

Puppy Day-Timer

A sample schedule to help make life with your new puppy easier.

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Puppies thrive on routine, and a regular schedule can make life with a puppy easier for people, too. To help keep your new hectic life a little more structured, follow a schedule like the one below. Every family has its own needs and requirements, so you may need to adapt this schedule to suit you and your new four-legged friend. Hey, life with your new puppy just got a little easier!

Note: As your puppy gets older, he will need fewer bathroom breaks, but more scheduled bathroom breaks when he is young will speed up housetraining.

7:00 a.m.: Puppy bathroom break. Take your puppy out as soon as he wakes up.

7:30 a.m.: Breakfast.

8:00 a.m.: Puppy bathroom break. Puppies usually need a bathroom break between 15 and 30 minutes after eating.

8:15 a.m.: Five-minute training session. Keep it short and fun! Practice what you learned in puppy socialization class, or follow instructions from a puppy training book.

8:20 a.m.: Treat and playtime! Always reward training sessions with a small healthy treat and some fun time together.

8:30 a.m.: Grooming time. Even if your puppy doesn't really need grooming yet, get him used to gentle brushing, clipping off the tips of one or two nails, and gently washing his face. This will make more difficult grooming easier later on, and will also get your puppy used to handling. Your vet and groomer will appreciate it.

8:45 a.m.: Puppy bathroom break. Puppies often need a bathroom break after a treat and also after vigorous play.

9:00 a.m.: Nap time. Even puppies need rest, giving you time to go to work or even rest yourself!

12:00 noon: Puppy bathroom break. Puppies need a bathroom break whenever they wake up. If you work, come home mid-day or hire a pet sitter for this important job.

12:15 p.m.: Lunch. After about 16 weeks, you can eliminate the mid-day meal, but young puppies, especially small breeds, can benefit from eating more often.

12:30 p.m.: Puppy bathroom break.

12:45 p.m.: Five-minute training session. Daily training in several short sessions works better for puppies than one long session that requires more concentration.

12:50 p.m.: Treat and outdoor playtime or short walk. A reward for another good training session!

1:00 p.m.: Nap time. By now, puppy is probably worn out (and so are you!). You might also have to go back to work now.

3:00 p.m.: Puppy bathroom break if possible. When he's really young, a mid-afternoon potty break might be needed.

5:00 p.m.: Puppy bathroom break. Don't delay coming home from work. Your puppy will need a break after a few hours of confinement.

5:15 p.m.: Exercise! Take your puppy on a short walk or have an active play session outside.

6:00 p.m.: Dinner.

6:30 p.m.: Puppy bathroom break.

6:45 p.m.: Five-minute training session.

6:50 p.m.: Treat and short play session.

7:00 p.m.: Bonding time. Spend some time relaxing and playing with your puppy. This will help strengthen your relationship. Watch TV or read while petting your puppy, or just hang out at home with family or friends.

8:00 p.m.: Puppy bathroom break.

10:00 p.m.: Even if you aren't ready for bed yet, your tired puppy probably is! Tuck him in and say goodnight.

2:00 a.m.: Very young puppies may need a middle-of-the-night bathroom break, but don't despair. If you keep your puppy on a regular schedule, this stage won't last longer than 12 or 16 weeks.

For more helpful information about living with a new puppy, check out the April 2008 issue of DOG FANCY.