

The 7-Day Puppy Training Checklist

A simple, force-free plan for your puppy's first week at home. Print it, stick it on the fridge, tick it off as you go.

How to use this checklist

Each day has a small number of jobs. Keep sessions short (2-5 minutes), end on a win, and repeat a few times a day. Puppies learn in bursts, not marathons. Everything here is reward-based - no corrections, no fear, no punishment. If your puppy shows stress (lip-licking, yawning, hiding), you've gone too fast; drop back a step and make the ask easier.

Before day 1 - set yourself up to win

Get a crate (correct size: puppy can stand, turn, and lie down), a treat pouch, a clicker or a consistent marker word, long-line/lead, and a supply of high-value treats (freeze-dried chicken or cheese). Close off the rooms you don't want them in, and set up the toilet spot with a consistent cue.

Day 1 - Arrival & a calm baseline

- ☐ Keep day 1 low-key: one quiet room, no visitors, no dog park. Let them decompress.
- ☐ Establish the toilet routine: take them out every 1-2 hours and right after waking/eating, same cue each time ("let's go").
- ☐ Introduce the crate as a good place: toss treats in, close the door for seconds, open. No meals in it yet.
- ☐ Start the name game: say their name in a happy voice, treat when they look at you. 10 quick reps.

Day 1 tip

Tip: the first 48 hours are about safety and routine, not training. Rest is a legitimate job.

Day 2 - Settle & first cues

- ☐ Begin 'sit' with a lure: treat at nose, move up and back, mark the sit, treat. 10 reps, 3 short sessions.
- ☐ Start the 'come' at zero distance: crouch, say 'come', treat when they approach. Never call them to do something boring.
- ☐ Crate: feed one meal in it with the door open, then closed for a few minutes while you stay nearby.
- ☐ Begin short alone-time: close the crate door for 30 seconds, leave the room, return calmly. Build slowly.

Day 2 tip

Tip: 'come' should always be a great experience. Stop the fun after they arrive - they'll learn coming means fun stops.

Day 3 - Bite inhibition & handling

- ☐ Teach mouth control: the instant teeth touch skin, say 'oops', pause play 2s, hand a legal chew. Repeat all day.
- ☐ Handling: gently touch paws, ears, mouth, tail; treat every time. Builds tolerance for vet/groomer visits.
- ☐ Add 'down' with a lure: treat from nose straight to the floor between paws, mark, treat.
- ☐ Continue crate alone-time, extending to a few minutes.

Day 3 tip

Tip: puppy nipping is teething + overstimulation. Cold chews in the fridge soothe gums and reduce the biting.

Day 4 - House rules & 'place'

- ☐ Set a 'place' (a mat or bed): lure them onto it, mark, treat. This becomes their calm spot and a default behaviour.
- ☐ Teach 'off' for furniture: when they jump up, turn away and withhold attention; reward four-paws-down.
- ☐ Keep the toilet cue consistent and reward heavily outdoors (treat + praise, not just 'good boy').
- ☐ Short training bursts 4-5x today; end every one on a success.

Tip: management beats correction. Close the room or use a gate while the new rule is being learned.

Day 4 tip

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Day 5 - Recall & loose-lead foundations

- ☐ Recall in the garden: use the long line for safety. Call, treat generously, let the walk continue after they come.
- ☐ Loose-leash intro: walk, stop when the lead tightens, treat when it goes slack. You become a tree.
- ☐ Add 'leave it': hold a low-value treat, close hand; treat from the OTHER hand when they give up on it.
- ☐ Crate alone-time: work toward 15-20 minutes if they're settled.

Day 5 tip

Tip: make the slack lead pay more than the tight lead. The dog who walks nicely gets the treats and the fun.

Day 6 - Proofing & distractions

- ☐ Proof 'sit' and 'down' with a tiny bit of distance and a mild distraction (a toy on the floor).
- ☐ Recall with a distraction: another person calls, or a treat on the ground; keep it winnable.
- ☐ Start the 'quiet' cue for barking: when they stop, even for a second, mark and treat.
- ☐ Keep sessions under 5 minutes but do more of them - mental work tires them better than a long slog.

Day 6 tip

Tip: if they fail at a new difficulty, you made it too hard. Go back to the last level they could do and build from there.

Day 7 - Consolidate & plan ahead

- ☐ Review the week: which cues are solid? Re-drill the weakest one at an easy level to end on a high.
- ☐ Add a 'settle' cue for the mat: a word they learn means 'go to your place and be calm' - great for visitors and noise.
- ☐ Plan socialisation: safe, vaccinated dog friends and new people/places/sounds in low-stress doses (not the dog park yet).
- ☐ Book the vet for first vaccinations if not done, and set up a consistent daily routine (meals, walks, training, rest).

Day 7 tip

Tip: the first 12-16 weeks are the socialisation window. New things should be positive and optional, not forced.

Next steps

You've built the foundations. From here, keep sessions short, keep rewards high, and add one small challenge at a time. For the full step-by-step progressions on every skill in this checklist, visit dogtraining.living - there's a complete guide for each one. And if you'd like a video-led programme that walks you through the same force-free methods, we review The Online Dog Trainer there too.

The one rule that makes everything work

Your puppy can only be as good as their environment. If they're failing, you haven't trained badly - the ask was too big. Make it easier, let them win, and build from there. That's all force-free training is.