FURLYWISE GUIDE

The New Puppy Handbook

Your first month, week by week

FREE EBOOK



FURLYWISE GUIDE

The New Puppy Handbook

Your first month, week by week

Inside this guide

Welcome home

Before your puppy comes home

Day one

Week 1: Settling in and potty training

Week 2: Feeding and the first vet visit

Week 3: Socialisation and chewing

Week 4: Routines, walking and grooming

When to call your vet

Printable checklists

Sources

© 2026 Furlywise · furlywise.online. Free to download, read, print and share for personal, non-commercial use. Please share the link rather than re-uploading the file. General information only, not a substitute for advice from your vet.

Welcome home

Bringing home a puppy is exciting, and a little overwhelming. This handbook breaks the first month into small, practical steps, so you always know what to focus on next.

Each chapter covers one stage: getting ready, day one, and then your first four weeks together. Along the way you'll find checklists you can tick off, simple routines, and clear signs that mean it's time to call your vet.

> **How to use this guide.** Read "Before your puppy comes home" a week or two ahead. Then read one week at a time. The checklists at the back are made to print and stick on the fridge.

This guide is general information, checked against vet-reviewed sources from the American Kennel Club (AKC) and the World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA). It isn't a substitute for your own vet, who knows your puppy.

Before your puppy comes home

Your shopping list

You don't need everything in the pet shop. According to the AKC, the essentials are a harness, leash, crate, bed, food and water bowls, puppy food, chew toys, training treats, waste bags and basic grooming supplies.

- ✓ **Crate** sized for your puppy's adult size, ideally with a divider so it can "grow" with them
- ✓ **Bed** or soft mat for outside the crate

- ✓ **Harness and leash**: a harness helps while your puppy learns to walk on a leash
- ✓ **Food and water bowls**
- ✓ **Puppy food**: the same food your breeder or shelter has been feeding, to start
- ✓ **Chew toys and teething toys**
- ✓ **Small training treats**
- ✓ **Poop bags**
- ✓ **Enzymatic pet stain cleaner** for accidents
- ✓ **Puppy toothbrush and toothpaste**, plus a brush suited to their coat
- ✓ **Baby gates or a playpen** to limit where your puppy can go at first

Puppy-proof your home

Puppies explore with their mouths. Before day one, get down to puppy height and look for anything they could chew, swallow or knock over. The AKC recommends:

- ✓ Unplug electrical cords, move them out of reach, or run them through cord covers; chewing cords can cause mouth burns or electric shock
- ✓ Keep cleaning products in high cupboards or behind childproof latches
- ✓ Put all medicines away, including on low tables, bathroom counters and bedside tables
- ✓ Keep toilet lids closed, and doors and windows shut
- ✓ Tie up blind cords
- ✓ Pick up small things they could choke on: coins, paper clips, hair ties, rubber bands and jewellery
- ✓ Keep knives, scissors, razors and tools out of reach
- ✓ Use bins with secure lids
- ✓ Move poisonous houseplants out of reach

- ✓ Keep human food off low surfaces, especially sugar-free gum (xylitol), chocolate and raisins

Outside

- ✓ Check the fence and fill any gaps or holes
- ✓ Remove toxic plants and fence off ponds and pools
- ✓ Keep the grass short to cut down on ticks
- ✓ Keep your puppy off lawns recently treated with fertiliser or pesticides
- ✓ Always provide shade and fresh water, and don't leave a young puppy outside alone

Book the vet

Find a vet before your puppy arrives and book a check-up for the first few days. Ask the breeder or shelter for your puppy's health records, including any vaccinations and treatments they've already had, and take them to the appointment.

Day one

Keep the first day calm and simple. Your puppy has just left everything they know.

- ✓ **Go straight to the potty spot** when you get home, and praise them when they go
- ✓ **Start with one or two rooms**, blocked off with gates, and widen their world gradually
- ✓ **Keep visitors to a minimum** so your puppy can explore at their own pace

- ✓ **Introduce the crate** with the door open and a few treats inside (see Week 1)
- ✓ **Stick with their current food** for now, to avoid an upset stomach
- ✓ **Keep them away from unknown dogs**, and from walking where other dogs go, until your vet says their vaccinations are complete

The first night. Take your puppy out to potty last thing at night and again first thing in the morning. Make the crate comfortable with a stuffed chew toy, and remember a young puppy may need a trip outside during the night too.

Week 1: Settling in and potty training

Potty training starts on day one

The AKC says potty training should begin the day your puppy comes home. Young puppies can generally hold their bladder for about as many hours as their age in months (up to around 9 months to a year). A 3-month-old puppy may manage around three hours; much less while they're awake and busy.

When to take your puppy out

- ✓ First thing in the morning and last thing at night
- ✓ After naps and after time in the crate
- ✓ After meals and after drinking
- ✓ After chewing and after play
- ✓ Every 1–2 hours while they're awake

That can mean a dozen or more trips a day at first. Watch for the signs a puppy needs to go: **sniffing the floor, circling, suddenly stopping play, whining or scratching at the door**, or restlessness.

