter, for example) until after this period Keep socializing your puppy! Just be sure those experiences are safe and rewarding
Seniority Classification	13 to 16 weeks	Puppies begin to clarify and resolve their position in their social group Testing rules and boundaries Puppy begins cutting teeth; might be painful/uncomfortable	Be consistent in enforcement of those rules and boundaries or you will regret it Do not indulge behavior you don't want to be permanent
Flight Instinct Period	4 to 8 months	Can last from a few days to several days and occur anytime in this period – the puppy is testing his independence Won't come when called Still cutting teeth (pain/discomfort) Physiological changes (like a human's puberty)	An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure: keep your puppy on leash or in an enclosure when outside – even if your puppy previously had a great recall Too late to start on socialization; now a matter of conditioning and counter conditioning Ensure your puppy has appropriate, safe chews to alleviate teething pain

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Second Fear Period	6 to 14 months May be longer in large breeds as it is tied to sexual maturity	<p>Many dogs will show an increase in level of reactivity during this time</p> <p>May become protective and territorial</p> <p>Expect “teenage flakiness”</p> <p>May suddenly be apprehensive or shy or timid about new situations or people</p> <p>Most of the dog’s body structure or height is complete – may fill out a bit more</p> <p>Males begin to lift leg for urination</p> <p>Females have first heat cycle between 6 and 12 months</p> <p>Puppy coat is replaced by adult coat</p>	<p>Be patient: it’s easy to be frustrated or impatient with this sudden change in behavior</p> <p>Continue to make exposure to novel things/situations/people positive and avoid overwhelming your dog (i.e., “flooding”)</p> <p>Don’t force your dog to “face his fears” – respect his comfort zone</p> <p>Reward Acts of Bravery and confidence</p> <p>In the event of an aggressive behavior display, do not correct or punish; give your dog space to regain composure and feel safe</p> <p>Keep your dog crated when alone until around a year of age</p>
Maturity	1 to 4 years	<p>Average dogs develop to full maturity between 12 and 18 months (large breed dogs may take longer)</p> <p>Often marked by increased aggressive displays and tests of leadership</p> <p>Dogs may become selective about their social circles</p>	<p>Continue regular, consistent rewards-based training</p> <p>Continue to give your dog ample exposure to social environments, working within his comfort zone</p> <p>Begin giving your dog time alone out of the crate (if desired), beginning with short absences (5 to 15 minutes maximum)</p>