

# ONE DAD & HIS DOG

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A 21 WEEK GUIDE TO BUYING & TRAINING A GOLDEN  
RETRIEVER PUPPY & WELCOMING THEM TO THE  
FAMILY

JAMES MACDONALD



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*For my mum, who has always seemed to know exactly what her 3  
children and their 9 children need.*



## INTRODUCTION

If like me, you're on first name terms with a big black dog (*not literally*) I hope this book might help, be of interest or perhaps just resonate with you a bit. Are you picking up 'baked in self doubt' yet?

If nothing more I'm hoping it might show you that you're not the only person that can feel like this. I mean you're not the only person that feels that sometimes you are having to work just too hard to manage your mental health (*personified in this case by a big black dog*).

Your big black dog, like mine, may feel bigger, heavier and much more of a burden during the autumn and winter months.

He may often be there needing to be let out for a poo at 5am or help getting back down the stairs when you told him not to go up but is now stuck halfway!

A fictitious black dog that may continue to feel really unfair to have to manage despite all your good intentions and suggested strategies like remembering .....

## INTRODUCTION

- Prescribed medication
- Very cold daily showers
- Being routinely humbled by teenagers at my bi weekly Jui Jitsu classes
- Cuddles with my children
- Being unnaturally busy
- Talks with my wife
- Lots of tea
- Creating video content in the form of Youtube shorts and podcasts
- Having a job where I engage and hopefully help other men dealing with similar shit
- Talking to my mum

Regardless of all this mental health homework you may sometimes still feel like someone has hollowed you out with a spoon during the night. You may wake up feeling like there's an emptiness that just allows a (big black dog) more space to wander around and distract you with the sound of its toenails on the laminate flooring of your mind.

You might sometimes wake up in a sweaty panic from the same reliable "*chink in your armour*" very vivid dream about your wife deciding she's answered as many questions about fictitious road traffic accidents and locked doors as a person can handle and left you for the postman and taken your kids with her.

You might feel like you just want to retreat even from all the things you know are proven by yourself to help, into a quiet part of the house where you can pretend you're in the middle of a very important but oddly quiet Zoom meeting that, for some reason not explained, involves no verbal contribution from you?



## INTRODUCTION

How ironic to find that the most effective way to silence or at least weaken this big black dog may be to give it something else to focus on, like a small white dog.

### **So who is this book for?**

This is a book for anyone who is struggling with their mental health and may have bought or is contemplating buying a dog.

It's a very *"lived experience"* as opposed to "this is what you should be doing" guide to how you can look after your dog and hopefully also your mental health in the first 6 months of his or in our case, her life.

If you are struggling – I'm sorry. I hope this book will at least make you smile a bit.

Take care of yourself

Love James

### GROWN UPS WHO CAN HELP

If you're really struggling, these organisations might be able to help.

### **If you live in the UK, call the Samaritans on 116 123**

That said, if a friendly chat with a trained professional doesn't feel like it's going to cut it, please stop trying to be such a bloody hero and just call 999. Like me, if you're struggling to feel like that would be okay to do, there are definitely people (take a moment to list them in your mind now) that are genuinely relying on you to continue to have those cold showers to get you through this and keep turning up.

*"The light at the end of the tunnel may be you." Areosmith*

### **If you live in the USA, and it's an emergency.**

## INTRODUCTION

Looking after your mental health and preserving your own life is exactly that, just in case you might be feeling like it's not please call 911 if you need to.

If you don't, I'm afraid I will be forced to continue to write these books with unnecessary long sentences and continue to pester you on social media until you agree to receive a free digital copy.

If you feel you are in crisis or suicidal and need someone to talk to call the Samaritans branch in your area or 1 (800) 273 - TALK

### **The dog bit...**

For anyone who now owns a dog, you will already know that like most things in life, including life, it's smelly, messy, frustrating but utterly worth it.

My first experience of having a dog was when I was about 7 or 8 and my parents brought home a warm, yellow, yappy, bundle of cheese stealing joy that the family "democratically" decided to call Sophie.

My suggestions of "*Hannibal*", "*Airwolf*" and Mr T, were sadly not even shortlisted which I still consider to be quite undemocratic.

Sophie was the first of 3 family dogs I have had the pleasure to have my bare feet trodden on while waiting for kettles to boil.

Here are three "Sophie" memories that show how parenting anything, is anything but simple.

One Christmas my younger brother had given everyone a mug with their initials on filled with homemade fudge. He had spent, what from memory was about a month of Sundays, making this fudge.

## INTRODUCTION

It was, all in all, an awesome and thoughtful Christmas present from a 7 year old.

These fudge-filled mugs were wrapped and arranged under the tree with all the other presents. When we got back from church on Christmas morning, we were confronted with the horrific sight and smell of a, growing larger by the minute, puddle of fudge smelling Labrador vomit. There were also about 5 unwrapped mugs also covered in fudgy dog sick.

Sophie was sheepishly hiding in the downstairs loo which was and continues to be my preferred hiding space.

My second memory of Sophie was how we used to find her and my younger brother asleep in odd places like halfway up the stairs, behind a sofa or in the garden.

Sophie on her back looked like spatchcock chicken. My brother curled up next to her in the foetal position. The only sign of life being the occasional fart or rhythmical rise and fall of a chest cavity.

My third memory was the genuine sadness I felt months after she passed away. I found myself sitting at the kitchen table and instinctively putting my hand down because I was so used to her trotting up to sit by my feet.

Sophie was our family dog during my adolescence and was as much a therapist as she was a dog. I used to take her on long walks where I would ask her questions that might possibly have been slightly out of her field of expertise.

*Was Laura Baker lending me her calculator once in maths, evidence she might want me to snog her?*

My conveniently ignoring the fact that in the previous 3 years of school she had referred to me once and when she did she got my name wrong.

## INTRODUCTION

*Would I ever get pubic hair?*

*Would Scotland ever beat the All Blacks?*

The evidence of my children thankfully indicates that at least one of these has happened. Like all good therapists she never replied which helped me to work out the answers myself.

Memories of our second family dog, Jessie, also outlined that like life being a dad to a dog can be a messy frustrating bun fight.

As amazing as a family dog was, Jessie was a very bouncy Labrador certainly as a puppy. To the extent that my brother-in-law who asked the Royal Military Police if they could help was told they couldn't help as she was "*impossible to train!*"

Luckily my mum got involved and had Jessie toilet trained, waiting patiently for her supper and sitting on command within a week.



## WEEK 1

Baby number 4 (*not literally that would be the stuff of nightmares*) arrives in the world not yet in our home.

On 22nd July 2023 a litter of 8 (*four dogs and four bitches*) Golden Retriever puppies arrived in Eastbourne East Sussex courtesy of (*Sire*) Amirene Finlandia for Canina and (*Dam*) Sweet Millie Mai.

Nell was born and our family dynamic would never be quite the same again.

### **What is happening for a puppy in week 1?**

The first 2 weeks of their lives are considered neonatal. They are born blind and deaf and therefore completely dependent on their mother.

This week will be spent mostly:

- 1) Crawling around and snuggling with their litter mates for warmth and comfort.

2) Nursing from their mother to receive the colostrum. This first milk, in the same way that it does for human babies will be providing the puppy with all the essential nutrients and antibodies it needs.

3) Basically being the cutest thing on the planet.

### **What was happening for my family during week 1 of dog's life?**

If your wife is anything like mine, she may have spent the last few weeks investigating and researching puppies. This activity would have been in direct correlation to my being offered a full time role working from home.

A ping on her phone may have notified her that a litter of Golden Retrievers puppies has just arrived 20 miles away.

This will mean that for at least the next few weeks any literate family members would be reading "*How to buy a puppy.*"

### **What to consider before buying a dog?**

If, like me, you're introducing a puppy into a home which has two humans with the characteristics of a puppy, if puppies were obsessed about PRIME and hiding Penguins (*the biscuits not actual Penguins*) in book bags, it's important to consider the following.

The marketing slogan I still remember from the 80's, that a dog is for life not for Christmas is something you should spend some time thinking about.

In the same way it's frowned upon to sell your child on ebay because they've thrown your flipflop onto the garage roof, getting rid of your puppy because they continue to shit under the kitchen table is something that may haunt you for years.

Your puppy will hopefully be a much loved and valued member of the family.

That said like flipflop throwing children it will absolutely test and frustrate you.

**Is dog hair on the sofa, bedding, rugs, or in yesterday's casserole going to be something you can deal with?**

Having grown up with dogs, I assure you a dog has the ability to turn a cold soulless house into a warm and welcoming one. Albeit with a doggy whiff, chewed skirting boards and enough shed hair to stuff a mattress.

If you're someone who likes living in a showhome you may want to re-think your choice of pet.

**Survival Tip**

Keep all shoes out of reach unless you want them decorated with toothmarks. One of my lasting memories was taking a bin bag of shoes, wellies, flipflops to the tip because one of each pair had been chewed. The items of footwear had all been gnawed to a point where they wouldn't even be good enough to complete an ensemble of a towel or wife's dressing gown when trying to discreetly fling that first "post feed" poo of the day into a hedge with a badminton racquet.

**Reason 1: Dogs Are Man's Best Friend: Search and Rescue:**

Dogs are often trained to search for, locate and rescue people missing in disaster-stricken areas.

*"Dogs have boundless enthusiasm but no sense of shame. I should have a dog as a life coach." Moby*







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## WEEK 2

The puppies are still reliant on mum for basically everything. This second week of life will be spent:

- 1) Putting on weight as they consume mum's calorific rich milk.
- 2) They still have fairly limited mobility and can wiggle but not walk yet.
- 3) Starring in very cute Whatsapp videos to win over potential customers. My wife and daughter needed absolutely no winning over.

### **What's happening in the minds of your family in week 2?**

Our two boys (*already here human puppies*) are being kept blissfully unaware of any dog research that's taking place.

It would only create arguments about getting to ride shotgun with Mummy, sleeping in its bed or naming it. In our case the answer to all of those questions was neither of you.

The universal intel implies that we'd only get the opportunity to buy if we all get 100% in an "*Are you good enough for one of my Golden Retriever puppies examination?*"

***Will I have to take my puppy to a grooming parlour?***

It is true that dogs, especially long haired dogs (*Golden Retrievers included*) need frequent brushing to stop them losing enough fur to stuff a mattress ,but this can be done yourself.

Instead of treating Bingo, Duke or Fenton to an all-expenses paid trip to "*Madame Fi Fi's boutique & Spa*", buy yourself a dog brush.

A "*grooming brush for long haired dogs*" search online showed you can buy a brush that will do the same job, "*Madame FiFi's* charging you for, for about a tenner.

As I tried to explain, not "*argue*" with my wife yesterday, just because it's written in a book about puppies it doesn't mean it's actual law.

Not treating your puppy to a weekly manicure is not considered neglect or justification for a nosey neighbour to make calls to the RSPCA.

If you can afford to, crack on with your puppy pedicures. If, like us, having a puppy might mean not having a family holiday for another few more years, you can do a lot of this puppy maintenance yourself.

You can also clip your dog's own toenails, just be really careful not to cut them to the quick. Accidentally doing so can be very sore for them and very distressing for you.

You can wash your dog in the bath and buy bespoke dog combs to groom them yourself.

I also imagine that in the same way kids prefer it when my wife or I pick them up or drop them off from school, your puppy who will view you as one of their pack and would prefer to be cleaned and groomed by you.

### **Survival Tip**

Invest in a good lint roller. If you don't you'll be wearing your dog's fur as a fashion statement. I also think in order to protect your mental health, you need to accept that clothes, furniture and children are probably going to have some of your dog's fur on them all the time, forever.

**Reason 2: Dogs Are Man's Best Friend:** Not only are dogs trained to locate people trapped under snow, they can dig them out.

*"The reason a dog has so many friends is that he wags his tail instead of his tongue." Unknown*





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## WEEK 3

In their 3rd week of life they experience pretty significant developments.

- 1) Their eyes are beginning to open which means limited, but some vision.
- 2) Their ears are also starting to open which leads to a heightened sense and awareness of the sounds around them.
- 3) They will still be squeaking, shuffling and piddling on old newspapers.

### **What's happening in the minds of your family in week 3?**

My wife has contacted the breeder to ask if we can come and see the litter.

The breeder has authorised this, if we promise not to take too many pictures or get too squeaky and over excited.

### **How will having a puppy impact my spare time?**

In the same way that being someone's parent should "*in theory*" require less time the older they get, I imagine the same can be

said for having a dog. Just like when your kids were babies, when your dog is a baby it may do the following...

Pooping everywhere it feels it wants to, crying throughout the night, getting its foot stuck in the bars of a cot or crate.

As the dog gets older and develops his or her fine motor skills that “should” mean they require less of your time.

That said puppies and children will always need exercise, training, company and stimulation. Without these things they will be increasingly unhappy and that unhappiness may result in pools of wee around your house or all your shoes looking chewed.

Having grown up with dogs, the reason I gave to the kids why we couldn't get a dog was because Mum and I work away from home. I always promised them if and when...

- 1) There was an adult in the house every day of the week
- 2) We could afford it
- 3) The sofas looked less brand new, we would get a dog.

In July 2023 I got a full time job working from home and it was time to back up a promise I made to my kids.

### **Survival Tip**

Don't play tug or war with socks, your dog always wins. I remember watching my mum's dog Millie sniff my sock from the other side of the room.

When I returned from making tea it was nowhere to be seen. I forgot about it until my mother texted a photo of a dog poo with a sock cleverly poking out like some sort of tampered Kinder egg, entitled

*“Are you missing a sock?”*

**Dogs Are Man's Best Friend:** Earthquake detection. Some dogs can sense earthquakes before they happen, giving people a chance to evacuate to safety.

*"Dogs teach us a lot of things, but none more important than to love unconditionally." Unknown*







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## WEEK 4

- 1) Baby teeth start to emerge which means no flipflops are safe. This development means mum's milk bar is no longer the only restaurant in town. They will also start to lap away at softened puppy food.
- 2) The puppies' mobility is improving and as they wobble on their feet and take their first wobbly steps.
- 3) They continue to soil old newspapers.

### **What's happening in the minds of your family in week 4?**

My wife received a number of texts from the dog breeder. Her request to visit the litter had been authorised and at 11.30 on an upcoming Saturday morning my wife and daughter would be driving to the wilds of Eastbourne to see a woman about a dog.

If they can both pass what sounds like a fairly strict character examination, assault course, lie detector test, 3 part multiple choice exam we might get the choice of the two girls in the litter.

### **What can I do to see if my kids get on with dogs?**

You can win serious brownie points and from memory, Toblerones, by offering to dog sit for friends whenever they go on holiday.

We have done this several times. It's an effective way to see how your family dynamic changes with a dog in the house.

It will also show you if your children pitch in and do their fair share of the dog walking, picking up poo, feeding and general support.

Once the novelty has worn off (*potentially within minutes*) of someone's dog being in the house are they still keen to help?

Will they join you for a walk when it's cold outside? Will they pick up poop from the drive of the neighbour their mum does aqua aerobics with on a Tuesday night?

If you have a family with dogs, ask them if you can stay to see if your kids are really "*desperate for a dog!*" That said this won't be as true a reflection as looking after someone's dog in your own home.

Like the advice I would give to a married couple thinking about starting a family, if you can afford it, and have the time in your life then it will probably really will complement & enrich your life.

### **Survival Tip**

If you drop food on the floor, consider it gone. The five-second rule doesn't apply when you have a dog. This is a rule I have lived by for as long as I can remember.

