Puppy checklist

Teething, growing, and learning what the world is for.

4 to 12 months for a medium dog · size-adjusted, approximate. Stages are behavioural as much as chronological.

01 This stage is done when

Tick each one as it becomes true most days, not once.

- [ ] Vaccine series completed, and you know what boosters come next and when
- [ ] Two weeks without an indoor accident
- [ ] Adult teeth are through and you have found the chew this dog actually prefers
- [ ] Recall works on a long line, in a field, with a distraction present
- [ ] A settle on a mat holds for ten minutes somewhere that is not home
- [ ] You have had the spay or neuter conversation with your vet and know the plan and the timing
- [ ] The dog has been weighed at the vet at least twice and you know the growth curve
- [ ] Nails trimmed and coat brushed weekly without a struggle
- [ ] A positive-reinforcement class attended, or a good trainer identified
- [ ] You know from your vet whether and when this dog moves off puppy food

02 Ask your vet

Questions to take to an appointment — not tasks, so no boxes.

? Discuss spay or neuter timing with your vet for your dog's breed and size — it interacts with joint development, behaviour and cancer risk differently in different dogs, and we do not publish a schedule.

? Ask your vet if a limp lasts more than a day or two, or if your puppy is reluctant to use stairs or jump. Growing joints are worth checking early rather than watching.

? Ask your vet whether a retained puppy tooth beside a new adult tooth needs removing, rather than waiting to see whether it falls out.

? Ask your vet before starting any supplement, including joint supplements, in a growing dog. Growth is one of the few periods where extra is not neutral.

? Ask your vet, or a credentialled behaviour professional, if your puppy is guarding food, toys or a space with a hard stare, a freeze or a growl. This is much easier to change now than at two years old.

03 Have ready

By need: the starter kit first, then THEN the recommended additions. The stage page carries the researched picks and current prices.

NOURISH

- [ ] Puppy formula matched to adult size
- [ ] Bowls that suit the dog they are becoming
- [ ] THEN A slow feeder, if meals disappear in ten seconds
- [ ] THEN Training treats in two value tiers

REST

- [ ] Move the crate divider out one section
- [ ] A bigger washable bed
- [ ] THEN A second bed wherever the household actually sits

MOVE

- [ ] The next harness size up
- [ ] A six-foot leash you can hold comfortably
- [ ] THEN A long line for open-space recall
- [ ] THEN A car restraint sized for a growing dog

THINK

- [ ] Three or four teething chews of different hardness
- [ ] THEN A mid-difficulty puzzle feeder
- [ ] THEN A snuffle mat for a rainy day

TRAIN

- [ ] Treat pouch and marker, still worn daily
- [ ] THEN A fifteen-to-thirty-foot long line
- [ ] THEN A settle mat that travels

PROTECT

- [ ] Region-appropriate parasite prevention
- [ ] Nail clippers or a grinder, used weekly
- [ ] THEN Brush and comb suited to the coat
- [ ] THEN Gates kept up a while longer

Notes — vet visits, weights, dates