



Developmental Stages

What happens when and how your puppy changes / develops

Developmental Stage	Age	Learning / Development – What to expect	What you should be doing
Neonatal	Birth -12 days	Puppy can't see or hear well. Mostly immobile, he stays very close to mom and littermates	Breeder provides warm environment.
Transition Period	13-20 days	The puppy can do everything he was unable to do during the neonatal period. Eyes are open, puppy can hear, begins to walk in a wobbly fashion	A good breeder will expose the puppies to mild amounts of stress. This enables the dog to cope with stress more easily later in life.
Awareness Period	3-4 weeks	Puppy is able to use senses of sight and hearing. Learning begins.	A stable environment is crucial. It is essential that the puppy remain with the breeder and mother.
Canine Socialization Period	3-7 weeks	Puppy learns species-specific behavior that makes him a dog (biting, chasing, barking, fighting and body posturing). Learns to accept discipline from mother. Learns not to bite too hard. Learns to relate to other littermates and develops a pack hierarchy or pecking order through play. Mother begins to wean puppies between 4-8 weeks.	Puppies require plenty of playtime with littermates so they can socialize. Clear distinction between sleep and play area should be made. This ensures the puppy can leave his living area to eliminate. Each litter mate should have one-on-one contact with humans. Occasionally isolate puppies to prepare them for separation. Puppy's rate of mental development will now depend on the complexity of their environment. Exposure to a variety of noises and different floor surfaces is also important.

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Human Socialization Period	7-12 weeks	Puppy should be completely weaned from mother. This is the age when most rapid learning occurs. Greatest impact on future social behavior will be made by any experience that happens at this point. The window of opportunity is closing. Although puppies can continue to learn, it is not as easy.	Best time to bring puppy into his new home is around 8 weeks. This is when the puppy MUST be socialized properly. Dr. Ian Dunbar, PhD recommends "100 new people by 12 weeks." Make socializing your pup a priority. Enroll in a non-aversive puppy socialization class. Take into account your puppy's physical limitations and short attention span when training them now.
Fear Impact Period	8-11 weeks	***This period falls within the Human Socialization Period.*** Anything that frightens the puppy or any experiences that a puppy perceives as traumatic during this time are generalized and may affect him all of his life. Dogs are most likely to develop an avoidance response if subjected to physical or psychological trauma during these four weeks. Anything that frightens the pup during this time will have a more lasting effect than if it occurred at any other time.	Trips to the vet need to be pleasant (take the puppy there just for fun!). Vet staff can give him a treat. Keep training fun using positive methods. Keep training short. Gentle guidance and management are critical. Set your puppy up for success. Avoid any potentially overwhelming circumstances you cannot personally oversee such as shipping your pup in the cargo bay of an airplane. Calm confidence is important. Don't coddle your pup when she shows a fearful reaction. Be calm and confident removing your pup from the situation.
Seniority Classification Period	13-16 weeks	Puppy has been in the home for approx. 6 weeks. This period is known as the "age of cutting" or "cutting teeth & apron strings." Puppies will attempt to clarify and resolve the question of leadership.	As long as you provide structure, control and leadership this transition should be fairly smooth. If not, LOOK OUT!
Flight Instinct Period	Somewhere between 4-8 months	This stage can last from a few days to several weeks and can occur any time during this period. A puppy will test his wings. He may challenge you in an attempt to resolve the question of leadership. He may not come when called. He may not play fetch	It is because of this stage that prevention over cure is advocated – you must start socializing and training before now! When you notice a change in your dog during this time, he is probably going through his "flight instinct" period. Like a teenage going through puberty, your puppy is changing physiologically. Your awareness

		<p>even though he once did. He will be uncomfortable because his adult teeth are growing in.</p>	<p>of these changes in behavior will help get you through this commonly difficult period. This is the time when obedience schools get most of their calls. Puppies that have not been socialized and worked with take a different path in life than pups that have. Even if you've done your homework it does not mean your puppy won't go through this. Just be aware of it and ride it out. Be prepared with appropriate chew bones (large enough so that the pup won't choke) to help with your puppy's need to chew. Use a long line in the park if our pup is not coming to you when called.</p> <p>If your puppy appears apprehensive, avoid confrontation. Don't force them into it! Building confidence thru training is a worthwhile effort. Avoid any potentially overwhelming circumstances you cannot personally oversee such as shipping your pup in the cargo bay of an airplane. Calm confidence is important. Don't coddle your pup when she shows a fearful reaction. Be calm and confident removing your pup from the situation.</p>
<p>Second Fear Impact Period</p>	<p>6-14 months</p>	<p>Corresponds with growth spurts. Therefore it may occur more than once as the puppy matures. May suddenly be apprehensive about new things or shy or timid of new people or situations. Most of height growing is over but pup will start to fill out over the coming year. Puppy beings to mature sexually; male begins to lift leg and female has first heat period anywhere from 6-12 months. Puppy coat being replaced by more distinctive adult coat. Timing depends on breed.</p>	
<p>Maturity</p>	<p>1-4 years</p>	<p>Refers to sexual maturity as opposed to being full grown. Smaller dogs mature earlier than large dogs. If you were lax in your work earlier on, you may now see the things you have missed: object guarding, unfavorable reactions towards unfamiliar people, animals or things that your dog missed during socialization stage.</p>	<p>Continue with training and socialization! Until this period has been reached, it is recommended that your pup remains crated or the equivalent (structure) when you are not available to supervise his behavior. You will know when your dog can be trusted to testing him for short periods (10-15 minutes) while you leave the house. If your dog is damaging property while loose, he is not ready.</p>