**Reason 4 Dogs Are Man's Best Friend:** Certain dogs have been trained to detect cancer through their exceptional sense of smell.

ONE DAD & HIS DOG

*"Did you ever notice that when you blow in a dog's face, he gets mad at you? But when you take him in a car, he sticks his head out the window." Steve Blueston*





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## WEEK 5

This is a big week for their cognitive and social development.

1) Your puppy's overall vision and hearing will have improved significantly. They've also becoming much more aware of their surroundings and the rest of their litter.

2) This improvement in their senses will encourage them to explore their habitat and interact with littermates. This can manifest in play-fighting and biting.

Be warned, puppies teeth can be very sharp and even though they have more control over their fine motor skills they are still a bit clumsy. If you accidentally get in the way you might find your hands and arms cut to ribbons.

### **What Is happening in the minds of my family in week 5?**

My wife is already worrying about leaving behind one of the two dogs we haven't been told we're allowed to buy yet. Both my wife and daughter now have what I imagine would be considered a Phd level of understanding the macro and micro developments of Golden Retrievers.

*"Dog Visit Saturday"* has finally arrived, as well as what looks like Amazon's best-ever week in their UK sales for the puppy and dog division!

Our puppy is not even here and already my Profit and Loss family spreadsheet now has a hypothetical dog expenses column! The level of planning that has gone into this round trip to Eastbourne would make NASA blush.

That said it may be my wife's clever way of not having to meet a door repair man from Safe Style. As I explained to my wife, unless you're hiring a horse and carriage it really shouldn't take 2 hours to get from Saltdean to Eastbourne. The SafeStyle man agreed.

*"Two hours to get to Eastbourne! Have they moved it?"*

As predicted, my wife and daughter fell instantly in love with this puppy. Apparently they were presented with one of the two bitches and although my wife said she didn't want to muddy her emotional waters by seeing the second one, my 10 year old daughter insisted that it would be the fair and sensible way to make an informed decision. I can assure you that would be a direct quote.

Even though the second puppy was fairly identical in size, colour, and snuffling noises both my wife and daughter agreed that for some reason they couldn't explain, puppy number one (*with a black marker pen mark left side of her tail, to distinguish her*) just felt right.

In the same way that frustratingly you sometimes can't explain why a person feels right this puppy just felt like ours.

The feelings were clearly heartfelt as for the few days both my wife and daughter mooched around the house like a couple of love sick teenagers.

My daughter even claimed she wasn't sure if she'd be able to get to sleep without her beautiful "Nell" by her side!

Possibly a bit dramatic for one 20 minute cuddle with a puppy she had met for the first time. That said I kept that to myself as who am I to comment on the complexities of a puppy and human love?

### **How to know what dog breed to get?**

If you had a dog growing up and remember it as a positive experience then maybe stick to that breed.

Different breeds bring different levels of work and cost. We had Labradors when I was growing up, so I already have a few decades of lived experience about the support they need.

My Mum still has a Labrador and our children adore her. They also seem keen to walk and play with her, so for us a Labrador or a similar sized dog with a similar temperament made some sense.

### **Survival Tip**

When your dog gives you the "puppy eyes," resistance is futile. This can also be said of your children doing an impression of a puppy doing "puppy eyes."

**Reason 5 Dogs Are Man's Best Friend: Diabetic Alert Dogs** - Dogs can sense changes in blood sugar levels that can alert their owners to dangerous fluctuations.

*"The average dog is a nicer person than the average person." Andy Rooney*







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## WEEK 6

The puppy will have improved coordination and will be putting this to the test by walking and trying to run. That said, the adage is true that you need to master walking first.

Be prepared for lots of skidding across floors and ending up in a water bowl, bowl of dog food, crumpled heap at your feet, or if they are especially attractive, a loo roll advert.

That just goes to show the power of love that a puppy can have. Only a puppy can make loo roll appealing.

In week six they're introduced to solid puppy food. This is going to help support their physical development and transition from relying solely on mother's milk.

The food should be small amounts of dry puppy food and according to a number of sources I found on the internet it should be soaked in water or a milk replacer to make it easier to digest.

**Six week old puppies need feeding 3-4 times per day.**

As well as this food slop transition from mother's milk, it's always important to encourage the puppy to continue to nurse. The milk they get from mum is full of antibodies and helps them develop immunity to diseases.

In that you won't be collecting your puppy until week 8 it's not really something you will need to worry about yet.

Any dog breeder worth their salt will be able to advise on what you should be feeding your puppy. Apart from experience of feeding and looking after dogs, they will have been feeding and looking after "*your*" dog up until this point.

One piece of advice I saw was that it's a good idea to stay close when feeding the puppy to prevent it from overeating.

### **What's happening at week 6 in the life of the family about to welcome a puppy?**

This will differ from breeder to breeder. We were asked to put down a 10% deposit to hold our puppy on the day my wife and daughter met her in week 5, so she is still there when we go to collect her in week 8.

Anyone who has met the puppy (*my wife and daughter*) will no doubt have changed their phone's screen saver to a picture of puppy - them with puppy - them holding sleepy puppy - them pouting at cute puppy etc

As well as being a lovely image to have, it's an effective way to score points over brothers or a husband.

### **Space - is your home big enough for a puppy?**

It's important to consider if you have the physical space for a dog. If you live in a flat with no access to a garden, maybe rethink your love for Great Danes.

Also dogs can be noisy and it's impossible to know if your cute little bundle of snuffling joy may become an over protective guard that barks for a good 20 minutes before and after anyone visits or walks past your home.

Things like this are worth considering if you live in a flat or rent a semi detached. Lots of landlords won't let you have pets anyway so this is something to consider. If you rent a flat I would advise you to check the contract you signed or speak to the letting agent.

That said if you are lucky enough to live in your own home and you do think it's big enough to house whatever breed then go for it. Make sure to meet the adult dogs that produce your puppy to get a clear idea of how big he or she is going to be.

If you have a medium sized garden, I have no idea what I mean by that. Our garden is probably 15 by 20 metres. It has some grass that will give our puppy somewhere to sniff before doing a poo and that strange MC hammer kicking the grass behind them.

It always amused me how inefficient this MC Hammer dog move is. I assume it is their way of trying to cover their tracks? Their scent? The steaming pile of dog poo an adult they live with will almost certainly step in later that day.

This must be an ancestral thing baked into their DNA when it was important as a wolf to cover up your poo, certainly long before MC Hammer was around.

### **Survival Tip**

Prepare for what we used to refer to as "*Harry Bonkers*" The sudden bursts of energy resulting in indoor races that will challenge the sanity of people living there and the safety of your

furniture. They seem to have no genuine function but do look like quite a lot of fun.

**Reason 6 Dogs Are Man's Best Friend:** Water Rescues:

Lifeguard dogs save swimmers in distress by swimming out to them and towing them to safety.

*"Happiness is a warm puppy" Charles M. Schulz*



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## WEEK 7

At this stage in their development puppies are getting more independant which is helpful as in a lot of cases, they will be getting prepared to leave their mum and litter mates and join a new family.

As this weaning process happens and they cease to rely on their mum for food, the solid food becomes their main source of nutrition.

Exploration and socialisation continue with increasing curiosity. This may include flipping through the business section or checking out an article in the colour supplement before they do a big wee on it.

### **What Is happening in the minds of your family in week 7?**

The same levels of puppy mania are still very present. It's been 2 weeks since my wife and daughter saw our puppy, which also coincided with the start of a new school term.

By this I mean that until the dog is collected in about a week's time the only impact she's had is on 50% of the family's screen-savers and an ever growing pile of Amazon parcels.

We are all naturally getting our heads round how having a dog in the family will impact us.

Our youngest son, Jack has dug out one of his old (*but he assures us every few hours*) favourite fleece rugs for the baby dog. I just hope it really likes Brighton and Hove Albion.

Our eldest son, William has picked out a couple of teddies to give her crate the feel of a Fortnite and Prime obsessed child's bedroom.

My wife is continuing her dog research and keeping Amazon's share value at an all time high.

I've added a column in my family finance spreadsheet called *Dog Costs*. I'm also busy searching the internet for the gold standard pet insurance. Something that is financially bullet proof and covers me for absolutely everything dog related, plus all the stuff I didn't realise could be a problem.

My daughter is giving us all hourly pep talks on the must and must-nots of puppy training.

The fears that my wife may one day leave me for a tall, dark handsome man have evaporated this week. This happened on Thursday when I walked into a pitch dark bedroom to find her watching the same 30 second Whatsapp video clip of Nell playing with a toy Octopus.

When our close friends come over to introduce us to their 10 week old Labradoodle it reminds me that what Huey Lewis was on about in the 80's was bang on.

*“The power of love is a curious thing, it can make one man weep and another man sing.”*

It also appears that it can make a woman who has lived by a strict mantra of no shoes in the house, no feet on the sofas and definitely no urinating on the floors completely unfazed when their puppy does all three in as many minutes.

As a dad I have been wrestling and swearing at inanimate objects that needed to be kept hidden under a bed and assembled the night before a birthday since at least 2013.

This tradition seems to be continuing with our (*not even bloody here yet*) puppy. The image of the smug family frolicking in the garden on the “Puppy Pen” box implied this would be a fairly simple thing to put together.

I continued to be lulled into this false sense of security when I opened the box and noted there were no instructions, Allen keys or plastic bags filled with screws. There weren't even any of those little wooden things. The wooden pill sized pellets that I end hammering into a wrong hole and have to dig out with a fork.

My wife, who has learnt from a decade of passive aggressive grunts to put the “*thank you darling*” at the start of her critique when I inevitably build and assemble something in the wrong room or side of the garden.

This meant, as it often does, taking it apart and building it wherever she wants it to go. This “helpful feedback”, was as it often is, followed by our three children, who having been reminded that “*Daddy can be stroppy if he doesn't feel appreciated*”, came out to tell me they loved me but that they agreed with Mummy why that wasn't a good place to put a puppy pen in a garden.

## **What will happen to my garden if I get a dog?**

This may differ from breed to breed, bigger dogs create bigger poo in relation to their size, weight etc but I would definitely invest in a fairly sturdy shovel. My mum has a number of "*Poo Shovels*" that are positioned in what I can only imagine are key points in her garden. Like humans, dogs may have a preferred spot for their daily or hourly bowel movement.

Even with the most diligent of poop removal systems, if the dogs I grew up with are anything to go by your dog will always be several deposits ahead of you. Therefore, once you have a dog who has regular access to your garden it's important to tread carefully.

That's not a metaphor, I would literally tread carefully as there will always be some poo you failed to spot or fling satisfyingly into a hedge.

Beyond that I don't recall our dogs doing any significant damage to the grass but again that may depend on the breed. I've heard that *The lesser spotted grass chewing Spaniel* can be quite problematic.

### **Survival Tip**

Accept that what may have started as a, strictly forbidden to children & dogs, bed is now your children's and dog's bed.

Try and take it as a compliment that your dog and child really loves you. Trying to enforce rules 24-7 like no dogs on sofas, upstairs or on beds is a lovely idea but fairly pointless.

**Reason 7 Dogs Are Man's Best Friend:** Landmine Detection: Specially trained dogs help locate and disarm landmines in post-conflict areas.

*"A dog is like a friend that never pays for lunch." Unknown*



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## WEEK 8

An 8 week old puppy will be continuing to play with littermates which is helping him or her to develop important social skills.

In week 8, which is going to be a pretty massive one for your puppy, it continues to wean itself off mum and is gaining an increased sense of independence.

This is good news as irrespective of how confident they are at skidding across laminate floors, the first few nights are a bit traumatic. They can be tough, both for a puppy missing sounds and smells of mum and a new family listening to the whines and cries. Challenging as it is, try to stick to the advice that once you have put your puppy to bed don't return to try and soothe its emotional suffering. Whatever you do, absolutely don't sleep on the floor next to it.

If you do, you are only creating an unhelpful standard that your puppy will expect and you may seriously start to resent. In the same way that your honourable but foolhardy plan of sleeping on the floor next to your newborn's cot to save them any feel-

ings of abandonment, lasted less than a week. This would not be helpful or sustainable.

In the same way that we can't and shouldn't try to protect our babies from every single challenge of life, you shouldn't try to do that for your new baby dog.

Keep them loved, looked after and safe -, absolutely. Wrap them up in cotton wool and never let them out of your sight - absolutely not.



### **What should our breeder have done before we collect our dog at 8 weeks?**

This is by no means a definitive list but the points below are points that seemed to be mentioned pretty consistently throughout the research I did for this book.

Your breeder should have organised the puppy's first vaccination.

It's always considered sensible to get a garage or mechanic to check out a second hand car, before you buy it. Kicking the tyres and asking your mate Dave if he likes it before buying it is probably a little on the laissez faire side to anything you might consider a considerable investment.

In the same way if you are about to spend upwards of £2,000 on a new puppy and then who knows how many 10s of thousands during its hopefully long life, it might be worth booking it in with a local vet to check it's not allergic to tap water.

Even with the most watertight of pet insurance policies, if the dog that your family has fallen in love with, swallows one too many bits of Lego, you're not going to be popular if you tell

everyone you have to give her away. You would be even less “family flavour of the month” if you decide you have no choice but to have her put down because you can't afford a vet's bill. Not being able to cover the costs of sorting her ingrowing toenails or halitosis will be your problem and by that I mean “Dad's problem” to fix once she's part of the family.

If your breeder hasn't got a record of its vaccination plus information about the health of the puppies parents that is something I would consider a red flag.

**Like most investments in life, if something seems too good to be true, there's a strong chance it probably is.**

If your research shows the dog you want costs say for argument sake £2000 on average but someone is selling one for £800 be wary.

**How do I get the average?**

If your research helps you to shortlist 5 available dogs that are the same age and breed add the 5 amounts together then divide the total by 5 to get the average.

Sorry to anyone out there in the 4th dimension reading this and thinking.

*“Working out averages! How dumb does this guy think we are?”*

I don't. The fact that you have the insight to spend some time and a small investment researching what would be a major financial, physical and emotional investment, for possibly the next 1 to 2 decades makes you very emotionally intelligent.

At 8 weeks a dog breeder should be handing over a puppy they have been toilet training from as soon as you can start toilet training a puppy.

The quicker you start the quicker you can be done with mopping up little puddles around your house.

### **What's the best way to introduce my puppy to the world?**

I suppose what's equally important is to start introducing your puppy to situations beyond their mum and litter as soon as you can. To not do this and then hope for a completely smooth transition away from everything they know to be "*the world*" is possibly a bit cruel and fairly unrealistic.

In a similar way children who are home schooled may actually be getting a significantly better education than their contemporaries but they might not be as well prepared for real life situations they may have to face.

1 to 1 teaching from someone who not only loves you but couldn't be more invested in your success, compared to a teacher who's overworked, underpaid and might feel their "teaching" job is better described as fire fighting and crowd control might, on paper, seem like a better option.

But what teaches you how to thrive and succeed in the world can only be achieved if you join the world. It may be very tempting to hide your puppy away from the world but at some point they will meet other dogs, new people and if they are totally freaking out because they have never been sufficiently prepared by you, their carer, their proxy parent, then that, I'm afraid, is on you.

I have been training Brazilian Jui Jitsu since I turned 40 nearly a decade ago. I'm now closer to 50 than 40. I have my ego tested on a weekly basis. I am often submitted by or unable to submit junior belts.

That never ever feels good. That said I believe the "*good*" it's actually doing is to encourage a beginner's mind, to keep me

humble and my ego under control. Doing something really hard like this will be positively transcending into every other facet of your life in ways you couldn't possibly comprehend.

