

Puppy Developmental Stages

Developmental Stages	Age	Learning & Development	What You Should Be Doing
Neonatal, Transition, Awareness, & Canine Socialization	0 – 7 weeks	Puppy is with mother & littermates up to seven weeks. During this critical period, your puppy must stay with their mother & littermates to learn about social interaction, play, & inhibiting aggression. As the puppies learn the most important lesson in their lives--they learn to accept discipline. It is at this time that they also learn not to toilet in the nest.	Puppies require plenty of playtime with littermates, so they can socialize. Leaving the litter before 7 weeks can affect the puppy's ability to get along with other dogs later & they may have trouble learning to inhibit the force of their bite. Puppy's rate of mental development will depend on the complexity of their environment.
Human Socialization <i>"100 new people by 12 weeks" - Dr. Ian Dunbar, PhD</i>	7 - 12 weeks	The best time to take a puppy home is 7-8 weeks, leaving you several weeks to work with the puppy during this incredibly impressionable period. The puppy now has the brain waves of an adult dog, but a short attention span. This period is when the most rapid learning occurs & is permanent.	<i>Enroll your puppy in a Puppy Socialization class.</i> Critical period in which puppy should be socialized - maximize this time! Teach bite inhibition. Capitalize by educating your puppy – begin training & introduce to things that will play an important part in his life. Introduce him to new things in a positive, non-threatening way.
Fear Imprint Period <i>Experiences a puppy perceives as traumatic during this time are generalized & may affect him all his life. A dog is most likely to develop an avoidance response if subjected to physical or psychological trauma during these four weeks.</i>	8 - 11 weeks	While the puppy is going through human socialization is will also go through an important fear/hazard avoidance period. Any traumatic, frightening or painful experience will have a more lasting effect on the puppy than if it occurred at any other time in his life.	Use short sessions, & keep all training positive & fun. Gentle guidance & management are essential. Set your puppy up to succeed. Avoid frightening the puppy during this period. Mishandling this period may give your puppy a lasting fears. DO NOT praise or coddle your puppy when he shows fear. This will confirm the fear. Allow your puppy to explore on his terms without forcing him.
Seniority Classification <i>Learning to compete & cope.</i>	10-16 weeks	Puppy starts to cut teeth & shoelaces! He begins testing his position in the family unit & attempts to clarify & resolve questions of leadership. Your puppy is most receptive to learning.	Discourage all biting. Provide structure, control & leadership,

Diana Wilkins, MA, CPDT-KA, CNWI
diana@inharmonywithdogs.com
www.inharmonywithdogs.com
 210-274-2472



Puppy Developmental Stages

Developmental Stages	Age	Learning & Development	What You Should Be Doing
<p>Flight Instinct Period</p> <p>Play Instinct Period</p> <p><i>Seems to forget everything previously learned.</i></p> <p>Even if you have taught foundation skills, your puppy may go through this - just be aware of it, provide structure and consistency & ride it out.</p>	4 - 8 months	<p>This stage can last from a few days to several weeks & can occur anytime during this period. Your puppy is entering adolescence and is changing physiologically.</p> <p>The way that you handle your pup at this time determines how he will respond to you as an adult.</p> <p>At about 4½ months, your puppy loses his deciduous teeth & gets his adult teeth. <i>Serious chewing begins!</i> A puppy's teeth don't set in his jaw until between 6 & 10 months. Occasionally the puppy will start to urinate in the house again.</p>	<p>Prevention over cure is advocated – reinforce your previous training.</p> <p>Supply appropriate chew bones and toys to help with his need to chew. <i>It is very important that you keep the puppy on a leash at this time! Use a long line if your puppy is not coming when called.</i></p> <p>Training must continue through this period or you may lose the results of your hard work.</p> <p>If housetraining regresses, go back to the basics.</p>
<p>Second Fear Imprint Period</p> <p>Many puppies will show an increase in aggressive behaviors and reactivity. They may become protective & territorial, & may challenge you.</p>	6 - 14 months	<p>Corresponds with growth spurts & may recur as the puppy matures sexually.</p> <p>Most of height growing is over, but puppy will start to fill out and grows his adult coat.</p> <p>Your puppy may again shows fear of new situations & even familiar situations. This fear period is normally more marked in males.</p>	<p>Be patient & very matter of fact in fear situations. Never force the puppy to face the fear situation. Encourage your puppy to work it out on his own but avoid confrontation. Avoid coddling your puppy or praising fear responses.</p> <p>Build confidence through training.</p> <p>Manage your puppy's environment.</p>
<p>Maturity</p> <p>You are never done with socialization. He must still meet & greet people, go places with you, & continue to experience the world. If he doesn't use social skills, he will likely lose them.</p>	1-4 years	<p>Refers to sexual maturity. Smaller dogs mature earlier, larger dogs later.</p> <p>You may encounter increased aggression & challenges, however if you have spent lots of time with your puppy & trained consistently, then this will be easier. You may notice things you missed in early training and socialization.</p> <p>Your puppy may have another fear period between 12 – 16 months of age.</p>	<p>As your puppy matures, he may earn increased freedom with less supervision. Remember, freedom is earned.</p> <p>Continue to train your puppy during this period.</p> <p>Test your puppy for short periods (10-15 minutes) while you leave the house to see if he is ready for more liberty. If he is damaging property while loose, he is not ready.</p>

Diana Wilkins, MA, CPDT-KA, CNWI
diana@inharmonywithdogs.com
www.inharmonywithdogs.com
 210-274-2472