Make it a habit

1. Go to the same spot each time.
2. Say a cue like "Go potty" as they start.
3. The moment they finish, give enthusiastic praise and a small, tasty treat.

Handling accidents

Accidents will happen. If you catch your puppy mid-accident, calmly pick them up and take them outside. If you find it afterwards, don't make a fuss: just clean it up with an **enzymatic cleaner** so the smell doesn't draw them back. The AKC notes that punishing accidents is less effective than rewarding the right behaviour and preventing mistakes. Some puppies learn within days; others take several months.

Introducing the crate

Used kindly, a crate gives your puppy a safe den and helps potty training, because dogs generally prefer not to soil where they sleep. The crate should be just big enough for your puppy to stand up, turn around and lie down; if it's too big, they may use one end as a toilet.

1. Leave the door open. Sit beside the crate and toss a treat inside whenever your puppy goes near it.
2. While they're inside, keep rewarding every 5–10 seconds.
3. Give a food-stuffed chew toy in the crate (freezing it makes it last longer).
4. Close the door for short spells once they're relaxed, and build up slowly.

5. Crate-train when your puppy is already calm or sleepy, after a potty break and some play.

Crate rules. Never crate your puppy for longer than they can hold their bladder, never force them in, and don't leave them to cry it out. Stop and go slower if you see panting, shaking, scratching or biting at the door, long bouts of barking or howling, or drooling. Take their collar off in the crate.

Week 2: Feeding and the first vet visit

What to feed

Growing puppies need a **puppy food**: a complete and balanced diet made for growth. If you want to change foods, the AKC advises doing it gradually over a few days, mixing more of the new food into the old each day.

How often to feed

Age	Meals a day
6–12 weeks	4 meals
3–6 months	3 meals
6–12 months	2 meals

Typical meals per day. Source: AKC Puppy Feeding Fundamentals.

Small breeds usually move to adult food at around 7–9 months; larger breeds often stay on puppy food until 12–14 months. Ask your vet what suits your puppy's breed and size.

Treats: the 10% rule

WSAVA says treats should always make up **less than 10% of a dog's daily calories**. That includes training treats, chews and any human food. Use tiny pieces for training and count them as part of the day. Our free **dog treat calculator** at furlywise.online/tools turns this into real foods for adult dogs.

Never feed these

WSAVA lists these as toxic to dogs:

- ✕ Chocolate
- ✕ Macadamia nuts
- ✕ Onions, leeks, shallots, garlic and chives
- ✕ Grapes, raisins, currants and sultanas
- ✕ Xylitol (a sweetener in sugar-free gum, sweets and some peanut butters)
- ✕ Alcohol and raw yeast dough
- ✕ Caffeinated drinks, including coffee, tea and energy drinks

WSAVA also warns that cooked and raw bones can cause serious injuries. Not sure about a food? Search it in our free **Can my dog eat this?** checker at furlywise.online/tools.

The first vet visit and vaccinations

Your vet will give your puppy a check-up and plan their vaccinations. According to the AKC, most puppies need **core vaccines** against

distemper, adenovirus (hepatitis), parvovirus and parainfluenza, plus **rabies**, which is required by law in many places.

- Most schedules **start at 6–8 weeks** and continue with boosters every few weeks until about **16 weeks**.
- Boosters are usually given again at around **one year**.
- Some puppies need extra vaccines (such as Bordetella for kennel cough, leptospirosis or Lyme disease) depending on lifestyle and where you live.
- Ask about **heartworm prevention** at around 12–16 weeks, and when your puppy can start **flea and tick** protection.

Questions to ask your vet: Which vaccines does my puppy need, and when? When can they meet other dogs and go to puppy class? Which parasite treatments do they need? How much should I feed? When should we talk about microchipping and neutering?

Week 3: Socialisation and chewing

Why socialisation matters now

The AKC describes the most critical socialisation period as roughly **5 to 16 weeks of age**. Calm, positive experiences now help your puppy grow into a confident adult dog.

- ✓ Let them meet calm, vaccinated dogs you know, in safe places
- ✓ Invite friends of different ages to visit and offer treats
- ✓ Carry your puppy to watch the world: traffic, bikes, prams and people

- ✓ Play recordings of everyday sounds (doorbells, vacuum, thunder) quietly at first
- ✓ Get them used to being touched: paws, ears, mouth and collar
- ✓ Try new surfaces like grass, tiles, gravel and rugs

Until your vet says vaccinations are complete, avoid unknown dogs and busy public places where many dogs go. There are plenty of ways to socialise your puppy safely in the meantime. The AKC calls puppy classes essential, so ask your vet when your puppy can start.

Go at your puppy's pace. Between about 8 and 11 weeks, puppies can be easily frightened. If your puppy seems scared, move further away, offer treats and try again another day. Never force them to face something.