There are often times where the idea of coaching or training Brazilian Jui Jitsu comes a very distant second to doing pretty much anything else.

Earning serious brownie points with my wife by offering to do bath time is never more appealing when the left side of my brain is trying to talk me out of going to Jui Jitsu training.

You may be thinking where is he going with this. Don't worry so am I. The same may be the case in the future when your dog needs a walk but it's cold or raining outside.

I continue to stick to Jui Jitsu and the humbling life lessons it brings because I want my children to see that good things follow hard work. I need to set an example in order for them to follow. I do it because I can't control the future or how tough it may be for my children. In the same way that I can't protect a puppy, I can't protect my children from the realities of mean people or adverse situations, but what I can do is prepare them for it.

I find that doing things for people you love to be a much more effective way to keep you doing the things you know you should do but don't feel like.

In the same way when you have decided to take the responsibility of maintaining and supporting another life, even if that life is a different species to yours, it's on you to prepare that life for their future.

As well as the companionship I get from having a puppy she has also helped me to develop a number of the projects I struggle to motivate myself to do.

This book is one of them. Maybe like you, I set an alarm before I go to bed with the best of intentions. I am confident as I drift off to sleep that the alarm will help me to get up at 5 or 6am to work, write, meditate, work on a side hustle.

Quite often the warmth of the bed wins and I hit snooze and fail with the first challenge of the day.

When the puppy wakes up with a full bladder and starts barking, anytime from 5.30am to 6am I know that the clock is ticking.

From the moment I hear her bark I know that if I don't go down to let her out at some point in the seconds or minutes that follow there will be a much messier and smellier job to have to deal with.

A barking dog telling you that it needs a poo is in my opinion the Rolls Royce of the alarm clock world. I also am not sure that without her "regular and clock work" help this book would ever have gotten finished.



### **What do we need to do to prepare our house for a puppy?**

Like the other children in the house your dog will also need an area that they can call their own. In the very early days and weeks this area will need items that still smell and feel like their mum and litter mates. They will need this until what they think of as home is you and your home. Like everyone in a family, especially a family with small people who like to mentally wear you down by asking the same question on loop for literally hours.

People with a determination not unlike Arnold Schwarzenegger's character in the Terminator to keep on until they get

“exactly” what they want. Individuals who will just keep on and on and on at you until you buckle under the sheer weight of mental pressure and give them another bag of crisps!!!!

Like everyone else your dog will need its own corner. A place where it can retire to sleep or to not be stroked the wrong way or keep being covered in salt and vinegar crisp crumbs.

### **What's a dog Crate?**

I was first introduced to the appealing world of crates by my mum who has one for her Labrador. This is a clever metal structure that can be moved to the boot of your car if and when you're brave enough to take a visit with the "*whole*" family.

At the time of my writing this book, following a quick Google search, the going rate for a double door dog crate seems to be about £42 or approx \$65.

That said you can, like everything, spend a lot more. I always think it's a false economy to buy the cheapest of anything. If someone shows me a wine list I may want to buy the cheapest but it's almost certain I'm gonna go for the second or third cheapest. This mindset plus doing some research seems to have worked out pretty well in the past.

Our breeder instructed my wife to bring a blanket when in week 5, they went to meet her. I suppose the idea being that when we came to collect our puppy three weeks later it would smell sufficiently enough of her mum to provide some comfort for those first few nights.

This may resonate with any parents reading whose child, like ours, had that one all important teddy or blanket that they flatly refused to sleep without. As mentioned I'm only basing this on our experience with my daughter but your child may link the smell and feel of this item with their mum. When we realised

how important this cuddly rabbit comforter was my wife purchased a number of super sub reserves for the emergency scenario of losing the original. Several identical fluffy rabbit comforters were trialled but sadly none passed the smell and feel test. Smell can be a very important component of how mammals bond and we humans are no exception.

Eleven years on Rabbit Rabbit that has somehow evolved into *Re Re (Rabbity Rab became Re Re Rab and then settled on Re Re )* is still as important to our daughter as she was when she wasn't big enough to tell us how important she was.

The substitute cuddly rabbits hadn't, like their mentor, put the hours in. They hadn't spent the lion's share of the first 6 months of my daughter's life wedged between her face and my wife's armpit. The stand-in rabbits were still a brilliant white as opposed to cream bordering on a greyish tone.

Smells are very important to us humans and I imagine the same can be said for puppies. A blanket that smells like mum won't completely remove your puppies feeling of unease at being somewhere else, but it might just help to take the edge off so they and you can get "some" sleep in those first few nights.

Before your puppy arrives it's important to do a bit of a safety inventory and remove anything that can be reached at their level or that you'd rather not be chewed.

If they can reach it then it's fair game. On a serious note there are some things that are really bad for dogs. Foods that if consumed can make them very ill or in some cases kill them.

### **This is by no means a comprehensive list**

Foods that are especially high in fat, eg bacon, ham, or any fatty leftovers can lead to your dog having an upset stomach or in worse cases pancreatitis.



Giving your dog onions, garlic or chives (*I have no idea why you'd want to do that in the first place*) can cause gastrointestinal irritation and also damage his or her red blood cells.

Giving your dog chocolate can cause vomiting, diarrhoea, seizures or in extreme cases death.

Macadamia nuts can cause vomiting and hyperthermia.

Giving your dog corn on the cob can result in it causing obstructions in its intestines.

Avocados can lead to diarrhoea and vomiting.

Any sort of artificial sweeteners can cause your dog to have low blood sugar and liver failure. So if your puppy asks for two sweeteners in her latte, I'm afraid it's a hard no.

This one hopefully is pretty obvious, but alcohol can cause intoxication, coma or death in humans and the same rules apply to your dog.

Although you might think you're giving your dog a treat at your friend's BBQ, don't give him your leftover chicken bone. Cooked bones can splinter which can lead to internal damage in your dog's digestive tract.

I worked as a Seafront officer from 2013 to 2023 and we often had to warn dog walkers of the white waxy material which would wash up on our beaches in the winter months.

This substance was called Palm Oil and was unhelpfully released into the sea by passing ships.

This substance was like catnip for dogs, they were always very attracted to the smell of it and like chocolate if consumed, can kill a dog.

So basically in short you need to remember to make sure your stocks of fat ,onions, chocolate, macadamia nuts, corn on the cob, avocados, sweeteners, booze, cooked bones and of course all your congealed palm oil are well out of reach and kept in a safe place.

### **What do I do if my dog has eaten any of these food items?**

I would give you the same advice that I would give if you thought your child had eaten something poisonous. Firstly, don't panic.

Flapping around the kitchen is only going to freak everyone out, including your dog. Even if you are freaking out on the inside it's important not to show it. Your best bet is to get it to a vet as soon as you can. Dogs can have fairly stoic digestive systems. For example my mum's Labrador will quite happily eat a dead rabbit, fur and all. This doesn't seem to do her any damage and the only evidence that it might not have agreed with her is the occasional heinous smelling fart for a few hours afterwards.

That said, my mum's dog, like most Labs, is a big dog. She is now 6 years old and her digestive system has been built up over years of eating squeaky toys, grass, my socks, horse poo, various dead animals and sticks etc.

In the same way that I wouldn't feed a newborn the same meals as our 6 year old, if your puppy has eaten something that is potentially poisonous I imagine the results could be catastrophic. This segways perfectly onto the next question.

### **How do I find a good vet?**

Selecting the best vet for your puppy is a very important decision. It's one that if done successfully can significantly impact their health and overall well being.

Just like finding a doctor at your local surgery that you feel really comfortable with, a medical professional who is happy to repeat answers to questions like....

*Are you sure that rash isn't meningitis?*

***Yes I'm sure!***

*How can you be sure?*

***Because if it looks, smells and tastes like raspberry jam, it's probably raspberry jam.***

When you're choosing which vet to go for, there are several considerations that you need to make.

Again this list is by no means comprehensive, but may help to make a good decision.

### **Location**

As is true when buying a house choosing a vet in a suitable location is a pretty important thing to think about. Choosing a clinic that is conveniently located, making it easy for you to access in case of emergencies of routine appointments is wise.

Proximity to your home will also reduce the stress on your pet during travel, especially if they are in physical discomfort.

**Second only to location are trusted recommendations and reviews.**

Asking friends, family and fellow pet owners for recommendations is always a clever idea. Online reviews and testimonials can help but can also be made up or fabricated. With that in mind I would only really trust the reviews of people you know and trust. As opposed to the opinion of *username:PuppyLove1997* who may be on the payroll.

## **Accreditation and Licensing**

Ensuring the clinic and the vets practising there are qualified and accredited by the relevant associations is, I would say, pretty important.

If your vet is a part time vet, full time roofer then you might as well be doing it yourself. I think it would be a pretty rare situation to find yourself in but I'm sure if you check their website all their relevant qualifications will be advertised. If they're not then you're within your rights to ask to see them.

Having these qualifications shows they meet the required governed standards of care and professionalism. That said, it's important to employ a vet that you like. They could be the most qualified gold standard vet on the planet but if you don't like how they talk to you or treat your dog then I would advise you look elsewhere.

## **Specialisation**

It's important to consider the specific needs of your pet. If you have an exotic pet, it might be wise to find a vet that is a specialist in dealing with that species. For fairly common pets like cats and dogs I imagine most vet surgeries will consider them as their bread and butter work.

## **Emergency services and care**

Make sure to ask your vet if they offer an emergency or out of office hours service. A reliable vet should have some sort of after hours service for emergencies. Without wanting to sound mercenary, it might be worth enquiring about added costs to out of working hours emergency service.

If Fi Fi having another one of her turns, or being slightly off her "*Taste the difference*" organic chicken breast doesn't look to be life threatening and you know the vet's emergency call out

charge is enough to give you an equally unfunny turn, it may have to wait to be treated, or explained again during working hours.

### **Clinic Facilities**

Make sure to visit the Vet Clinic in person to assess its cleanliness and organisation. A clean and tidy waiting room is a good start.

It might be considered odd as a brand new customer to start demanding to see their diagnostic equipment and inspect the cleanliness of their scalpels. That said, if after your first initial consultation or appointment you are not too impressed or think their surgery may also be a working car garage, maybe look elsewhere.

### **The clinic staff**

The person who answers your call, up to the Vet who safely removes a Stickle Brick from Pumpkin's lower intestine will all have an impact on both you and your dog. A caring and friendly team can and will make a big difference to yours and your pet's experience.

### **Communication**

This follows on nicely from the previous point. If the person who answers the phone seems to not give two hoots that your dog is in pain then that's not a good start. Also if the vets you speak to seems unable to answer your questions or seems dismissive of your worries about your dog maybe having a nut allergy, then again that might be them kissing goodbye to years of income.

### **What services do they offer?**

If it's your dog's birthday or you're married to someone who wants Fi Fi to have a weekly cut and blow dry, then going to the same place that clips nails, de-worms them and compassionately explains to you again that they're not allergic to tap water is wise. Finding a clinic that is very much a one stop shop will just make your life easier.

### **Cost**

This is a big one. Having any species of pet is going to incur costs, sometimes substantial. Finding a clinic that is totally transparent about their costs is important. You want the vet equivalent of the garage that checks your oil and tyre pressure for free. Or the tradesman that calls to warn you that this "simple fix" could cost you a small fortune in parts & labour. I don't mind paying for something that any member of our family (dog included) needs, but I would like the opportunity to discuss it.

### **Preventative Care**

You want a vet who is proactive when it comes to your pets' health. You want to make sure they are directing you to what you should be doing away from the vet's clinic to reduce the time spent in the clinic.

### **Who does your dog want to treat them?**

Sadly your dog can't vocalise his or her preference but their body language and general demeanour may show you how they feel about their vet. In that this could be the start of a long term relationship it's important that you choose a vet that your dog likes, seems happy to be looked at, treated etc.

### **Flexibility with payment**

Pets are awesome, but can also be awesomely expensive. I would inquire about payment options. Checking to see if they accept your pet insurance is job 1.

If your dog is fully integrated into the family and adored by everyone from your children to the lady in the co-op, there's no way you're going to be able to dodge that expensive operation they need. Yes they are an animal but they are also part of your family, and anyone who has ever lost a pet will confirm that the sense of loss can feel as profoundly sad as the loss of a human. I think it is probably worth paying an extra £10 or however much a month to get the titanium plated gold standard pet insurance, the one that covers everything from major surgery to bad breath.

### **Financial Transparency**

Following on from the previous point. There's nothing worse when someone quotes what sounds like the best and most affordable option so you go with it, only to find that once they have added in all the costs they didn't mention, these sneaky "admin" costs suddenly make it the least affordable option. Some added costs like VAT can't be helped but I still think it should be mentioned as opposed to being hidden to seduce you into a sales agreement.

### **Other costs like.....**

- 1) I was working in my lunch break (2% added)
- 2) It was a Friday (1.5% added)
- 3) I don't really like you or your dog (7% added)

All costs should be made crystal clear so you can make a clear choice about giving them your business or looking elsewhere.

The customer is always king, even if the customer is a Golden Retriever that needs deworming.

### **After care and follow up services**

Apart from it being a false economy to not do a good job right up to the end of the job, if your dog has just undergone major surgery and you have a question that didn't come to mind at the time, I think that you should be able to get free aftercare advice.

### **What is happening in the minds of your family in week 8 of getting a puppy?**

The daily countdown and hourly questions "*How many sleeps*" has started in the same way that it does for birthdays, Christmas and trips to Granny's house.

On Monday morning all three of them insisted that they wanted to walk to school to get the practice. I tried to explain that for the first few weeks Nell will be too little to walk and would therefore need to be carried. They didn't really seem to process this and all it did was create a walking argument about who's school bag the dog would be hitchhiking in on future walks to school.

Well this is the week and in the same way that life was never the same again and then never the same again and then again when babies one, two and three joined the team, the same will no doubt be the case when we have a furry animal living in our home.

### **What happens on the day you collect her from the breeder?**

On Saturday, 16th September, my wife collected our 8-week-old Golden Retriever "*Nell*" from her biological mum and family.



Apparently she cried in the footwell of the passenger seat. The puppy, not my wife, although our children have occasionally managed to have that effect on her.

I say Nell, her *"keeping all members of the family happy name"* Nell-Flower-Toni-Star-Airwolf Macdonald.

When I returned home from leading a Dad's walk in a local park on the day Nell arrived I was confronted with the following scene. My daughter looked to be frozen in time watching a baby dog sleep from the other side of the living room.

My wife was in the kitchen trying not to gag while sawing off a tablespoon sized nugget of frozen tripe from a house brick sized block.

Bringing a new Golden Retriever puppy into your home is an exciting but challenging experience. But be prepared, the first night can be particularly stressful for you and your new family member.

**Here are 5 essential tips I stole to hopefully make it as smooth as possible...**

1) Prepare in Advance: Before bringing your puppy home, ensure you have all the essentials ready. This includes a comfortable crate, food and water bowls, puppy food, toys, and a leash.

My wife had bought enough toys, treats and blankets to amuse a small army of puppies. I had spent the last couple of months expecting a call from the head of "Amazon's UK Pet Division" offering us a generous line of credit or an exclusive affiliate package.

2) Gradual Introduction: Avoid overwhelming your puppy with too much attention and excitement on the first night. Give them time to explore their new environment at their own pace.

**What this looked like in our house...**

My wife gave us all, me several times, strict guidelines about ignoring any cries or barks during the night. She then did a total u-turn at 11.30pm by sleeping on the sofa next to the crate. I'll be keeping that memory in my back pocket for any future *"differences of opinions."*

It seems that irrespective of the species my wife has a maternal instinct for anything ,especially babies. I did as I was originally tasked and slept happily in the spare room.

