



## Tips for Puppy owners during the coronavirus pandemic

Congratulations on your new family member.

Having a new puppy is an exciting but at times challenging and worrying experience. The current public health crisis has added a whole new set of challenges.

We all know that puppy socialisation is important, but this will need to be restricted during the pandemic. New puppy owners will need to take steps to encourage resilience in their pups.

### **Keeping your puppy entertained and stimulated**

Be creative and think of ways you can engage your pups brain at home. Activity feeding toys and games can be brilliant for keeping pups occupied. Introduce positive reward based training and games.



### **Sleep**

It is normal for puppies to sleep a lot! Up to 18-20 hours sleep in every 24 is normal for pups. Having a puppy at home will be a great distraction from all our worries at the moment but especially if you have children at home make sure that your pup is getting plenty of rest time and has a quiet safe place where no one will disturb them for a good nap.

### **Resilience**

Inevitably puppies worlds are going to be small over the next weeks / months and we need to try to prepare them for the big wide world. Try to introduce as much novelty as you can, dress up, introduce new objects, rearrange furniture, change your scent with a light spray of perfume or aftershave. Play sound recordings – the sounds sociable soundtrack created by veterinary behaviourists Sarah Heath and Jon Bowen is available free to download from the Dogs Trust website (<https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/help-advice/dog-behaviour-health/sound-therapy-for-pets>).

Always make these experiences positive. Give your puppy time of assess the new things and chose whether to approach. Do not try to lure them closer but praise brave behaviour. If they are worried back off and try again from a greater distance.

Take this opportunity to be at home with your puppy to build really solid foundations and a great relationship so you set them up for success when their world starts to expand.

### **Let your pup see the world**

Sit by the window with your pup and let them watch the passers-by, other dogs and traffic. You can form great associations with strangers and other dogs by offering a piece of food each time the pup sees them.



## Walks

Many vets will have stopped routine vaccine appointments at least in the short term and so if your pup has not been vaccinated you will need to avoid places where unvaccinated dogs may have been. You could consider a puppy stroller to get your pup out in world or even carrying them if they are small enough for this to be done safely.



If your pup is vaccinated, then use your exercise time to introduce them to the world ensuring that you observe all the government guidelines.

This is a great opportunity to teach your pups to walk calmly past people and dogs at a distance.

## Handling and grooming

It is likely that your pup will not be attending the vet or groomer and it is important that they learn to enjoy handling and grooming at home. Start slow and gradually build up. Make this positive and reward calm appropriate behaviour.

## Training classes

Many trainers and behaviourists are now offering online classes and support for puppy owners. We would urge you to contact your local qualified trainer (for a list of accredited trainers see the ABTC registers <http://www.abtcouncil.org.uk/register-of-instructors.html>) and ask what they can offer to support you and your puppy.

## Home Alone!



We have the unique situation of a group of pups who are likely to grow up with their owners always at home. It is important that your pup starts to learn that they can cope without you. We want them to be ready to cope when we all return to our normal daily activities.

Start leaving your puppy in another room just for short periods. Initially give them a great chew / stuffed food toy and leave the room just for a few seconds. Gradually build up the time that you are away and build to perhaps leaving them while you go into the garden or for a short walk.