

Puppy Sitter 101

The raiser should send Puppy Sleepover Notes with the puppy. It will include

- <https://www.guidedogs.com/uploads/files/Puppy-Raising-Guidebook/Puppy-Sleepover-Notes.pdf>
- Vet clinic & any medications puppy is taking
- Mealtime notes - how much food the puppy eats and how often
- Bedtime notes – where the puppy sleeps at home, what their routine is
- Relieving Notes – surfaces, schedule, etc
- House manners – can the puppy be loose in the house? Do they have a Yes Space or Crate?
- ** Remember, the puppy may be able to be loose at home, but in your new environment, they may not be ready for that much freedom. Don't give the puppy freedom until he/she has proven they are trustworthy to be free in your environment.
- Any other special notes for that puppy

- The raiser should send all the supplies the puppy needs. Here is a checklist – feel free to let the raiser know what you may need:
 - the puppy's leash (nylon dragline and/or leather leash)
 - gentle leader
 - puppy coat
 - food
 - Food/water bowl
 - Crate
 - ex-pen / tie down
 - clean up kit
 - chew toys (bones, etc) / yard toys (jolly ball, retrieve ball, etc) / tug toys
 - If the puppy will stay with you on the 1st of a month, they should send Heartgard and NexGard (replacing Frontline).
- A sitter should not have to buy anything for a puppy sit.

Regardless of the age of the puppy coming to visit, assume he/she knows nothing. They are coming in to a new environment with new people. They don't know what the rules are in this new environment, and your job as a puppy sitter is to help them learn the rules in your home are the same as the rules in their raiser home. Give them the opportunity to make good choices (don't control their leash all the time), while at the same time, do not trust them until they have proven they are trustworthy. It's easier to grant more freedom once it's earned than it is to reel a puppy back in when given too much freedom up front.

Regardless of the age of the puppy, use kibble to reinforce behaviors you like (come, loose leash walking, calm behavior, appropriate dog-to-dog interaction, etc).

Regardless of the age of the puppy:

- Start with no (or very limited) freedom
 - Consider using a drag line
 - Consider using an ex-pen to limit access to one or two rooms
 - If the puppy behaves appropriately with the limited freedom, you can choose to give more freedom. Or not. It's ok to limit the puppy's freedom during his stay with you.

- Start small and build from there
 - Short outings
 - Short walks for older dogs (6 mos +)

- 30-45 min without relieving is appropriate for a 15-month old dog
 - Use a shorter time for a younger pup
 - maybe even 5-10 minutes for a dog under a year until he/she proves they can handle the freedom
- If the puppy is “older”, and if the puppy behaves appropriately with the small amount of freedom/short outings, you can quickly move to more freedom and longer outings.
- Don’t always make it harder – sometimes, you may do a 30-minute outing with an older dog, and only a 10-minute outing the next day.
- Use a high rate of reinforcement for behaviors you like
 - Always reward for the DYB command;

Relieving:

Relieving is one of the top reasons a dog can be career changed. It is also the #1 mistake puppies make at a sitter’s home.

- Our older puppies should relieve on a leash, on a hard surface (concrete, asphalt, rocks, etc), with their jacket OFF, every time
- Our puppies are not supposed to relieve on neighborhood walks. They need to relieve before going on a walk and can relieve again once they return home. They are not supposed to relieve during the walk unless it’s a long walk. If you’re going on a long walk and feel like the puppy may need to relieve, you may give them the DYB command when you decide to offer an opportunity. Please do not offer to relieve after they “indicate” they need to relieve. They need to relieve when you decide it’s appropriate.
- Our puppies shouldn’t be given the opportunity to relieve on grass. If they are playing in your yard and relieve in the grass, simply ignore the behavior and resolve to relieve the puppy before playing next time.
- Take the puppy to the designated relieving area, release the puppy with “OK”, give the “Do Your Business” command, and cast the puppy out in front of the handler with the leash.
- If needed, you can help the puppy move in a figure 8 in front of you.
- Don’t let the puppy relieve on your left side or behind you.
- Sniffing is a preliminary behavior to relieving. Watch for scavenging (picking up rocks, twigs and other debris), especially in young puppies.
- The Puppy Sleepover Notes is a good place to start with when and how often the puppy relieves.
- Give the puppy up to 5 minutes to relieve. The younger they are, the longer it may take to relieve. There is no need to wait more than about 5 minutes for a puppy to DYB.
- If you know the puppy needs to relieve and he doesn’t when given the command, put him in his kennel to prevent accidents. If you’re out on an errand, try to end the errand early to prevent an accident in public. Wait about 20 minutes and attempt the DYB command again.

Read Relieving and Housebreaking in the GDB manual:

<https://www.guidedogs.com/uploads/files/Puppy-Raising-Guidebook/Do-Your-Business.pdf>

<https://www.guidedogs.com/uploads/files/Puppy-Raising-Guidebook/Puppy-Pit-Stops-Relieving-Skills-Away-from-Home.pdf>

Water:

- Allow the puppy free access to water. You may need to show them where your water bowl is.
- For young puppies, remember water in means they will need to relieve pretty soon after drinking. You may want to set a timer for 5-10 minutes after a drink for young puppies.

Confinement:

Yes Space: This is a new tool the younger puppies are using. Whether the raiser sends the Yes Space will depend on a lot of factors. The Yes Space is heavy and quite bulky to transport. Most puppies will be fine with a crate (wire or airline) and a tie down.

Crate: the only place where you can leave your puppy unsupervised

- A Nylabone or Kong is ok to leave in the crate with them (NO red Kongs for dogs >5 mos, use black Kongs for over 5 mos)
- Some puppies may have a bed or fleece in their kennel; Their raiser will tell you.
- Use "Kennel" command for puppy to enter kennel, toss a few kibble in
- Ask them to wait when coming out. They should politely wait for an OK release

Baby Gate or Ex-Pen: Useful for limiting puppy's access to areas of the home and for separating dogs

- Puppies may not be left unattended in an ex-pen unless it's the Yes Space vertical bar ex-pen
- If using outside on grass, put a blanket/mat underneath it so the puppy can't eat grass

IMPORTANT: Most puppies will bark or whine when in a kennel in an unfamiliar environment or with an unfamiliar schedule. Your job as a puppy raiser is to ignore that behavior. DO NOT let the puppy out of the kennel when he's barking. Even if you think he needs to relieve, DO NOT let the puppy out of the kennel when he's barking. The ONLY exception to this is if the puppy has had diarrhea. If the puppy is quiet in his kennel, you can quietly drop kibble in sporadically. You may have better success (a quieter night!) if you can let the puppy sleep in its kennel next to your bed or in your room.

House Manners:

- Do not leave the puppy alone (unattended) in your home until you are sure he can handle that freedom.
- It may be better to let the primary raiser work on home alone behavior.

Socialization Guide: Ask the puppy raiser what outings are appropriate for the puppy. Remember, no grass (other than your backyard) for puppies under 17 weeks old.

Transportation

- Baby puppies should ride in a crate, or on tie down in the car.
- They should not be allowed to ride on the seat
- Make sure puppies are waiting until released with "OK" to get out of the car
- Puppies under 6 months or so may need help getting in or out of the car
- When riding on a bus, teach them to sit between your legs or under the seat, not in an aisle
- On a bus, it's helpful to back the puppy in, instead of trying to put them in a small space head first and then asking them to turn around.

Have fun!