Chewing and teething

Chewing is normal. Give your puppy plenty of safe chew and teething toys and swap them in whenever they chew something they shouldn't. A tired, well-rested puppy chews less. WSAVA advises supervising dogs with chews and avoiding very hard chews like antlers and hooves, which can break teeth.

Week 4: Routines, walking and grooming

Build a daily routine

Puppies thrive on routine. A predictable rhythm of meals, potty breaks, play, training and naps makes potty training faster and helps your puppy

feel secure.

When	What
Wake up	Straight outside to potty, then praise
Breakfast	Meal, then outside to potty
Morning	Short play and training, potty break, nap in the crate
Midday	Potty, meal, potty, quiet chew time
Afternoon	Gentle socialisation outing, potty, nap
Evening	Meal, potty, play, handling practice
Bedtime	Last potty break, then crate for the night

An example routine for a young puppy. Adjust to your puppy and your day.

Collar, harness and leash

Let your puppy wear their harness for short spells indoors, with treats, until they ignore it. Then clip on the leash and let them walk around the house with you. Keep sessions short and fun.

Grooming and teeth

The AKC recommends brushing your puppy's teeth early, so they get used to the feeling. Use a dog toothpaste (never human toothpaste), start with a few seconds, and reward them. Brush their coat and handle their paws regularly, too.

Training basics

Short, happy sessions of a few minutes work best. Reward the behaviour you want with praise and tiny treats. Good first skills are responding to

their name, sit, coming when called and settling on a mat.

When to call your vet

Puppies can get sick quickly. If you're worried, call your vet; it's always better to check.

Poisoning? Call your vet or an emergency clinic. In the US you can also call the Pet Poison Helpline on 855-764-7661 (a fee applies). Don't try to make your puppy vomit unless a vet tells you to.

Parvovirus warning signs

Parvo is a serious virus that most often affects unvaccinated puppies between 6 weeks and 6 months old. The AKC warns that dehydration can become life-threatening within 48–72 hours. **Call your vet immediately** if your puppy has:

- ✕ Vomiting
- ✕ Diarrhoea, especially if it's bloody
- ✕ Lethargy or weakness
- ✕ Loss of appetite
- ✕ Fever

Get help straight away if your puppy

- ✕ Ate something toxic (see the list in Week 2), even if they seem fine
- ✕ Ate any grapes or raisins
- ✕ Is choking or struggling to breathe
- ✕ Collapses, has a seizure or can't stand
- ✕ Has repeated vomiting or diarrhoea, or won't eat or drink

Printable checklists

Before day one

- [ ] Crate (with divider) and bed
- [ ] Harness, leash and ID tag
- [ ] Food and water bowls
- [ ] Puppy food (same as current)
- [ ] Chew and teething toys
- [ ] Training treats and poop bags
- [ ] Enzymatic cleaner
- [ ] Toothbrush, dog toothpaste and coat brush
- [ ] Baby gates or playpen
- [ ] Home and garden puppy-proofed
- [ ] Vet found and first check-up booked
- [ ] Health records from breeder or shelter

Week by week

- [ ] Week 1: potty spot and cue chosen; crate introduced with the door open
- [ ] Week 2: feeding schedule set; first vet visit done; vaccine dates in the calendar
- [ ] Week 3: 3 new safe experiences a day; handling practice; chew toys rotated
- [ ] Week 4: daily routine written down; harness and leash practice; first tooth brushing

Potty log

Time	Pee	Poop	Accident?	Notes

Sources

Every fact in this guide was checked against these vet-reviewed sources:

- AKC: How to Potty Train a Puppy
  https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/training/how-to-potty-train-a-puppy/
- AKC: Everything You Need to Know About Crate Training Your Dog
  https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/training/how-to-crate-train-your-dog-in-9-easy-steps/
- AKC: New Puppy Checklist
  https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/puppy-information/new-puppy-checklist/
- AKC: Puppy-Proofing Your Home and Yard
  https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/home-living/puppy-proofing-tips-for-your-home-and-yard/
- AKC: Your First Day at Home With a New Puppy
  https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/health/first-day-new-puppy/
- AKC: Puppy Feeding Fundamentals
  https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/nutrition/puppy-feeding-fundamentals/
- AKC: Your Complete Guide to First-Year Puppy Vaccinations
  https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/health/puppy-shots-complete-guide/
- AKC: Parvovirus in Puppies
  https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/health/parvo-in-puppies/
- AKC: Creativity & Critical Timing Are Key to Puppy Socialization
  https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/puppy-information/creativity-and-timing-key-to-puppy-socialization/
- WSAVA: Feeding treats to your dog
  https://wsava.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/WSAVA_GuidetoTreats_Dogs_251107.pdf

More free help at furlywise.online

Care guides · Can my dog eat this? · Dog treat calculator · Pet name finder