

# Puppy Developmental Stages

## Neonatal Period

Birth-12 Days old. Puppy can barely hear or see, stays close to the pack. Mild body handling stress will result in a more confident dog.

## Transitional Period

13-20 Days old. Eyes open, puppy can hear, begins to walk/wobble around and respond to taste and smell. Good time to introduce novel stimuli like toys, do loads of body handling and some one-on-one time with each pup from the litter.

## Awareness Period

21-23 Days old. Overlaps the Canine Socialization Period. Learning "begins" at this point. Rapid development of the senses occurs and the dog is overly sensitive to changes. Critical for the pup to remain with its mother and litter mates. Good time to introduce new surfaces to walk on.

## Canine Socialization Period

21 Days-7 Weeks old. Pup learns to accept discipline from mother and use submissive postures, bite inhibition and pack structure. Mother weans between 4-8 weeks. Require plenty of play time with litter mates, able to start separating the eating area from the elimination area. Start to take for short car rides and isolate them from their litter for short periods of time to build independence. Exposure to new noises, smells and sensations is critically important. Can begin positive obedience training at this stage.

## Human Socialization Period

7-12 Weeks old. Puppy should be completely weened. This is the time when the most rapid learning occurs and the greatest impact on social behaviour will be made through experiences they have in this period. The window of educational opportunity is slowly narrowing. Puppy can go to its new home around 8 weeks old. Enrol in puppy class and take their physical limitations and short attention span into account.

## Fear Imprint Period

8-11 Weeks old. Overlaps the Human Socialization Period. Anything scary that happens during this stage will have a more lasting effect than at any other time in their development. Keep training and socialization fun, use gentle guidance and management. Avoid long trips, elective surgeries or anything that could be scary.

## Seniority Classification Period

10-16 Weeks old. Overlaps the Human Socialization and Fear Imprint Periods. Pup tries to figure out where they fit in their group. You must have clearly defined rules to prevent your puppy from turning into a beast!

## Flight Instinct Period

4-8 Months old. Teething happens during this stage and the pup begins to stretch its wings. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure at this point....problem behaviours that develop now are easier to resolve than they are in adulthood. This is when puberty begins so buckle up! Give your pup lots of obedience training, exercise and things to chew on to get over this hurdle.

## Second Fear Period: Adolescence

6-14 Months old. Overlaps the Flight Instinct Period. Dog may be suddenly apprehensive about new things, or timid with new people and places. Sexual maturation starts to occur (females may go into heat now, males may lift their leg to pee, puppy coat is replaced by an adult coat). Avoid overwhelming situations, be patient and make sure your pup has lots of positive interactions. Always end everything on a high note!

## Maturity

1-4 Years old. Smaller dogs mature earlier, larger dogs mature later. If you missed an educational opportunity while your dog was growing up it will become evident now (aggression and fears for example). If you see any red flags for behaviour issues GET HELP NOW, you should have done it already and most unwanted behaviours get worse with time, not better. Make sure that your dog earns their freedom, be very careful about how you leave them when they are unattended.