**Did your children argue over the puppy in the first few days, when she's still something of a novelty?**

No, they seemed to actually respect the rules of not raising your voice or stropping round the house because you can't find your charger.

Child 2 and child 3 who can often be at loggerheads about whose turn it is to...whatever, seemed to be calmed by her presence.

The presence of a sleeping puppy seems *"so far"* to be having a calming effect on our other 2 puppies.

**How has the puppy affected your relationship with your partner?**

In the same way that I often felt most connected to my wife in the early days and months of each of our 3 children, I feel united in this new shared passion. Meeting in the kitchen in the early hours to wind, feed or soothe a crying baby. A shared family project, like looking after a dog, doesn't just deepen the

bond you have with the dog but strengthens the bond you have with each other.

It also shows our home to us with new eyes. Taking the puppy outside to encourage her to do her final “*poo poo wee wee poo poo!*” means we get to see what the garden looks like at the end of the day.

Seeing your cosily lit home provides a feeling of accomplishment and makes me feel slightly less bothered about all the broken garden furniture that still needs to go to the tip. I may need reminding of this when she soils another corner of a “still to be paid for” sofa but at the moment it feels like a good thing for our family’s combined mental health.

**What other important stuff should we have done on the day of the puppy pick up?**

If you were buying a car you could ask to test drive it round the block. You could drive it to a nearby garage to have someone who knows what they're doing, check that it's okay and worth the asking price.

You can't really do the same when buying a dog. That said, I think you would be well within your rights to “*have a conversation*” with the breeder if after (*ideally on the same day*) picking up the puppy you visit a vet and they say the puppy has some serious health issues.

**In reality, if this were to happen could you give a dog back?**

Granted, it wouldn't feel good to have to say to a breeder, we're sorry but we can't buy this puppy and by doing so potentially lose a deposit. On the flip side neither would be paying for lots of trips to the vets, expensive operations and the pain of having to have a dog your kids have fallen in love with put down prematurely because it's so unwell.

This would only be made worse by the fact that you will probably remember that you had a choice and could have avoided all this heartache, stress and cost.

This is why it's often not a good idea to take the kids when you collect the dog because if the worst case scenario happened and a vet advised you not to buy this dog, your kids would be none the wiser.

You could tell a fairly large but still technically "*white lie*" and say they made a mistake and sold the puppy to someone else. The kids would be crushed for a day and then you'd end up getting another puppy that they would fall in love with.

### **Introducing your new puppy to your existing pets?**

In the same way that taxes and death are listed as life's guarantees once you have children that are introduced to other children, they and you will be introduced to whatever local bug is doing the rounds. Exactly the same can be said for your new puppy. At 8 weeks your puppy won't be fully vaccinated but it's important to encourage it to socialise with other animals. With that in mind make sure that in the first few weeks and certainly until he or she is fully vaccinated you only let them meet fully vaccinated dogs, cats etc.

### **When can I take my puppy for walks?**

Puppies can start going on walks at around 12 to 16 weeks of age. By this time they should have been fully vaccinated against a variety of serious diseases.

Following my research, apparently a solid rule of thumb is that you should allow approx 5 minutes of exercise (*I suggest gentle walking as opposed to Kettlebells or water aerobics*) per every month of your puppy's age.

When your puppy is collected from the breeder at 8 weeks, you can walk for 10 minutes at a time.

3 months old, 15 minutes, 4 months 20 minutes etc. That said this is only a general guide as it could vary from breed to breed.

This means that you may have to endure a fair bit of carrying your puppy around in a backpack. Similar to the mums at my kids' school that turn me into *Victor Meldrew 2.0* you might have to carry your puppy in your arms for a few weeks. Carrying them around in the same way you would your brand new baby gives them an opportunity to experience new sights, sounds and smells.

In the same way you should carefully introduce a new baby to being in a noisy car, going to the supermarket or anywhere else they may be overstimulated with different sounds and smells, the same goes for a new puppy.

A tip my mum passed on is to make handling your puppies ears and paws part of your bonding. Cutting your dog's claws can be a nightmare if they are not used to you touching their feet. If you do this from day one it should help make the job easier in the future, in theory!

### **The Time Factor: How will having a dog affect my spare time?**

Before you have kids and you get the chance at a family gathering to have a cuddle with your brother or sister's sleepy warm newborn, the idea of kids may seem dreamy. That dream can evolve into a nightmare when they are projectile vomiting at 2am and you're getting up for work at 5am.

The same example can be used for a puppy. When your friend brings their puppy into work, it may seem like the final piece of the jigsaw for your life.

When they're yapping to proudly let you know they've done another runny shit on your new sofa while you're trying to present the quarterly report via zoom to your boss's boss it might feel more like talking to "Jigsaw" from the Saw Films Franchise.

Like life and children, parenting a puppy will be a conveyor belt of joy, pain, laughter, frustration, worry etc. If you still think you could love and care for a puppy after it's been tripping you up all day literally, then you're probably ready for a dog.

### **Do I need to buy a puppy pen?**

You don't need to do any of this as it's your dog but there are certain items you can buy that will potentially make your life easier. If you can adopt a similar mindset to how you cared for your newborn baby to your dog you won't be far wrong.

You can buy a puppy pen from B&Q. Yes it's another cost but when your puppy is 8-12 weeks & needs to be taken out in the garden to have a wee at least hourly it might be seen as a shrewd investment.

How many times would you need to NOT have to clean up wee or poo from your kitchen floor for it to be considered a good investment? I would say once.

We're lucky enough to have a small garden and putting the puppy in the pen, not only ensures it doesn't scamper off and get stuck in a rhubarb harvest but that it's also protected from being able to wander around the garden and accidentally eat whatever food items or small plastic toys you kids may have dropped.

If you're frustrated about the idea of forking out another £75 on this puppy just remember that amount wouldn't even cover the

pet insurance excess you would have to pay to have the Lego batman head removed from your puppy's intestines.

It also means when you have to answer the door to receive the 3rd Amazon delivery that day (no doubt another "essential" Egyptian cotton dog throw for its crate) that you can leave the dog happily sniffing and rolling about in the garden in its pen and don't have to risk being piddled on as you carry it through the house to answer the door.

### **Survival Tip**

If you want personal space while eating, you may have to lock yourself in the loo. The simple equation of you eating plus your dog watching you with "puppy eyes" will no doubt result in you sharing at least half of your lunch.

### **Reason 8 Dogs Are Man's Best Friend: Protecting Children:**

Family dogs have protected children from dangerous situations, including snakes and intruders.

*"You can say any foolish thing to a dog, and the dog will give you a look that says, 'Wow, you're right! I never would've thought of that!'"*  
*Dave Barry*







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## WEEK 9

It's Nell's first week of living with us and like her human brothers and sisters she's been busy pushing the boundaries. She's hidden behind a sofa to urinate and been told off for skidding on flooring.

She's doing a lot of sleeping, again just like our children at the worst possible times of the day. She seems to be a fan of getting a massive surge of energy around 10pm which feels familiar.

### **What's happening for your family?**

Our opening weekend of puppy life resulted in all floors being mopped considerably more than the previous 9 years of us living here.

There were puddles and poos and irrespective of how much we all stood in the garden telling her to "*poo poo!*" or "*wee wee!*" she seemed much happier to wait till we'd carried her back into the house before doing it under the kitchen table.

It did feel like going back to the days of having a newborn in the house. My wife and I swiftly broke all the promises of not pandering to nighttime crying.

On Saturday night my wife was holding a puppy paw through the bars of her crate. I laughed at her about it on Sunday morning then did exactly the same on Sunday night.

The one noticeable and exciting difference which would definitely make up for dealing with the numerous stinky treats is that for the first Monday morning for a very long time, maybe ever there was no pre-school meltdowns or shouting. I didn't have to beg anyone to get their shoes on, or wear a fleece or get into the car.

They all agreed that they wanted to get to school as quickly as possible so that Nell wouldn't have to spend a long time alone in the house.

No one had a hissy fit about their socks! No one turned the air blue because I wouldn't let them play Fortnite and no one locked themselves in the bathroom. It was a little bit like magic just with a whiff of wet dog.

My working alone from home 5 days a week now also has a faint doggy smelling undertone to it. But I also find it genuinely comforting to have a warm puppy lying on my bare feet during lengthy zoom calls about safeguarding.

I'm acutely aware that the "baby dog" novelty will soon wear off, but our children definitely seem to be calmer. There are noticeably less dramatic exits stage right. A lot less slamming of doors and little to no growls of frustrations about it being bedtime. Can I have ten more minutes on my X box seems to have been momentarily replaced with

*"Can I go and say goodnight to Nell?"*

My wife has slotted back into full maternal mode. She demands pictures of dog poo on the fake grass she bought to ease the transition from poeing under the kitchen table to poeing outside.

Much as she argues it's all part of operation "*Training puppy*" I also think it's a way to check I'm following her strict guidelines throughout the day.

### **How long can I leave my puppy alone at this stage?**

Puppies like young children are going to end up being much more dependent on their owners than adult dogs. In that they are still very much an infant they require more attention, care and supervision leaving a puppy alone for too long can cause them to develop separation anxiety and stress. Puppies also need to be fed more frequently than adult dogs and need to be let out to go for a wee or a poo every few hours.

If in doubt, ask your mum. That said I would only ask your mum if she

- Has had a puppy maybe ideally of a similar breed
- Her dog seems to have been trained well.

My mum as I have previously mentioned has a Labrador that she has had since a puppy who is pretty well behaved. If you disregard the standard Labrador behaviour of rolling in fox poo, eating dead rabbits and doing the first rinse of the dirty plates as they're being loaded into the dishwasher. What she told me also marries up with what I found while conducting the research for this book.

Apparently a good rule of thumb is that you really shouldn't be leaving a puppy alone for more than 2-3 hours a day.

That said there may be times when your life dictates that you need to leave your puppy safely alone in their crate.

- When you need to do the (*at most 40 minutes*) round trip school run.
- When you have to do the most (*at most 2 hours*) to coach a kids' Jui Jitsu classes.

You will make a rod for your own back if you overly pander to your dog or spoil it.

In the same way, the research implies that things like letting them beg when you're eating, or nip you, or sleeping next to their crate to alleviate their loneliness or to alleviate your sadness at listening to yelps and cries for the first hour after you put them to bed and turn the lights off, is really just teaching them bad habits.

Teaching your puppy that if it cries long enough (*like a child asking for another ice cream ,mobile phone, can of Prime*) will get what they want is not the relationship you want between you and anyone or anything in your care.

As long as your dog has access to water and has recently been let out you have to help it get used to being left alone in its crate for up to 2 hours.

You have to be able to live your life and do all the things that make the luxury of having a dog possible.

The sooner you brave the hard miles by this I mean get used to your beautiful baby dog crying or yelping a bit because it's been put in its crate, the sooner it will learn to accept the coming and going of the family caring for it.

In reality this first week I feel we've had it pretty easy. Nell didn't make much fuss when I put her in her crate to do the

daily school run.

The longest she was left alone in the first 2 weeks was about an hour and according to my wife who returned home before me, she was greeted with a puppy asleep in a crate as opposed to a distressed dog howling the house down.

**What if I have to leave my puppy aged 6 months or less longer than 2 hours?**

If there are situations and there will be, when you have to leave your puppy (*alone for more than a couple of hours*), then you may need to consider hiring a dog walker or a dog sitter who can check in on and then, feed them, take them for a walk or just give them some company.

Along with finding yourself a great local vet, finding yourself a couple of great dog sitters is probably a good call.

**How Long Can You Leave an Adult Dog Alone?**

Adult dogs in general are going to be more independent than puppies and therefore will be able to tolerate being left for longer periods of time. This may differ from breed to breed and dogs like people are unique. Their tolerance for being alone will be determined by a number of factors such as their age, personality or breed.

Adult dogs like adult humans can suffer from separation anxiety so you do need to come up with a plan. With all this mind it's important to source a reliable dog sitter and get their number highlighted in your phone in case of emergencies.

From the research I have done and from the owners of happy and healthy dogs I have spoken to, the majority have told me an adult dog can be left alone for up to 4-5 hours as long as they have access to water, food and a place to go to the toilet. It is only my opinion, but anything over 4 hours for an adult dog

is too long and would require me hiring the help of a dog sitter.

If you do have to leave your adult dog alone for an extended period of time, say 3 hours plus then it's important to make sure they have something to keep them occupied. In the case of dog toys these need to be dog safe toys that help to keep them mentally stimulated, prevent boredom and stop them destroying your home.

Another option if you have to leave your dog alone to go to work is to ask your boss if you can take them to work. Some workplaces, apparently, provide doggy daycare where they can play and socialise with other dogs. I love the concept of this but can also see how it could be fraught with issues.

### **Do all dog breeds need the same amount of attention?**

I can only speak about my experience of growing up with a Labrador in the house but like children, hopefully, they seem to need less in the way of attention from you as they get older. They will always need to be let out for a crap, taken for a walk, taken to the vet when they've eaten another dog toy or sock, fed good nutritious food, but those things will "hopefully" reduce as they develop and get older.

### **How do I know if our family's lifestyle allows us to offer an active dog breed the time they'll need?**

I think it's unfair to leave a dog alone in its house for extended periods of time. They will be moments in your day and week, where it's unavoidable. I can't coach 4-6 year olds Brazilian Jui Jitsu while also making sure our puppy isn't terrorising people on the sidelines. For our family, our decision was that we would only get a dog when either my wife or I were at home every day of the week. Dogs need a daily walk as a minimum, but they also just need company. They are descendants of wolves and there-

fore pack animals. Like us humans they do well when they're part of a community.

### **Survival Tip**

When it comes to pretty much all relationships, never underestimate the power of a well-timed belly rub. In all honesty I really don't think my bank manager would have authorised our loan without it. In the case of dogs they also go down pretty well.

### **Reason 9: Dogs Are Man's Best Friend:**

*"My fashion philosophy is, if you're not covered in dog hair, your life is empty." Elayne Boosler*







## WEEK 10

At this stage of your puppy's life she/he is more like a toddler and is active and keen to learn about his/her surroundings.

At ten weeks they are now ready for some training and can go on a 10 minute-ish walk.

(5 minutes for every month so = 10 ish minutes)

For us this means that whether she likes it or not Nell has become another of my wife's ongoing educational projects. Instead of trying to get her to read about Biff, Kipper and Chip we're now getting Nell to sit for treats not chew the curtains etc.

At this 10 weeks point Nell is now a well-established member of the family. Deposits in the hallway and puddles in the kitchen are now rare. She seems to understand that the sofas are off-limits when my wife is at home and goes down happily in her crate without barking her disapproval and sleeps through the night.

Like a human toddler she may start to challenge you at this stage. She may start chewing shoes, scatter cushions or your hand if you're not careful. Be warned puppies teeth can be very sharp and they can get easily over excited through play which can result in your hands and arms being cut to ribbons. I had to sport the most ridiculous of injuries when I picked her up to take a picture on my phone and she bit my nose.

If she does start nipping you a firm, loud and confident "NO!" directed at her will teach her that you are not impressed with that behaviour.

From overhearing my wife and daughter binge watching "*Dogs Behaving Very Badly*" this will establish that you are in charge. Dogs like humans are used to living as part of a pack or tribe. If you don't put your hand up and make it clear you are in charge or the Alpha, he or she may see an opportunity to inhabit this vacant power vacuum.

