

MONTHS 6 - 12

Monthly Focus

Reinforce your puppy's early training and enjoy new activities and places with your dog!

TIPS & TRICKS

Test your dog's recall by throwing his or her favorite toy or treat and telling them to "come" before they reach it. If they leave their favorite item and return to you, be sure to praise and reward them for making a great choice!

Any behavioral issues should be addressed promptly. Do not let bad behaviors develop in this stage, they will last until adulthood if not corrected.

Mental and physical stimulation can help curb boredom in rascal pups. Explore puzzle mats, snuffle mats or even agility courses to tire them out.

TRAINING

Boundaries – Dogs 6 months – 1 year old go through a phase of testing boundaries, much like a teenager. During this time be sure to be consistent and clear in your expectations. Do not allow bad habits to form and discourage the behaviors you would dislike in a full-grown dog.

Touch – Place an open hand with a treat between your fingers. Get your puppy to take the treat from your flat, open hand. Overtime, pair this with the word "touch" and phase the treat out. This tool can be useful for getting your dogs attention and bringing them within arms reach of you.

Advanced skills – Roll over, catch and crawl are some fun motion-oriented skills you could teach your puppy. Some handy positioning commands include under (a bench or table), between (your legs, common in agility) or backup (walk backwards).

Ecollar – Electronic collars are a wonderful tool to allow your dog to be a dog, while ensuring open channels of communication with you from a distance. Choose a trusted brand and be sure to introduce (condition) the e-collar correctly if you use this tool.

SOCIALIZATION & EXPOSURES

Fear Period #2 – Around 6 – 11 months old your puppy will experience their second fear period. Puppies at this stage will often seem to regress and forget all you've taught them about other people and animals. Keep up the good work encouraging them to explore new places, people and animals in a low stress way. Continue to allow your puppy to make space from something that disturbs them, if they check in with you reward that behavior and feel free to use a toy to diffuse the situation.

Other dogs – Try visiting the parking lot at the beginning of a hiking trail. You will see lots of other dogs here that you and your puppy can observe from a distance. Try playing a game as the other people and dogs walk around. No need to make a big deal of the other dogs, they are just there in the background and nothing to worry about (that's what we want to teach our puppy).

Unneutered male dogs will mark their territory by peeing on things. Unspayed female puppies may go into heat at around 6 to 8 months old. She can become pregnant at this age if left alone with a male dog and may even try to run off to find a mate. Keep a close eye on her and do not let her out of the house unsupervised.

HEALTH

You can start to bring your dog with you on longer walks or even short jogs. Your puppy can most likely exercise comfortably for 30 minutes at 6 months and 60 minutes at 12 months. For a long hike, consider bringing a backpack to carry your puppy after a while. They'll be happy to rest and go along for the ride, sniffing all the smells and seeing all the sights from the comfort of your (unzipped) bag. Be careful not to overexercise your pup, as this can lead to joint problems down the road, such as hip dysplasia. This is particularly true for larger breeds of dogs.

As your puppy approaches their adult height, you can begin to switch them from a puppy diet to adult dog food. Toy and small breeds usually reach their adult height within 10 – 12 months old. Medium breed dogs generally reach 75% of their adult height at about 6 – 7 months old and large breeds reach their final height around 18 months of age.

