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Bringing Your Puppy Home

Use the information in this section to prepare your home and family for life with your new puppy.

The Supplies You Need

Before you bring your puppy home, be sure you have the following supplies:

1. Premium pet food to get your new puppy off to a good start.
2. Stainless steel, non-tip food and water bowls.
3. Identification tags with your puppy's name, your name, phone number and your veterinarian's name and phone number. A collar and a leather or nylon 6-foot leash that's 1/2 - 3/4 inches wide (consider using a "breakaway" collar with plastic clips that will unsnap in case your puppy gets hung up on something).
4. A home and travel crate that's airline approved and will accommodate your puppy's adult size. This crate will serve as your puppy's new "den" at home, when traveling or riding to the veterinarian's office. His scent in the crate will provide comfort and a sense of security during these stressful times.
5. Stain remover for accidental soilings.
6. Brushes and combs suited to your puppy's coat; ask your veterinarian or breeder about an appropriate brush or comb for your dog.
7. Dog shampoo, toothbrush and paste.
8. High-quality, safe chew toys to ease teething.
9. Flea, tick and parasite controls.
10. Nail clippers.
11. Treats

Helpful Hints

- Use stainless steel, non-tip food bowls, which won't break or absorb odors.
- Toys with parts that squeak or whistle can be dangerous if swallowed.
- For a comfortable collar fit, allow for two-fingers of space between the collar and your dog's neck; consider using an adjustable collar.

Making a Home Safe

To make your home safe for your new puppy, eliminate potential hazards around the house and pay attention to the following items:

- Keep breakable objects out of reach.
- Deny access to electrical cords by hiding or covering them; make outlets safe with plastic outlet plugs.
- Safely store household chemicals.
- Keep the following house and garden plants out of reach: poinsettias, azaleas, rhododendrons, dumb cane, Japanese yew, oleander and English ivy among others.
- In the garage, be sure engine lubricants and other poisonous chemicals (especially antifreeze) are safely stored.
- If you own a pool or hot tub, check the cover or the surrounding fence to be sure they're in good condition.
- If you provide your puppy with an outdoor kennel, place it in an area that provides sun and shelter in the pen; be sure the kennel is large enough to comfortably accommodate your puppy's adult size.

The First Days at Home

The ideal time to bring home a new puppy is when the house is quiet. Discourage friends from stopping by and don't allow overnight guests. First establish a daily routine and follow these steps:

Step 1: Before bringing him in the house, take him to the area in your yard that will serve as his "bathroom" and spend a few minutes there. If he goes, praise him. If not, proceed into the house but be sure to take him to this spot each time he needs to use the bathroom.

Step 2: Take him to the room that accommodates your crate—this restricted area will serve as his new "den" for several days. Put bedding and chew toys in the crate, leave the door open and line the area outside of the crate with newspaper, in case of an accident. Let him investigate the crate and the room. If he chews or urinates on his bedding, permanently remove it from the crate.

Step 3: Observe and interact with your puppy while he's acclimating to his new den. This will help forge a sense of pack and establish you as the pack leader.

Special Puppy Concerns

Don't treat a puppy as young as 6 to 12-weeks old like an adult dog. Treat him the same way you would your own infant: with patience, constant supervision and a gentle touch. The way you interact with your puppy at this age is critical to his socialization. Use these tips:

- Don't bring home a puppy while you're on vacation so you can spend a lot of time with him. Instead, acclimate him to your normal, daily routine.
- Supervise your puppy at all times and interact with him regularly.
- Be alert for signs (sniffing and circling) that he has to go to the bathroom, then take him outside immediately.
- A young puppy has no bladder control and will need to urinate immediately after eating, drinking, sleeping or playing. At night, he will need to relieve himself at least every three hours.
- Don't punish an accident. Never push his nose in the waste or scold him. He won't understand, and may learn to go to the bathroom when you're out of sight.
- Praise your puppy every time he goes to the bathroom outside.
- Feed your puppy a formula designed for puppies. Like a baby, he needs nutritious, highly digestible food.

Meeting Resident Pets

Keep resident pets separated from your new puppy for a few days. After your new puppy is used to his new den area, put an expandable pet gate in the doorway or put your puppy in his crate. Give your resident pet access to the area. Let pets smell and touch each other through the crate or pet gate. Do this several times over the next few days. After that, give the resident pet access to the den area with your new puppy out of his crate. Supervise their meeting and go back to through-the-gate/crate meetings if trouble arises.