By 10 weeks every member of the family plus a couple of neighbours have developed a relationship with her and she is continuing to be more and more of a positive distraction that is at least equal to the X box.

As your children and puppy grow up you may notice there are some cross species parenting parallels..

You may have to congratulate your puppy and child for pooping in the correct area of the house.

You may exhibit parental pride as both puppy and child eat all their Royal Canin dry food or cheesy pesto pasta.

You may have to discipline both puppy and child for unprovoked attacks on another family member following someone eating half a bag of someone else's Haribo.

You may find yourself to be pleasantly surprised when your puppy / child takes themselves off to their crate / bedroom and only howls or shouts questions about Komodo dragons from the other end of the house for a few minutes before falling asleep.

Yes, having a dog will add another dimension of work to your already insanely busy family life, but I still think the calming impact he or she will have on all of you makes a family dog a welcomed addition.

### **How do I establish a routine and house rules?**

Establish a consistent routine and rules by rewarding good behaviour and ignoring the bad behaviour.

### **What is Crate training?**

Like all the other members of the family your puppy will need a place where it can retreat to.

A place that's theirs and theirs alone.

Providing your pet with a metal crate may sound unfriendly but if you can put down a nice dog friendly rug and a dog bed and some dog toys it can become a place your dog can feel happy and safe.

Crate training may also help to reduce your anxiety as much for you as it can for your puppy. Looking after your new baby dog will bring equal measures of joy, laughter but also stress and anxiety. This may certainly be the case when it comes to you having to leave your puppy home alone for the first time. Knowing your puppy is safe in its crate may really help to ease your worries when you have to go and get the kids from school etc.

Crate training may also help when you are attempting potty training as puppies and adult dogs don't tend to soil their sleeping space, unless they have no choice or if they are incontinent due to illness.

When you are crate training it's important to increase the amount of time he or she spends in the crate over time. You need to do whatever you can to help your puppy associate good feelings towards any time they spend in her crate. If he or she is put in the crate as a form of punishment that will create negative associations. The research I have done confirms that praising your dog every time it gets into its crate will help it to link positive associations to it.

In exactly the same way your children will repeat the behaviour that you praise, so will your puppy.

In no particular order, here are 10 tips I found, heard, researched on how to crate train your puppy.

- It's really important to make sure you choose the right crate for your dog. Different sized dogs require different sized crates. It should be large enough for them to stand up, turn around and lie down comfortably. They shouldn't be bumping their bum or nose every time they try to move. It can't be so big that they basically live in one corner of it.
- Make sure that you introduce them to their crate slowly. Maybe start by just leaving the crate door open and a comfy dog bed inside and don't make too much of a fuss of it. This way your puppy is free to investigate it if and when it feels comfortable.
- Do what you can to promote positive association with the crate. Praising your puppy when they are brave enough to venture inside for a sniff around. Maybe

reward them with a treat when they go and lie on their dog bed.

- Don't force them into the crate, that will freak them out. If you're getting frustrated that they won't voluntarily go in the crate, take a breather. Leave the room, count to ten, take some deep breaths. Odds are as soon as you leave the room they will do what you have been trying to get them to do on their own, quite a lot like your children.
- If you are feeding your puppy next to its crate try to source dog blankets or dog beds that can be machine washed. Dogs like children can have a frustratingly "care free" attitude towards eating.
- Establish a routine by actually scheduling a regular time in the day to do some crate training. In the early days it's all about establishing positive routines that will make your and their life easier. It's important to remember that puppies like children have small bladders. Therefore make sure you've taken them out to do their business before and after puppy training.
- Never use the crate as a form of punishment. All that will do is encourage a negative association with it.
- Don't use the crate as a place to lock them away while you answer the door as this may seem like a punishment. If you work from home or have a retail therapy addiction resulting in you being on first name terms with your local Amazon delivery driver invest in a puppy pen. From a quick Google search I can see they range in price from about £30 upwards.
- I also struggled to know when I should be putting down all three of my kids for a nap so who knows what signs if any will indicate that for your puppy. If you can encourage them to sleep in their crate that can help them to associate their crate as being a safe, quiet place

to rest. In the same way that I have had to move sleeping children from cars, sofas etc, if your puppy falls asleep somewhere other than their crate pick them up and gently move them to the crate so they wake up in their crate.

- Make the crate an integral part of their nighttime routine. There are two schools of thoughts. Some people say you should be putting the crate in your bedroom at night. Others say it's better to go full cold turkey and put them in their crate in the room you want them to sleep in. Obviously I will do as most 47 year old dad's of 3 should do when faced with any sort of life hurdle and ask my mum. If I was feeling pretty brave at making my own big boy decision, I would say go full cold turkey and put them in their room as opposed to your bedroom.

Like children, if they can see you from their cot that will encourage them to cry, fart, gurgle and do whatever they can to get your attention. That leaves the opportunity for you to buckle under the weight of their emotional black mail and end up having them in your bed.

- Supervise them around the crate to make sure they don't hurt themselves. If they trap their leg or tail in the crate and it hurts them they may start to dislike it. You might find yourself having to smack the "naughty crate" in the same way you may have had to smack naughty corners of tables or door frames that your children have walked into.
- Be Patient. Like any training of little people or in this case baby animals, crate training will require time and patience and probably several large gin and tonics. Like your kids each puppy is unique and may take longer to

pick things up than others. Just stay consistent and calm and remind yourself that this, like being a dad, is something you “get” to do as opposed to “have” to do.

**Does buying a purebred guarantee they will be fit and healthy?**

In a word "No." Although buying a purebred from an established dog breeder who's Kennel Club registered is doing your due diligence, there are no guarantees because although your dog will no doubt become a much loved and established member of your family, he or she is still a dog, an animal and therefore an unknown quantity.

There will be people who bought their dog from a man living in a caravan in a pub car park for £50 and a bag of crisps. There will be owners who may testify that even though they would describe it, at a guess maybe half cocker spaniel, half chinchilla, that their dog has been a loving and ideal family dog.

There will also be people who had to remortgage a home to pay for a dog they bought from an established dog breeder. Someone with a triple barrelled surname who has raised Crufts winners. These owners may still end up finding that their dog was allergic to tap water and definitely leaning heavily towards one end of the autistic spectrum.

Throwing money at the problem doesn't always ensure success.

Our world was recently thrown into a global pandemic which then required lots of us to work from home. This change to our working lifestyle boosted sales of dogs. This pandemic which was followed by a downturn of the global economy not seen since the Great Depression may now mean there are millions of dogs that have been given to dogs homes because they can't be afforded.

## **Do dogs think in barks?**

Dogs can communicate and therefore understand each other through their barks but probably not in the same way that humans understand words. Dogs communicate with other dogs through body language and tone.

They can translate a dog's intention and emotion from its barking by its pitch, volume and frequency. Some barks could indicate: I'm excited and happy to see you and others may communicate fear, aggression, feeling protective etc. In the same way that a new parent can become an expert on what the limited noises their new born baby makes (*snuffles and cries*) pretty early on you will learn to understand, often through trial and error why your dog is barking and what it's trying to communicate to you.

### **Survival Tip**

The vacuum cleaner may be to your dog what kryptonite is to Superman and brushing teeth is to small boys. They seem to hate them and may well wage war on them or just bark and snarl at them at any given opportunity.

### **Reason 10 Dogs Truly Are Man's Best Friend:**

*"My windows aren't dirty, that's just my dog's nose art." - Unknown*





## WEEK 11

Your puppy needs to have had her first of 2 vaccinations by the 12 week point so if your puppy hasn't you need to get that done asap.

In regards to when she needs her first of 2 vaccinations, we got a couple of different opinions. The breeder said anytime from 8 weeks. Several vets we spoke to said 10 weeks and one said 11. So with that in mind if you can make it a job to get done between month 2-3 you're good.

**What diseases are these vaccinations protecting your dog from?**

**Canine distemper** - This is a virus that affects dogs that can be fatal. It's similar to the measles virus in humans. It's passed from dog to dog via direct contact in the saliva of an infected dog when it coughs or sneezes. It can also be transmitted through urine. In that most dogs have a relaxed attitude to who and where they do their sniffing it's obvious to see how it can be transmitted.

**Canine parvovirus** - is a virus that will if not quickly treated make your dog very ill or in some cases can even kill it. It's a virus that damages the lining of your dog's intestines and causes severe vomiting and diarrhoea and therefore dehydration. It attacks the infection fighting cells inside the bone marrow which weakens your dog's immune system and makes it hard for your dog to recover.

**Kennel cough** - is the name given to infectious bronchitis for dogs. It's similar to the chest infections that can affect humans. A variety of different bacteria and viruses can cause the illness. It affects the dog's respiratory system which in turn causes it to cough.

**Leptospirosis** - is a contagious bacterial disease that attacks and damages the kidneys and liver. If untreated it can be fatal. This disease is caused by a bacteria called *Leptospira*. The bacteria are spread through the urine of infected animals like dogs, mice, rats and cows. Dogs can also contract this disease from drinking or swimming in contaminated water. Any owners of Labradors and in our case Retrievers may well find they have a pet who seems to be instinctively drawn to open water. Some of the common symptoms include fever, a loss of appetite and lethargy.

**Parainfluenza** - This is a respiratory disease that can affect dogs of all ages. It can be transmitted through contact with infected dogs or airborne droplets caused by coughing or sneezing.

### **Who will vaccinate my puppy?**

One of your first jobs when getting your puppy is to register them with the local vet of your choice. They will in turn be the medical practitioner that administers your puppy's vaccinations.

### **How much will these vaccinations cost?**

The cost will vary depending on what vaccines are being administered and when. Following a Google search the primary vaccinations for your puppy will cost you approx £70 in the UK at the time of writing this book (2023)

Before you roll your eyes at yet another expense, remember that whatever the cost, it will be considerably less than the treatment your dog would need if they were to become ill from one of the diseases listed.

### **What if I rehomed my puppy from a charity or an animal home?**

In most of the cases I researched your puppy will have been given their vaccinations, but it's always a good idea to check. Quite often the "*adoption fee*" or "*suggested donation*" that a charity or animal home may charge may be going to cover the costs of your dog's vaccinations.

### **Reason 11- Dogs Are Man's Best Friend:**

*"A dog is one of the few things in life that is exactly what it seems."  
Unknown*





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## WEEK 12

This, like parenting, will probably differ from puppy to puppy but as it was and continues to be as a parent, it often feels like one step forward and two back.

The first 2 weeks we were amazed at how easily Nell would go into her crate at the end of the day. Unlike our children we only had to endure 2 nights (*the first 2*) of sleeping on a mattress next to her crate, occasionally holding paws through the bars.

After that, well up until the start of her 3rd week of living with us it was plain sailing. That said, for the past 3 nights even though we have followed the same pattern she howled and cried for a good hour before going to sleep.

Having a child or puppy that refuses to go to sleep and in turn lets you sleep is a very effective way of reducing some or all of the "*Joy and Wonder*" of parenting.

Here are some things you can try if your puppy is howling like a banshee when you try to put them to bed

- If he or she is in a crate, place the crate where they can see what's going on but also rest. So as opposed to a draughty basement or garage put it in a corner of a warm kitchen or living room. I often put her in her crate and then do my "nightly 10 minute pottering" of checking doors are locked, loading the dishwasher etc.
- In the crate make sure there's a comfy bed, a toy to chew and a small bowl of water.
- Partially cover the crate with a breathable blanket to make it cosier and cave like.
- If you're feeding your dog dry food like Royal Canin, maybe take out a couple of their food pellets and scatter them in their crate.
- Never use the crate for punishment.

### **What is "Extinction burst" behaviour?**

Unfortunately you have to ignore a crying puppy as long as they are not in any physical pain. If you rush to them whenever they cry, ultimately you are rewarding bad behaviour.

What this will teach them is...

Oh okay, howling gets Dad's attention therefore crying and howling is an effective way to get his attention.

When you then try to correct their behaviour by ignoring their howls they will just think you haven't heard them and cry even harder.

*Extinction Burst* is the term that describes when the situation gets worse before it eventually gets better.

It is ultimately, like parenting your children, a battle of wills. If you cave into their demands for attention, another biscuit, McDonald's for tea, they will have learnt that crying works. Just sometimes you have to do it a bit louder or for a bit longer.

This is easier said than done but instead of getting cross, try to make a plan and stick to it.

- Train your puppy to enjoy their own company. During the day leave them in a room alone after they have had a wee or a poo to limit accidents.
- Make a nighttime routine and stick to it. Playing with them for the last hour of the day to tire them out and putting them out for their last pee or poo break can help. Then put them in their crate, say “*Night Time*” leave the room and don’t give in to their cries.

### **How long can a puppy hold in a wee?**

This is definitely not an exact science but from the research I have done the general consensus seems to say that it’s one hour for every month of life. So a 12 week old puppy should be able to hold it for 3-4 hours.

During my research I did see it written that it can be longer at night. Our puppy tends to have her last bowel movement before being put in her crate anytime from 10pm to midnight. My wife then lets her out for her first wee of the day at approx 5am. So far 3 weeks in, that seems to be working.

### **What is Puppy Fear?**

It’s important in the same way that navigating the world as a child or adult can be daunting the exact same can be said for your puppy. Puppy fear which is also known as “*Fear Period*” is the developmental phase that most puppies will go through in the first few months of their life. When you go for their first walks, it’s what makes them cower and hide behind your legs when a car goes past. Understanding this phase and how you can help your puppy overcome their fear is important for their emotional well being.

Puppy fear is a natural part of your young dog's development. It's something you need to navigate with them, not fear for them. Its purpose is to help them learn to distinguish between safe and potentially life threatening situations.

For example: they will eventually learn that the Hoover, noisy and unpredictable as it is, is more an annoying noise than a genuine threat. That said, other animals if you live anywhere tropical where poisonous snakes and spiders are a part of their surroundings could offer a serious threat. I remember one particular hot summer when my dad was redoing our patio, he unearthed what looked like an Adder's nest. Adders, like slow worms and grass snakes, are indigenous to the British Isles.

### **Can a bite from an Adder kill a dog?**

It would depend on the following

- The age, size and weight of the dog.
- The health of the dog
- Where the dog was bitten
- The amount of venom transferred during an attack

This particular summer was the summer we had got our first family dog and because a bite from an adder could potentially kill a puppy we all had to be on the look out for snakes.

I think the noise of my dad ripping up a patio and the occasional profanity would have been more than enough to encourage a family of adders to find somewhere quieter.

### **What are the common signs of puppy fear?**

- Your puppy may be startled easily. The Hoover, the mop, the springy things you have to stop your doors



slamming, all seemed to unnerve our puppy to varying degrees.

- Hiding. Your puppy seeks the safety of furniture or being in their crate if they are feeling anxious or threatened.
- Excessive barking. Some puppies react to fear by barking excessively as a way to communicate their anxiety.
- Trembling or shaking unless they are really cold is a physical manifestation of fear in puppies.
- Avoidance. Your puppy might avoid situations or people they find intimidating.

### **How can I help my puppy with puppy fear?**

In the same way that you should with yourself or anyone else, with unlimited amounts of patience and understanding.

It's important to remember that puppy fear is a normal phase of development. Being patient and avoiding scolding your puppy for its scared reactions is vital to your and their shared success. Exposing your puppy to new people and animals in a positive and controlled manner will help. Do what you can to make these experiences pleasant, rewarding and not too overwhelming for your puppy.

Avoid throwing them straight in at the deep end and adopt a gradual exposure to new experiences. Doing this will help to build their confidence and not overwhelm them.

