

The First 100 Days

Puppy Edition

A day-by-day walkthrough of the chaos, from pickup to the first calm evening — grounded in guidance from the AVMA, AAHA, AKC, and AVSAB, with every claim traceable to its source.



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Pickup Day & the First 48 Hours

DAY 1

Bring your puppy home at the quietest point in your day, not the most exciting one. The instinct is to invite everyone over to meet the new arrival — resist it. The American Kennel Club's advice for the first day is almost entirely about subtraction: fewer new things, not more. Too many new places, smells, and people at once can overwhelm a puppy who, a few hours ago, was still with their littermates.¹

Let them explore one designated area first, then open up the rest of the house room by room over the following days. If you have family members eager to meet the puppy, introduce them one at a time, and keep visitors out entirely for the first stretch.¹

PAWFESSOR MOCHI'S TIP

I know, I know — you want to show them off immediately. Don't. A boring first evening is a successful first evening. Save the party for week two.

Setting Up the Sleep Space

Whatever crate or bed you choose, it needs to double as a genuine refuge, not a holding cell. The American Kennel Club (AKC) recommends putting the crate in your own bedroom for the first stretch — your puppy will settle faster with you nearby.¹ A blanket or toy carrying the scent of their mother or littermates, tucked into the crate, helps too.¹

Size the crate for the dog your puppy will become, not the one they are today — big enough to stand up, lie down, and turn around in, with a divider panel you can move back as they grow.² Line it, and never, under any circumstance, use it as a punishment. As the AKC puts it plainly: "It should always be a haven for your pup, not a jail cell."²

Do	Don't
Give a small treat when they enter the crate willingly	Force or drag a puppy into the crate
Keep the crate within earshot at night	Leave a puppy crated all day — they need regular breaks ²
Use the crate for calm, supervised naps	Use the crate as a time-out or punishment

The Basic Supply List

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)'s baseline: a warm, quiet resting place off the floor and away from drafts — a crate or dog bed with a clean blanket works well.³ Beyond that, you're mostly assembling the essentials: food and water bowls, an appropriately sized collar or harness with ID tag, a leash, age-appropriate food, and a first-week supply of whatever the breeder or shelter was already feeding, so you're not changing food and environment on the same day.

WATCH FOR

Lethargy that doesn't lift, repeated vomiting, or diarrhea with visible blood in the first days are not "settling in" — call your vet. See Chapter 08 for the full picture on when urgency is warranted.

Pickup Day Checklist

- ☐ Crate sized for their adult dimensions, with a divider panel
- ☐ First vet appointment booked within the week
- ☐ ID tag ordered and microchip registration started
- ☐ A "safe zone" of the house chosen for day one — not the whole house at once
- ☐ House rules agreed with everyone in the home before the puppy arrives (who feeds, who's on furniture, where they sleep)

A Realistic First-Day Timeline

There's no single official schedule for hour one, but stitching together the AKC's settling-in advice and the ASPCA's supply guidance gives a sane shape for the day:

When	What
Arrival	Straight to the designated potty spot outside before anything else — a long car or plane ride means a full bladder
First hour	One quiet room only. Water available. No visitors, no other pets yet ¹
Afternoon	Short, calm exploration of one or two more rooms if they seem confident — follow their pace, not a clock
Evening	First meal (same food as the breeder/shelter used), quiet play, another potty trip
Bedtime	Crate in the bedroom, scented blanket inside, small treat for entering willingly ¹

ABOUT THE "3-3-3 RULE"

You'll see this rule everywhere online: 3 days to decompress, 3 weeks to learn the routine, 3 months to feel fully at home. It's a genuinely useful way to set expectations — but it originated in shelter and rescue community practice, not as an ASPCA or American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) position statement, however often it gets attributed to one. Use it as a rough mental model for patience, not as a citation.

DOCTOR AGATHA'S NOTE

Wondering why the puppy who was perfectly calm all afternoon falls apart the instant your extended family arrives for a "quick meet and greet"? A nervous system that spent the day absorbing a new house, a new crate, and new humans wasn't actually finished by dinnertime. Whose idea was the party, again?

What to Actually Buy

Category	What you need
Sleeping	Crate (adult-sized, with divider) plus a bed or blanket inside — off the floor, away from drafts ³
Eating	Food and water bowls; several days of the exact food they're already eating
Walking	Well-fitted collar or harness, a standard (not retractable) leash, and an ID tag ordered same-day
Containment	A puppy pen or baby gates if you're limiting access to part of the house
Enrichment	A couple of appropriately sized, flexible chew toys (see Chapter 06 for what to avoid)