

MONTH 4

Monthly Focus

Build good leash walking skills and be a strong pack leader.

TIPS & TRICKS

The window for socialization typically starts to close around 3 months. In some puppies, this window can last until the end of 4 months, so don't stop socializing your puppy! Keep up the good work!

Fear periods are an evolutionary tool dogs developed to get familiar with what is a harmless stimuli (trees, rocks, birds chirping) and become wary of novel, potentially dangerous stimuli (trains, predators, rapid rivers).

TRAINING

Hierarchy – Puppies will try to figure out who is the pack leader at this age. For the next few months, be sure to provide strong guiding support. Encourage them to look to you for direction and correct them if they are making bad decisions. It is best to not let your puppy be in a position that they could make a bad choice, but if so, redirect them and praise good behavior. When walking, position them next to you and do not let them pull on the leash. If they do, change direction. Reward them for looking up and checking in with you.

Puppy proof (still) – Puppies at this age are very curious, but they are also very timid! Remove dangerous or delicate objects from your puppy's area of access. This way they can safely approach and investigate new objects without needing to be redirected or corrected. Praise their initiative and encourage them to explore safely.

Place – Teach your puppy to go to a specific spot and stay there. The easiest way to grasp this skill is with a mat or dog bed. Lure to dog into their spot, command them to lay down and reward. Wait a few seconds between rewards until your dog inherently remains laying with an implied stay. This is useful when guests are coming over, when you need to vacuum or when you want to eat dinner undisturbed.

SOCIALIZATION & EXPOSURES

Grooming - Once your puppy is fully vaccinated you can explore more outdoor places. In the meantime, pretend to tick check your pup and look for abnormalities in their skin. Get them used to patiently being handled while you examine them thoroughly. Don't forget to (pretend) check between their paws, behind their ears and inside their legs.

Exposures – If you have not already, be sure to expose your puppy to the numerous looks people can have. If you have done some of these exposures, it's highly encouraged you do them again – the more comfortable your dog is with variation, the better suited they will be in new environments when older. Invite your friends and family to participate in these different exposures: tall and short people, old and young people, sunglasses, beards, hats and hoods, backpacks, large coats, people of different races and ethnicities as well as people in uniforms (police, fire fighter, army).

You can also help your puppy experience people doing different activities: using crutches, carry boxes, standing on a ladder or chair, using hand or power tools, vacuuming, using a broom, carrying plastic bags, ringing the door bell and knocking on the door or window.

HEALTH

Your puppy may begin sleeping through the night at this stage! If you've been crate training, it will pay off now!

Consider adding 5 minutes of exercise for the next few weeks. Around 6 months old, they should be active for about 30 minutes at a time. All puppies are different so listen to your pup and monitor how he or she is feeling after exercise. Exercising in the morning and evening can help avoid the heat of mid-day.

Your puppy may be due for some routine medications. Check with your vet regarding their DHPP vaccine, parvovirus vaccine and bordetella vaccine (optional).

You may notice your puppy's hair changing from fluffy puppy fur to firmer adult hair at this stage.