You being confident when a noisy car or dog goes past you both can help. It will help your puppy to gain confidence and trust in you as their leader of their pack.

In the same way that you, no doubt would do so for other members of the family, ensure your home is a safe and secure

place for your puppy.

Removing potential hazards and providing your puppy with a comfortable crate or similar safe space they can retreat to, will really help them. Like our adventurous puppy, use stair gates to limit access to areas that could confuse or overwhelm them. Also stairs themselves can become a fear inducing hazard,

I had to rescue Nell on several occasions from halfway up the stairs when she started to panic when she couldn't work out how to safely turn around and get back down to ground level.

In the exact same way that my wife didn't shout or critique when I was trying to do something very similar just in an NCP car park with a car full of screaming children. I spoke to her calmly and rewarded her with a treat. In her case with a stroke on the head and a dog biscuit, in my case with a stroke on the back of the neck and a Greggs sausage roll.

### **What if none of this works for our puppy?**

If your puppy's fear seems severe or persistent consult your vet or a professional dog trainer. A dog trainer with experience of dealing with behaviour issues will no doubt be able to tailor some advice for your puppy's specific situation.

Keep calm and coach your dog.

Dogs are highly attuned to their owner's emotions. Staying calm and composed around your puppy will prevent them from picking up on your anxiety.

### **What and when should I be feeding my puppy?**

Feed them the same puppy food as they had before and keep the same routine with small, regular meals. At this 12ish week stage we have been feeding our dog the dried food that the breeder was using 4 times a day.

Our dog tends to wake up around 5.30 - 6am. She gets fed around 8am, midday, 5pm and around 9pm. We and therefore she, tends to want to make tracks for her crate and bed at around 10pm.

Feeding her at 9pm gives her time to digest it and need a last poo/wee of the day. This may differ from breed to breed but it's what we were advised by our breeder and it seems to work for us.

If she's lucky her first 8am meal may contain some scrambled egg as a topper and one of her other meals might have some shredded chicken breast (*nothing with bones*) as a topper too.

### **Survival Tip**

If you don't choose to give her a chance to have the last crap of the day she may be encouraging you in the best way she knows how, in the early hours of the morning. To protect your sleep and sanity stick to a structure that ensures she's gone to the loo after each meal. This is especially important after her last food of the day, before she's about to spend 8 hours in her crate!

### **How do you stop a retriever puppy from gnawing on skirting boards?**

Ask them nicely? Hire a security guard? To be honest we still have absolutely no idea.

### **What does buying a purebred mean?**

It means you'll probably get to have an idea of what your dog will look like when it's fully grown.

### **When is my puppy a full grown dog?**

This may differ from breed to breed but the internet will be full of information that is specific to your dog's breed. In our case Golden Retrievers are considered to have reached an adult size

around the 12 - 18 month stage. In the first year of their life Golden Retrievers develop gradually. On their first birthday their coat and all their major organs are considered to be fully grown.

**Are a puppy's paws an effective way to determine its adult size?**

Again from my research, I have learnt that the size of a puppy's paws is not a definitive indicator of its eventual adult size. That said it can provide clues about its potential adult size.

According to "*Endura Flap*" who specialise in making pet doors a puppy's paws can be a good indicator of a dog's future growth spurts, especially if their paws are unusually large.

The research also indicates that large breed dogs like Labradors and Golden Retrievers need bigger feet to support their heavier frames and taller heights. Small feet would not be effective for a 100 pound dog. So to conclude when your dog is a puppy their paws will already be on the larger side in anticipation of their growth.

That said while a puppy's paw size can be a good indicator of whether his or her growth spurt is finished it doesn't tell you how much bigger your dog will actually be.

**Survival Tip**

Make it as clear as you can that no one ever buys your dog a squeaky toy. It's a very underrated form of torture. That also goes for discarded plastic toys that may evolve into squeaky, rattly items from months of chewing work.



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## WEEK 13

In the 13th week of your pup's life, they're going through important developmental milestones and changes.

Socialisation is still a really important part of your puppy's development and it needs to continue throughout this stage. You need to continue to expose them to various people, animals, environments and the Hoover. Doing so will help them become well-adjusted adult dogs. Positive social experiences early on in their life can help to prevent fear or aggressive behaviour in the future.

Thanks to the diligent work of my daughter, commands like sit and stay are becoming standard practice before we give her food. This is the puppy equivalent of my wife and I asking our boys not to put their feet on the table or watching electronic gadgets during meals. As you may do with your children, learn to negotiate and compromise.

For example...

If your child is apparently "*starving*" but you are literally in the process of cooking their dinner, offer them a piece of bread or

fruit. This will test if they are hungry or just a bit bored.

Dogs not being allowed upstairs in bedrooms seems to me like a good and important rule to try and enforce. They will, of course, challenge you on that. I'm guessing your dog may observe you going upstairs and think that must be okay for them.

The same I'm sure can be said for the sofa. They see you all sitting on the sofa and think that's a good idea. In an ideal world, not having your furry child on the sofa is probably preferable but maybe allow them on one sofa. Ideally the sofa you're less bothered about. Also invest in a machine washable throw for that sofa. This may cause you to avoid a lot of unnecessary stress.

If you have more than one child you may notice they learn different skills at different speeds. The same can be said of your puppy. What the other owners are posting in the shared WhatsApp about how much or how little their puppies are eating, sleeping, chewing dog toys, chewing skirting boards is irrelevant.

Your puppy is its own slightly stinky but still totally unique snowflake. It will therefore have its own skills and abilities. It will learn how to do all the things it needs to do at its own pace. I would avoid putting unnecessary pressure on yourself or the puppy to have achieved any particular milestones at any particular time.

Hot housing your puppy like hot housing your kids - it isn't going to help any one in the long term.

### **How is the family adapting to having a dog in week 13?**

Nell is an established member of the family and in the same way that we got used to every change of another child, we have got

used to knowing when to let her out, feed her, play with her etc. Her schedule seems to have slotted in fairly comfortably with everyone else's. The kids tend to spend the last 30 minutes or so of the day cuddling or saying goodnight to her.

This has also given them another emotional loophole of extending the day and increasing the levels of frustration of adults. That said, playing or cuddling the dog seems to calm them down as opposed to rev them up which puts them in a better mindset to wind down and go to sleep.

Trying to get my son to turn off his X box and get to bed was more often than not met with a tirade of abuse and tears at the total injustice of life!

Having Nell has undoubtedly had a calming effect on everyone, not just our children.

### **What does it mean when a puppy sleeps at or on your feet?**

I think there will be a clear parallel between a puppy's behaviour and your child's in this case. When a puppy sleeps at your feet it is almost certainly a sign of affection towards you and that they feel safe and trust you.

According to a number of articles I read online this is instinctive pack behaviour in response to various situations.

In the eyes of your domesticated dog you may be the leader of their pack. Don't forget their ancestors were wolves living in the harshest of environments as opposed to your suburban house. Your home may sometimes feel and sound like the harshest of environments, around breakfast and bedtime or whenever a wifi signal goes down but it isn't the wastelands of Siberia. Lying at your feet will reassure them of your protection. Again it shows that your puppy trusts you and feels safe around you.

## **What breeds are the most hardy?**

Although this isn't an exact science, there will be some breeds that are hardier than others. Lots of breeds have a reputation for suffering from certain health issues so it's definitely worth doing some research first. For example Great Danes who look more like small horses than dogs can have heart problems because they are so massive.

Labradors from memory can have problems with their backs or their back legs. This could be because they are often allowed to get too heavy which like it does for humans puts an unhealthy amount of pressure on their spine. Make sure that you do your research and select a breeder who can offer proof of tests. This will help to ensure the future health of your puppy.

Remember, while some breeds may be more likely to show certain types of behaviour, the way your puppy behaves as an adult will depend a great deal on their life up to that point. Certain breeds may have a reputation for growing into friendly family dogs, but if they aren't trained and socialised early, they could end up being afraid of strangers, unfamiliar dogs and even their own shadow!

## **Survival Tip**

If you are getting a Golden Retriever puppy not only start bulk buying lint rollers but maybe invest in the lint roller market!

## **Reason 13 Dogs Truly Are Man's Best Friend:**

They can provide allergic reaction alerts: Some dogs are trained to detect allergens preventing people from having severe allergic reactions.

*"If there are no dogs in Heaven, then when I die, I want to go where they went." Will Rogers*



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## WEEK 14

Why do dogs twitch in their sleep? This was a question I researched early on to reassure my daughter that our sleeping puppy almost certainly wasn't having a fit.

### **How did I know this?**

The truth is I didn't. I was basing my answer on a childhood of watching TV next to our twitching and farting dog.

She always woke up fine. From the research I have done on the subject, dogs like humans go through different sleep cycles. This includes REM (*the sleep stage we tend to be in for 25% where our brain waves slow down and our brain is highly active*)

During REM phase of sleep, dogs may demonstrate various movements like twitching, paw paddling or making noises. These movements are perfectly normal and associated with dreaming. Whenever our dog used to do this my dad used to comment that "*She's dreaming about chasing rabbits again!*"

Like us humans during this REM (*deep state of sleep*) dogs can experience dreams. Their twitching or movements during sleep

may just be a reflection of what they are dreaming about. I'm not sure if this is linked with what seems like a laissez faire attitude to farting. It's thought that these movements are related to the brain's activity during this phase of sleep, as their brains are processing information, memories and their life's experiences. When you see your dog twitching while they're asleep it's often an indication that they are in REM sleep and therefore dreaming.

### **Survival Tip**

Always knock before entering a room; you never know what your dog is licking or scratching.

### **Reason 14 Dogs Truly Are Man's Best Friend:**

There are dogs who can anticipate seizures and then provide or alert others for assistance.

*"Dogs are wise. They crawl away into a quiet corner and lick their wounds and do not rejoin the world until they are whole once more."-  
Agatha Christie*



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## WEEK 15

This week Nell took her first long car journey up North not only to meet my mum, but my mum's 6 year old Labrador and my sister's 3 year old Labrador.

### **How do you look after a 14 week puppy in a car on a 4 -5 hour long journey?**

Like children, any journey longer than say 10 minutes will require military style planning. We put our puppy's crate in the boot of the car which limited the danger of her bouncing around, getting scared or pooing or weeing on anyone. In fairness, she was incredibly well behaved. Door to door our journey up North took just under 5 hours which meant for the sanity of my wife and I, 4 \*FFWs stops.

*\*Fuel, food and Wee stops.*

When it comes to car journeys with children or animals this is the rule I now live by. Frustrating as it may feel, to be stopping and starting your trip every 45 to 60 minutes, it might help to improve how you may view your car journey. This tortoise approach won't win you any records but breaking up the

journey to give your dog, children and yourself a chance to stretch their legs, have a wee, buy an overpriced meal, is probably the best bet if you truly value your mental health.

There will be things on long car journeys that you can control. For example:

- Cleaning the car out so it's a nice space to be in for 5 hours.
- Filling up the windscreen fluid so if it's a hot day and you're attacked by bugs your windscreen won't start to resemble some insect battlefield.
- Having a couple of empty plastic bags hanging off the back of the passenger and driver's seat so sweet wrappers are just dropped in can help.
- Having things to entertain the child or animal who will need entertaining.

There are also things you just can't control...

- Traffic jams. There's only one thing worse than being stuck in a traffic jam with 3 children, a barking puppy on the hottest day of the year where you can't roll down the windows enough. Is all of that plus living with the smell of a puppy who has had no choice but to do a poo in it's crate.

Even if everyone, when asked, assures you that they really don't need the loo, that 10 minute veer off route to give everyone that opportunity may be the best decision of the hour.

- You can't control a puppy barking because she may understandably be feeling a bit freaked out being stuck

in a moving vehicle in the place she usually goes to escape and relax.

- Small children triggering a now barking dog with their arguments about who's turn it might be to tell a joke they've just made up.

One of the best things I think you can do is accept that you're on this journey and have a limited amount of control. Just go with it and if stopping every hour adds time to the journey it's worth it for the reason that it may also be adding to the quality of the journey.

### **How do you introduce your puppy to new older dogs?**

The first time we drove to introduce Nell to my mum and her 6 year old Labrador bitch Millie, my mum was also dog sitting my sister's 3 year old Labrador dog "Arlo"

Understandably the family had concerns about how our '15 week' old puppy might be received.

*"What if she gets growled at, or bitten or eaten!"*

I explained to my wife that although being eaten alive by another dog was possible it was also fairly unlikely.

Irrespective of age, dogs that know you and therefore may be excited to see you can be bouncy. This is certainly the case with my mum's dog. When you introduce your puppy to other adult dogs you should do it gradually and with careful supervision.

So for example in our case we left our puppy in her crate in the car while we all went in and met the dogs and made a fuss of them until they were both suitably calmed down.

If possible try and introduce them in neutral locations for the first meeting. This can reduce territorial behaviour and hopefully make it a calmer experience for everyone involved. For us,

this meant we put the two older dogs in the garden and made a fuss of them first.

Depending on how well you know the dogs in question it might be wise to keep all the dogs on a lead but making sure that the leads are loose to allow them to have some natural interaction. Pay close attention to the body language of all the dogs. Be aware of signs of stress, aggression or fear.

If there is growling or baring of teeth or their hackles go up I would remove the dogs to a different area to avoid any unpleasant escalations. It's also probably sensible to start at a safe distance. With that in mind, don't introduce them to each other in a cramped shoe boxed sized area. Allow them to observe each other from a safe distance for as long as it feels necessary.

Then do a gradual approach. Start slowly with the leads in hand and keep a close eye on their reactions. If they all remain calm and have done some calm and friendly bum sniffing you can allow them to get closer to each other. If their tails are wagging, it's a good sign. Even if there is mild growling as there was when our puppy met my sister's 3 year old "boy" Lab since his tail was wagging and everything else about his body language implied that he was kind of okay with this scrappy dog skipping around his feet.

When you want to encourage them, use positive reinforcement. Using treats and positive verbal reinforcement to reward their calm and friendly behaviour will help their bonding process. Verbally praise them when they show signs of positive social interaction like bum sniffing, tail wagging or my favourite the play bowing.

### **What is dog play bowing?**

It's when they place their front legs flat on the ground in front of another dog they want to play with. They may bark but if their tails are wagging it usually means they are being friendly and just want to play.

It's a common dog behaviour used to show playfulness and an invitation to another dog or human they want to play with. It's a common posture that dogs of all breeds, ages and sizes will adopt when they want to have fun. As mentioned a dog will stretch out its front legs and lean down on its elbows. This naturally brings its chest lower to the ground as if they are about to lie down but their bum stays up in the air.

It's often accompanied with some grinning, enthusiastic tail wagging and the occasional bark. To promote a successful first interaction, I would keep the first meet and greet short. Don't rush the process and gradually increase the time they spend together over days and weeks.

The more comfortable they seem in each other's company the longer they can spend together. For example my puppy was quite cheekily taking afternoon naps on my sister's dog's bed after about 12 hours which I felt was a little relaxed but seemed to be going down okay. In regard to this, when my sister's boy dog wanted to go to bed a fairly non committal low growl seemed to be enough to get our puppy to move.

The puppy will have an instinctive understanding of when they are in danger. When my mum's dog had clearly had enough of the constant ear biting one louder growl & a bark was all that was required to communicate to Nell that it might be a good time to wind her neck in. Even if all the dogs in question seem to be getting on like a house on fire it's important to allow them some time apart. All dogs need a safe space where they can relax

or retreat to. Puppies are lovely as are your children but like your children they can sometimes be pretty annoying. Having somewhere to retreat to away from the constant requests for biscuits or in this case ear biting is a good way of keeping all PR between dogs and people as harmonious as possible.

