

PUPPY FOUNDATIONS

Your Step-by-Step Guide from Birth to Hand Over

Practical, age-appropriate activities for breeders to raise
confident, well-adjusted puppies

DIONA
THE TRAINER



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Puppy Foundations Guide: Week 0-8

Week 0-2: Neonatal Period

DEVELOPMENTAL FOCUS

- Eyes and ears closed
- Limited movement
- Fully dependent on mum
- Nervous system and stress response developing

ACTIVITIES

- Daily gentle handling (5–10 seconds per pup)
- Early Neurological Stimulation (ENS) once per day
- Introduce new scents daily (vanilla, chamomile, lavender)
- Soft background sound (white noise, heartbeat)
- Keep handling calm, short, and consistent (same movements each time)

CHECKLIST

- Gentle daily handling
- Gentle touching and handling
- Positioning: hold the puppy in various positions, like supine or head-down
- Thermal stimulation: brief exposure to cool or warm temperatures
- Scent exposure: one mild scent a day
- Background audio: low volume

NOTES



Week 2-3: Transitional Period

DEVELOPMENTAL FOCUS

- Eyes and ears begin to open
- First steps and mobility
- Start responding to voices and touch

ACTIVITIES

- Continue gentle holding and soft talking
- Introduce new textures (towel, fleece, non-slip mats)
- Light environmental changes (open curtains gradually)
- Introduce soft, natural daylight and mild indoor lighting
- Brief sensory exploration session

CHECKLIST

- Handling with voice interaction
- New textures underfoot
- Mild sound exposure
- Gradual light exposure

NOTES



Week 3-4: Awareness Period

DEVELOPMENTAL FOCUS

- Startled by sound and movement
- Begin to interact with littermates
- Teething begins
- Increased sensory awareness

ACTIVITIES

- Daily rotation of novel items (mirror, cardboard, toys)
- Calm, new adult visitors
- Soft grooming sessions (brushing, nail touches)
- Exposure to recorded household sounds (vacuum, dishwasher)
- Short individual sessions away from littermates (1-2 minutes)

CHECKLIST

- Novel object exposure
- Grooming practice
- Sound desensitisation
- 1-on-1 time with pups

NOTES



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Week 4-5: Socialisation Begins

DEVELOPMENTAL FOCUS

- Increased curiosity and mobility
- Forming first real bonds with humans
- Engaging in play

ACTIVITIES

- Introduce crate (door open)
- Rotate items like wobble boards, stairs, crinkly bags
- Allow supervised time with new people
- Start gentle challenge games (treat puzzles)

CHECKLIST

- Crate in pen (door open)
- Environmental items rotation
- Human interaction

NOTES



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Week 5-6: Confidence Building

DEVELOPMENTAL FOCUS

- Stronger play and exploration
- Start problem-solving
- Able to handle new challenges

ACTIVITIES

- Car desensitisation (stationary engine on)
- Start leash dragging (in safe area)
- Gentle vet handling simulation (ears, paws, mouth)
- Play with interactive feeders or puzzle toys
- Solo crate time with chews (3-5 minutes)

CHECKLIST

- Car desensitisation
- Leash introduction
- Vet handling prep
- Puzzle play
- Short solo crate sessions

NOTES



Week 6-7: Emotional Shaping & Coping

DEVELOPMENTAL FOCUS

- Heightened learning
- Strong emotional memory forming
- Startle recovery developing

ACTIVITIES

- Louder real-life sounds (TV, vacuum, visitors talking)
- Interactions with new people (elderly, delivery driver, child)
- Grooming simulation (gentle pretend bath)
- Brief solo play in pen or crate
- Practice leash walks in yard (gentle tension on the leash, followed by reward)

CHECKLIST

- Real-life sound exposure
- New people visits
- Grooming simulation
- Independent playtime
- Leash pressure familiarisation

NOTES



Week 7-8: Preparing for Handover

DEVELOPMENTAL FOCUS

- Learning transitions and routines
- Readiness for bonding with new family
- Fear period may begin—experiences should stay positive

ACTIVITIES

- Practice separation and solo time (10–15 minutes)
 - Reinforce crate time with positive association
 - Simulate handover: car trip, handling, new smells
 - Provide transition pack: blanket with litter scent, feeding & toilet schedule, socialisation checklist
- Encourage new families to start [Good Puppy Blueprint](#) from Day 1

CHECKLIST

- Solo crate time with chew or toy
- Short car ride
- Final socialisation experiences
- Transition pack prepared
- Family briefed on next steps

NOTES