### **Repeat what works, stop what doesn't.**

This is a good maxim for life as it is when training your puppy. If something is working triple down on it. If something isn't bringing you the result you want, ignore your ego and stop doing it.

### **Encourage lots of socialisation**

Introducing your puppy to lots of different dogs, animals and people will help build their confidence and social skills. Teaching them to become more sociable, just as it is for human beings, is a continuous process that goes on forever, not just in the very early stages of a dog's life.

If you find your puppy is struggling to interact with other dogs and you've tried extensively yourself then it might be worth consulting a professional dog trainer or dog behaviourist for help and advice.

Like you and no doubt your children, your dog is unique and will have a unique temperament. If you have more than one child you will no doubt have observed that they don't have the exact same approach to meeting new people or making friends. Your dog will not follow a rule book and it's important for you to support your dog with its specific needs.

Some puppies may be more accepting of other dogs, the key is not to compare your dog to other dogs, even other dogs in its litter. As I have mentioned, your puppy is its own unique bum sniffing, puddle on the kitchen floor producing miracle sort of.



The key to your dog successfully socialising with other dogs is to take your time, remain patient and prioritise the safety of yourself and in this scenario any of the dogs involved. A successful first introduction can pave the way for positive and happy relationships for your puppy with other dogs and people.



### **How do I stop my puppy chewing skirting boards?**

From the research I did which was as much for this book as my own reassurance, it became evident that skirting board chewing was fairly standard behaviour. Apparently with patience and training you can help to curb this behaviour.

Here are some tips on what you can do to tackle this.

- Puppy proofing the area. If you remove or can just move any tempting objects or materials that your puppy can chew, this would be a good start. This includes keeping shoes and other items like electrical cables, tassels of sofa throws out of reach. This may not stop but it will help to reduce their opportunities for chewing.
- Provide chew toys. Puppies have a natural urge to chew especially early in their life when they are teething. If you don't offer a variety of interesting looking and shaped toys they will adapt and find their own. Safe and durable dog toys that have been designed specifically for teething puppies can help to satisfy their chewing instincts.
- Supervise your puppy. This is obviously easier said than done when like me you may be trying also to supervise your children raiding the biscuit tin or staying engaged during a zoom meeting. If you see them attempting to

chew a skirting board, redirect their attention to a dog toy straight away.

- Use a Bitter Spray.

I had never heard of this but apparently it's an effective way to stop puppies and Scotland rugby supporters chewing on skirting boards when they yet again go out in the Rugby World Cup flipping pool stages!!!!

A quick Google search has shown me that *"Pets At Home"* sells it for about a fiver. This spray as the name would suggest has a bitter taste that will deter your dog from gnawing anything it's sprayed on.

- Basic obedience training. In the same way that you may, like me, feel you spend your life telling your children to,

*"Be Careful!*

*Watch Out!*

*That's hot!*

*Don't Run In Here I've got a hot pan"* etc

You can do the same for your puppy. If you say *"Leave it!"* when they go to chew on a skirting board. Remember to reward them if they obey with kind words and affection.

### **What's the four paw rule?**

I don't know how official it is or if it's been officially trademarked to our dog breeder but I like the concept. She told us not to reward Nell with affection unless she has all four paws on the ground. So if she is jumping up because she's excited to see you don't make a fuss of her. Ignore her or tell her to *"Get down!"* In the literal version as opposed to James Brown Godfa-

ther of Soul approach. Only shower her affection when all 4 paws are on the floor.

- Exercise and mental stimulation?

You need to ensure that your puppy is getting plenty of physical and mental exercise everyday. A happily worn out and mentally stimulated dog is far less likely to engage in destructive behaviour like chewing skirting boards.

- Consult a Pro. If after you have repeatedly tried all of the above they are still chewing your house then you may need to employ the help of someone trained. Someone who has recently obtained their level 2 or 3 dog anti skirting board chewing qualification being a prerequisite.. That was a joke in case you're busy searching for a dog trainer with a qualification I've just made up.
- In exactly the same way that you would with your children, be kind and patient. Puppies are babies and like children they need time to learn about the world they live in. Like most things in life, consistency is key to your success.
- Continue to reinforce and reward good behaviour and discourage annoying chewing of skirting boards. With time and effort most puppies will outgrow this stage, I know I did.

### **Survival Tip**

When you come down in the morning or any time you leave your dog unattended for more than 10 minutes be prepared for unexpected "*gifts*" left. When I say gifts I mean wee, poo or vomit.

**Reason 15 Dogs Are Man's Best Friend:** There is significant evidence to show that positive interaction with dogs can have both physical and mental health benefits. Studies show it can lower your blood pressure, reduce stress levels and improve your overall feelings of well being. Dogs encourage you to take more physical activity and that plus the sense of responsibility can produce a profound sense of comfort and joy, comfort and joy...

*"The greatest fear dogs know is the fear that you will not come back when you go out the door without them." Stanley Coren*



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## WEEK 16

Our puppy is becoming a lot more adventurous and we've started putting her on a lead and walking her around the garden as well as 10 to 15 minute walks around the block. She's quite happy being outside while she's done her business. That said, she's still pretty clumsy. I hope that's what it is as opposed to choosing to stand or sit in the pile of steaming poo she's just produced.

This segways me on to the next question you might have, if like us, you have a puppy.

### **How do I wash a puppy?**

Washing a puppy is an essential part of their grooming as well as helping to keep them clean and healthy. It's all the more important if like us your dog has a habit of standing and sitting or both on her own poo.

If what happens to me happens to you and you're having a chat with your neighbour over the fence about your recent Rhubarb crop. Halfway through the conversation he helpfully points out

she's standing in something she's just digested. Here are some tips on how to get her *"back in the house clean"*.

You will need...

- Puppy shampoo.

Apparently this is specifically formulated just for puppies and not as I was corrected by my wife, specifically formulated to play into the narrative of anxious dog parents that they're not doing enough for their baby dogs. Mmm highly efficient marketing strategies of guilt and shame, sounds familiar?

- Towels you will need towels, the dog will need towels, the room, stairs, house will need towels after you've tried to wash a Golden Retriever puppy!
- Non slip bath mat
- Cotton balls plug ears, be careful they don't try and eat them.
- A brush once they are hopefully one day dry again.
- A post wash treat for them for positive reinforcement.
- You may also find that you need a post wash treat for positive reinforcement. May I suggest a large scotch or a week alone sat in a dark but warm shipping container.

I wish I had decided to do this myself as I was carrying our puppy who'd managed to smear her own still warm excrement over her paws, belly and chin.

Before the bath or emergency shower try and give her a brush to remove any knots or tangles in her fur. I would go with the technique of using a shower with a head you can remove. I then as gently as I could manage wedged her between my thighs and just accepted that I was also going to get about as wet as her!

Just like when bathing your children make sure to check the temperature of the water so as not to burn her. I have seen it suggested that you place cotton balls in her ears so as not to get water inside. If my experience is anything to go by, these become an unhelpful distraction that either keep falling out, get instantly soaked and therefore a new ear hazard in themselves or something she wants to sniff or eat.

I found that gently placing your cupped hand around her ears and just being careful is a better option.

When your puppy is completely wet and wedged between your thighs, apply the impressively marketed “dog shampoo” and wash in the same way you would a very wriggly child who hates having their hair washed.

Make sure to rinse out all the soap and dry her thoroughly. When it comes to drying make sure to be gentle as the skin is delicate.

As my wife did you can also use a hair dryer but I advise using the lowest setting and don't direct the warm air into her ears or eyes. Just to be on the safe side I would cup her ears if you are blow drying around the head area.

It's important to make sure they are completely dry especially with a long haired dog like a Retriever. If you don't you will get a wet dog smell throughout the house from your still wet dog.

In the same way you may have to cajole your kids to have a bath, you may need to heap praise on your dog before, during and after the process. If you make a fuss of them during bath time they may start to have positive associations with the whole experience.

## **What's an effective way to stop your puppy chewing skirting boards?**

*A Pig's ear or a stick made out of yak's milk. Anyone?*

Both of those may sound rank but I can assure you our Nell is a big fan of both. That said be warned if you put it into the microwave for a minute and then leave it for 5 minutes it will turn into what looks like a very large and very smelly Wotsit!

Or if you really want to push the boat out treat her to a high-land reindeer antler.

## **Is my dog a descendant of a wolf?**

I only really shoehorned in an answer to this question to wind up my wife. From all the research it does appear that yes, dogs are descendants of wolves. The domestic dogs latin name (*canis lupus familiaris*) shares a common ancestor with the grey wolf, latin name (*canis lupus*) or canine. It is believed to have been domesticated from wolves thousands of years ago. This alone in my mind justifies my asking my wife how baby wolf is?

The exact timing and location are still subject to ongoing research and debate but it is widely accepted that dogs evolved from wolves through a process of selective breeding by early humans. I imagine it may have happened at someone's prehistoric BBQ. A handful of Neanderthals sitting round the fire chomping on Wildebeest steaks and complaining about being asked to do gathering when everyone knows and really should accept their role is exclusively hunting.

Maybe they had a laissez faire attitude to rubbish and someone chucked the bone of a tomahawk steak over their shoulder. Maybe a Grey Wolf lurking in the shadows got braver and gingerly came forward to retrieve it. Dare I say Golden Retrieve it?



From the research I've read it indicates that over generations humans selectively bred wolves to have certain personality traits. Traits such as sociability, docility, not going upstairs or jumping on the sofa etc. This breeding of dogs to have specific physical characteristics would have led to the development of different dog breeds. Therefore despite differences in appearance, behaviour and temperament all dogs belong to the same species as wolves.

Therefore if you want to roll around with your poodle or pug before no doubt posting the news on social media that you've just been wrestling with your "*descendant of a wolf baby*" your wife is not allowed to roll her eyes.

### **Survival Tip**

Play and massage your puppies toes and nails from a very early age. That way when you need to clip his or her nails they won't be freaked out by it.

**Reason 16** - Dogs Are Man's Best Friend : Dogs are trained in help in the protection of conservation and wildlife protection. They can track and protect endangered species as well as deterring poachers.





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## WEEK 17

From my lived experience of looking at our family dogs at fairly close range, looking a dog straight in the eyes can be perceived as a sign of aggression or dominance.

Whether it's dangerous or not probably depends on a number of factors. Your dog's temperament, your dog's breed or your dog's present mood.

Like you, our dog and dogs in general can feel tired, stressed, scared or irritable. I would strongly advise you to never go up to a dog you don't know and look straight into its eyes. Doing this could end in serious injury and potentially a normally calm family dog having to be put down.

Like children your puppy is an individual and like children, especially if like me you have more than one, you will see that they have very different temperaments.

Some dogs may not react negatively to direct eye contact, while others may see it as a threat. That said it's something I strongly advise you don't investigate for a bit of fun, even with a dog you may feel you know really well, like you're own. Yes they may be

your cuddly little bundle of joy but they are still an animal and like all animals they are an unknown quantity.

I firmly believe there are no bad children or bad dogs. Dogs like people are not born bad. In almost all cases I think it's how they are treated that determines how they interact with you and the rest of the world. If they are forced to learn from an early age that the world is a scary dangerous place that may negatively impact how they behave in it. In regard to this question it's often a lot more about the context in which you make your eye contact that matters. If you approach a dog in an aggressive or threatening manner and make extended and direct eye contact it may result in a negative response. In contrast, brief and friendly eye contact with the dog at a safe distance even if you've never met them before may not pose any sort of problem.

A lot will come down to a dog's previous experiences with people which is sadly nothing you can do or have done anything about. The same can be said for people. A dog's past experiences with people and other animals will strongly influence how it reacts to different social cues, including eye contact. If a dog has previously had positive experiences with people it may be more accepting of direct eye contact.

### **What can show you what sort of mood a dog is in?**

You can often tell a lot by a dog's body language. If a dog seems uncomfortable or showing signs of distress or agitation (*showing their teeth or stiffening*) it's important not to turn your back but to back away slowly. Doing this will give the dog some space without encouraging it to chase you down.

When you're approaching a dog it's always a safe idea to ask the owner for permission. No one will understand a dog's mannerism or behaviour better than the person who spends the

most time with them. If the owner says it's fine to stroke the dog, lower yourself to the dog's level to appear less threatening and allow the dog to approach you. This approach will help to create a much more positive and less threatening interaction.

**When will you understand your dog?**

At 17 weeks your puppy may have lived with you for around 2 months.

At this stage I would say that all five of us were getting to understand and pick up on what Nell's unique mannerisms meant.

Barking at the back door = please let me out I need a poo or a wee

Barking at the bottom of the stairs = please remove the foam gym mat you've wedged as a barrier I really want to explore upstairs.

Hiding behind the sofa = I've done a poo in the hall and am waiting nervously for you to find it.

My wife seems to have adopted a similar relationship with the puppy to ours.

There definitely seems to be a strong correlation between the number of poos in the hall / times she's had to tell her to stop jumping up on the sofa with how many cuddles she has with the dog in a week. The correlation is the same in our marriage although I haven't intentionally poohed in the hallway for years.

One of the most positive changes our puppy has brought to family life is how my eldest son who often found the start of the day the most traumatic and frustrating now seems to be a completely different child. Trying to get him up and dressed for school was usually met with tears, anger, requests to stay at

home, arguments about being allowed to play on the X box. There were sometimes even physical tussles when he refused to get in the car unless I allowed him to have 7 empty Prime bottles and my old work mobile phone in his book bag.

His morning routine couldn't now be any more different. He wakes up without me asking him and then pads down to talk to and cuddle Nell. The puppy who can often be equally boisterous seems to pick up on his emotional state and is very calm.

This change in his behaviour, which I can only assume is from the calm influence that Nell provides, has completely changed the dynamic of the daily routine of getting our three kids to school.

### **Survival Tip**

Dogs are very loyal animals but they are also very resourceful and therefore if you're holding anything that resembles a food item, your dog is your new best friend.

**Reason 17 Dogs Are A Man's Best Friend** - Dogs of many breeds are often used in both military and security work. They may be tasked to assist with tasks such as tracking bomb detection and patrol work.

*"A dog teaches a boy fidelity, perseverance, and to turn around three times before lying down." Robert Benchley*



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## WEEK 18

### **Teething**

I sometimes forget that as a baby dog they are still growing into their bodies and their physical development is an ongoing project.

Your puppy will start to lose his or her first baby teeth around four months old. At the six to eighth month stage they will have lost all of their very sharp baby teeth.

These teeth are being replaced with their adult teeth. From two months on your puppy will be growing their new teeth so that at the eight month stage they should have a total of 42 adult teeth.

This teething process can give them sore gums which might explain their strong urge to chew toys and skirting boards. If you can give them some dog chew toys this will *“hopefully”* help to alleviate their sore gums and rescue your furniture.

At this stage our puppy seems to be sleeping less through the day and doing a lot more zooming. In the same way that I will

never forget the day all three of our kids became a mobile threat. She is big enough now to put her front two feet on the table, sofa, and window sill. This may be amusing to see and reassuring of her development but like, for newly mobile children, it's a whole new world of work and dynamic risk assessing for you. Cups of tea that were once relatively safe balanced on a book next to you on the sofa, now just aren't.

Young children who can't be trusted to not offer half a meal they want to skip on route to pudding are now even more encouraged to share a chicken goujon.

The parallels between raising a puppy and your child are startling. At every stage of her development, I find that I have a not dissimilar memory.

**My puppy seems to want to run around a lot, how much is too much exercise?**

Puppies do have a lot of energy and need regular exercise to ensure their physical development stays on track. Play time and short walks (*5 minutes per month of their life*) are essential for their physical and mental development. It's really important not to over exercise them as their bones and joints are still developing.





### Should I still be feeding them 4 times a day?

This may differ from breed to breed but from the research I have done this table below indicates what seems to be a good guide of when to feed your puppy.

PUPPY AGE	MEAL FREQUENCY	TIMING	SUGGESTED MEAL TIMES
8 - 10 weeks	5 TIMES A DAY	EVERY 3 HRS	7am-1pm-4pm-7pm-10pm
10 - 12 weeks	4 TIMES A DAY	EVERY 4 HRS	7am- 2pm - 5pm-10pm
12 weeks - 5 months	3 TIMES A DAY	EVERY 5 HRS	7am-Midday-5pm
5-6 months +	2 TIMES A DAY	EVERY 8-10 HRS	7-9am & 5-7pm

I noticed that from 12 weeks onwards our puppy suddenly went from being a bit picky about what we put in her food bowl to being able to see her face in it.

Like our other children as she approached an adolescent stage of her life two things seemed to change.

Firstly she seemed to be hungry all the time, which helped to explain her rapid physical growth. Secondly her behaviour seemed to become a bit more, well, teenagery.

This manifested in things like barking her objections when I removed her from the sofa. Picking fights with our youngest when he came downstairs to “say goodnight”

Barking at me when I told her off for chewing the skirting boards, then doing it again while simultaneously staring at me.

Puppies may start testing boundaries and displaying teenagery behaviour at this stage. As I would advise any parent of children, the best way to combat this is to try and stay calm and be consistent. Being constant with training and discipline, using positive reinforcement and avoiding harsh punishments is the way forward.

There are also positives at this teenagery stage. Like with your other children you will find that they need less support with things like getting dressed or going to the toilet. At the 12 week stage onwards our puppy was getting very good at trotting off to sit patiently at the back door to signify she needed to do a 1 or a 2 or the dream combo of a 3.

Lots of praise and a cuddle post poo will help to reinforce this helpful habit.

### **Survival Tip**

Don't leave any food unattended, ever. Even if it's on a table or kitchen counter that, to the naked eye, looks out of reach to your dog. In the same way that human beings can call on super-human feats of strength, speed and ingenuity when they really need to. In this case when they really need to reach that Christmas ham ....

**Reason 18 - Dogs Are Man's Best Friend** - Dogs like Border Collies and Sheepdogs are essential for roles like herding livestock, while other working breeds assist with tasks like hunting, guarding and farming.

*"Dogs are better than human beings because they know but do not tell." Emily Dickinson*



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## WEEK 19

As well as growing in size, appetite and confidence this week Nell has managed to negotiate the most challenging of family obstacles, having her own furniture space. Like our other 3 children, she needed her own space in the house. At least 25% of the living room where we put her crate, food bowl, water bowl box of dog toys was clearly not considered enough for her! Apparently she also required furniture.

This leads me on to trying to answer a question which has been discussed and argued over by married couples probably since the dawn of time.

### **Should you let your dog sit on the sofa?**

Obviously there isn't a definitive answer for this. Whether or not you should allow your dog to sit on your sofa is a personal decision. It will depend on a number of factors, ultimately your house rules and how the dog behaves when sitting next to you on the sofa.

If you're not that bothered by their frequent DIY gynaecological inspections and cleaning routine then they will probably get

away with being on the sofa. If, like children, they wriggle while you're trying to write groundbreaking literature about having a puppy causing you to spill your tea they will probably be encouraged to sit on the floor.

That said, your dog probably views him or herself as your equal. They may see themselves as just another member of the family (*pack*) and when they see you all sitting on the sofa they probably think that it's just what is done.

That said, and this is probably because the house I grew up in had a non-negotiable punishable by major feelings of parental disappointment “*no dogs upstairs especially in bedrooms*” rule. I also don't really want our dog upstairs wandering about or jumping on our beds.

As Nell has demonstrated in the excitement of finding herself in the forbidden land beyond the stairs, peed on the rug in my son's bedroom. A rug that like a lot of the soft furnishings this house has seen has like others before it a 2 to 3 monthly shelf life before ending up, being washed, hung outside on the trampoline and then in the tip. Not only would allowing Nell upstairs create more cleaning but it would encourage my wife's addiction to buying more soft furnishings.

In the same way that all the humans living in the house do their best “*some more than others*” to live by an accepted list of household rules your dog needs to attempt to buy into that.

I suppose the problem is that maybe in the eyes of your dog they are like you? They see you going upstairs, sitting on sofas, eating food at the table and think the same rules apply to them.

We all need to try and live by rules that give our life the correct balance of form and chaos. In the same way that as parents you need to be consistent with your parenting approach so they

don't try and play you off with each other, the same goes for your job of parenting a puppy.

Much as we may think it, human beings and dogs don't like chaos. We tend to flourish when there is some structure or rules to live by.

Another reason why keeping your dogs off the sofa or as we have done only allowing her to sit on a specific comfy chair that we bought for £70 off Facebook marketplace, it will not only extend the life of your sofas but stop them becoming thriving communities for whatever germs your dog is transferring to them from his or her feet.

I would consider myself pretty effective at cleaning my puppy's feet when she, more often than not, steps in her own poop, but I'm just a man and therefore not perfect.

With that in mind as well as...

- Prohibit them from sitting on or joining you on any sofas you want to preserve at least until you complete the finance agreement.
- Train them to see that the second hand slightly dog eared comfy chair or sofa that you got on Gumtree is their chair.
- I would advise covering all the chairs and sofas in machine washable throws to help protect them.

Washing them regularly will help to reduce the "*doggy*" smell that you are all probably becoming more and more "*nose blind*" to.

Also a practical reason to keep your puppy off the sofa is that puppies don't stay puppy size forever. Certaining in the case of our Golden Retriever even at this 4 month stage we can already

see that she is going to become quite a unit. A sizable animal that may take up all the lion's share of space on a sofa.

### **How do I deal with feeling angry or frustrated with our puppy?**

Most of the time everyone seems to be pretty happy that we share our home with a furry bundle of joy. There will also be times when you're feeling a bit "over" parenting a dog.

- Coming down first thing in the am to be confronted with a large pile of dog poo they are repeatedly jumping in.
- They continue to jump on and scratch the sofa you're still trying to pay off.
- They lull you into a false sense of security by affectionately lying on your feet only to then start biting your toes.
- When they somehow manage to breach the bottom of the stairs barricades and interrupt your Zoom meeting to alert you to the fact that they are stuck at the top of the stairs and now can't get down.

Like kids and their similar acts of frustration it's important to just try to breath and laugh it off.

I'm sure when you think about it, these moments are going to be in the minority. Nine times out of ten it will be your dog's influence that calms you down when you're feeling stressed or anxious. It's also important to remember as a baby they are just, like all of us trying to find their way in the world.

### **Survival Tip**

Remember, life is better with a furry, four-legged friend by your side – even if they do make every day an adventure!

**Reason 19 - Dogs Are Man's Best Friend** - Dogs naturally provide comfort and emotional support. They can be trained to provide specific support to people in hospitals, nursing homes and schools to help reduce stress and anxiety.

*"Dogs are not our whole life, but they make our lives whole." Roger Caras*







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## WEEK 20

This book was always meant to come across as a friendly supportive guide. I really hope it feels more like *“here are things I tried that you could do...”* as opposed to *“This is what you must do!”*

Like a lot of the advice you’ll find on the internet the information in here is the suggested best practice. It won’t take into consideration any of the financial or emotional factors in your life. Therefore if your 20 week old puppy isn’t able to do all, some or any of these skills, don’t beat yourself up. Like parenting and your time on this planet as a whole we have way less control than we think we do. According to the actual grown up dog experts on the internet, ideally at this 20 week point your puppy should have some sort of grasp on the following.

- They should have their daily food routines established.
- They should know where their food and water dishes are located and instinctively have an idea what time their meals are. (My mum’s 6 year old Lab has been known to locate her at the exact time, often to the minute, she is due her evening meal.)

- Forgetting and forgiving the occasional accident, your puppy should be pretty much completely toilet trained by this stage in their development.
- They should be used to when and where you let them out to go for a poo or wee and ideally might even sit and bark at that door to let you know.
- Your puppy should be fairly well “*socialised*” and familiar with the various noises and smells in their surroundings.
- Traffic noises, people of all ages, shapes and size and other animals shouldn’t really faze them at this stage in their development. If they do still worry about them, they just need to be given more opportunities to become familiar with these things.
- Trips to the vet, being made to have a bath, toenails clipped, all the really unglamorous elements of parenting life (*for dogs and children*) should be things they have experienced by this stage.

As previously mentioned, I’m afraid with alarming frequency, the parallels between parenting a child and a puppy are clear. Dogs and children can both be adverse to the daily routines of cleaning teeth, brushing hair, having baths etc. Fear-inducing tasks like going to the doctors or vets can and probably will be a constant arm wrestle for you with them. The more you can get them into routines the better. The more these fundamentals become natural daily habits the easier and smoother life should be, in theory.

By this stage your puppy (*should*) also have an understanding of some basic obedience commands. Obviously this is entirely your choice. There isn’t yet a Dog Division of Ofsted to unhelpfully send a local representative to judge you on the shininess of your dog bowl. No Local Dog Behaviour Liaison Officer will

arrive unannounced and remove your dog if your pet looks at you blankly when you ask it to sit, or roll over or answer who was the first person to win the Nobel Peace Prize and in 1901? All jokes and anti Ofsted propaganda aside, I do think teaching your dog some basic obedience like

- Sitting and waiting for their food.
- Not jumping up to people.
- Not begging while you're eating at the table.
- Learning to walk to heel while you're out walking.
- Coming back to you when called if you're out walking and they're off the lead.

Teaching these 5 life skills to your puppy (and children if you have the energy) will, I think, really help to reduce some of the future stress in your parenting life. *\*Just in case you are interested it was Henri Dunant and Frederic Passy who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1901*

### **Survival Tip**

Do whatever you can to dog proof your bins. If they have any suspicion that there may be something worth investigating they will adopt the tenacity of Liam Neeson in the film *"Taken."*

**Reason 20 - Dogs are man's best friend** - Dogs are trained to perform in films and television. They can be trained to do a variety of skills and stunts.

*"I believe in integrity. Dogs have it. Humans sometimes lack it." Cesar Millan*





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## WEEK 21

Like parenting you might often feel it's one step forward several back. Puppies like children are highly susceptible to their emotions. Dogs are also well known for their ability to read human body language and our emotional cues.

### **Body Language**

Dogs at all stages, including puppies, are experts at reading human body language. They can and will pick up on subtle cues that you might not even be aware you are doing.

Facial expressions, the way you move, your tone and voice etc. If you seem happy they may respond with playfulness. Alternatively if you are quiet or withdrawn they may try to offer emotional support. For example sitting close to you or by your feet.

The tone of your voice is also a big give away of where you are at emotionally. Dogs can distinguish between a happy cheerful voice and an angry or distressed one. Dogs also have an excellent sense of smell and can detect very subtle changes in your

smell that might happen when you're feeling stressed, unhappy or anxious.

Dogs can be very empathetic creatures and may try to offer comfort or companionship if they sense you are unhappy.

When a dog comes and lies down near to you or on your feet or leans against you on the sofa or puts their chin on your arm it's not just about their ability to pick up on your emotional state. It's as much that they want to be closer to you as a way of providing some support. It has been shown that puppies can often mirror your emotional state. If you're energetic and happy that can affect how they behave. With that in mind, if you are calm in your voice and physical mannerism that might help to settle your puppy down.

Like human beings, dogs may vary in their ability to pick up or support their owners' emotions. Some may be perfectly attuned where others are not as adept. Building a strong emotional bond with your dog through positive training and interactions can only develop their ability to effectively communicate and respond to your emotions.

## **SURVIVAL TIP**

If you're running late, your dog will have an urgent need to sniff every lamppost.

**Reason 21 Dogs are man's best friend** - Companionship: Dogs are loyal and loving companions, offering emotional support and reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation.

*"I have found that when you are deeply troubled, there are things you get from the silent devoted companionship of a dog that you can get from no other source." Doris Day*



## CONCLUSION

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### **How does the added cost and work of having another life to manage affect the family?**

In the days and years to come there will no doubt be more than enough smelly dog stress, but after 6 months of having a dog living in our house, I can tell you this. When I lie down on the floor to be sniffed, licked and climbed on, it provides me with a profound sense of calm. As someone who has struggled with mental health for years and has been on and off, mostly on, medication, “*profound senses of calm*” have often felt few and far between.

I really hope something in this book might resonate with anyone who battles with their mental health. I can only imagine your puppy running towards you wagging its tail, like you’re the literal highlight of their day, creating a sizable surge of oxytocin may become one of if not the highlight of your day. I’ve found that the best way for me to manage my anxiety is to learn about it. To study what helps and then double down on that with daily regularity.

## THE FOLLOWING ACTS HELP ME ENORMOUSLY

My children hugging me, even if that's accompanied with a poorly hidden agenda of, *"I'd like another ice cream please?"* My wife looking hot in her teacher's work clothes (*she'll hate me saying that and therefore it might not make the final draft*). Exiting the English Channel having immersed myself into pretty cold water. Cycling home after Brazilian Jui Jitsu. In particular a class where I may have managed to submit someone or at least was tapped less times than usual.

These moments are all very different but the effects they have on my internal physiology feel the same. My shoulders drop, I instinctively take in long and grounding breaths and everything in my world just feels better than it did.

What the past 6 months of rescuing Nell from halfway up the stairs, picking up her poo and protecting our skirting boards from her razor sharp teeth has shown me is that being sniffed, licked, or sat on by "Nell" is something that has joined the list.

I really appreciate you reading my book and if you have got a puppy I hope your skirting boards are okay.

Love James...and Nell.

*Some people don't understand the love I have for my dog, that's okay my dog does.*

*Unknown*





## **Famous Quotes About Dogs**

*"To his dog, every man is Napoleon; hence the constant popularity of dogs." - Aldous Huxley*

*"My dog's only flaw is not living forever." - Unknown*

*"I wonder if other dogs think poodles are members of a weird religious cult." - Rita Rudner*

*"Ever consider what our dogs must think of us? I mean, here we come back from a grocery store with the most amazing haul, chicken, pork, half a cow. They must think we're the greatest hunters on earth!" - Anne Tyler*

*"You can trust your dog to guard your house but never trust your dog to guard your sandwich." - Unknown*

*"A dog can't think that much about what he's doing, he just does what feels right." - Barbara Kingsolver*

*"If your dog is fat, you're not getting enough exercise." - Unknown*

*"A dog desires affection more than its dinner. Well – almost." - Charlotte Gray*

*"If you pick up a starving dog and make him prosperous he will not bite you. This is the principle difference between a dog and man."*

*"A dog is the only thing on earth that loves you more than he loves himself." Josh Billings*

*"Dogs teach us many things about being a better person that people don't teach." Unknown*

*"A dog will teach you unconditional love. If you can have that in your life things won't be too bad." Robert Wagner*

*"No matter how little money and how few possessions you own, having a dog makes you rich." - Louis Sabin*

JAMES MACDONALD

*"You want a friend in Washington? Get a dog." - Harry S. Truman*

*"The dog is a gentleman; I hope to go to his heaven, not man's." - Mark Twain*

