

The Puppy Handbook

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The First Day

If possible, try to pick up your new German Shepherd puppy from the breeder in the morning. A German Shepherd puppy bonds very quickly to its new home. It will make for a better experience if your puppy gets the chance to spend the day with you before having to spend its first night away from its litter mates. Your new puppy will recognize your voice as a friend and the transition will be much easier.

It is important not to over-stress your new puppy. The first couple of weeks should be a very pleasant, calm experience. Puppies need their quiet time, as do all babies. They need a place and the opportunity to take their short naps during the day. As with children, tired and over excited puppies tend to become bad, grumpy puppies.

Have your home prepared for your new puppy. Food and water dish, a secure pen outdoors, and sleeping quarters. You will also need a leash, collar, toenail clippers, and several brushes. One soft brush for daily grooming and a rake or comb for during the spring when you puppy will shed its coat. You will also find it helpful to have several chew toys ready for your teething puppy.

You will want to sit down with the rest of the family and decide who is going to feed, groom, and exercise the puppy. Decide what kind of rules you want to put on the puppy. (i.e.: limited to certain rooms in the house, getting on the furniture.) Also, decide which method of disciplinary action you are going to use with your puppy. Remember, consistency will be the most important.

Houstraining

When you get your new puppy home, walk it around the yard so it can have a chance to explore, relieve itself, and interact with the family.

It is important to immediately start houstraining your puppy so you do not allow bad habits to start. Determine which entrance to your house you want the puppy to go in and out of. For the first several days only take the puppy in and out of the house through the designated door. It will also be helpful, if during the first day, you take the puppy in and out of its entrance **20-30 times**. The puppy will know which door is his and will go to that door when he needs to go outside.

After each meal, take your puppy outside to the area you want it to relieve itself. Praise your puppy when it goes. If the puppy is in the house and needs to relieve itself, he will get fidgety and possibly start sniffing the floor. If you see your puppy moving in a small circle and sniffing the floor, quickly pick up your puppy and take it outdoors! Remember to praise your puppy when he/she relieves himself. It is a good idea not to give them any food or water for several hours before bedtime and take the puppy outside right before going to bed. If your puppy is under 12 weeks of age, they may not be able to hold it all night long, so restricting food and water for a couple of hours before bedtime will help you get a good night's sleep. It is best to place your puppy in an animal crate or box for nighttime until you feel comfortable with your puppy's good habits.

If you do not allow your puppy to be unsupervised in your house, you will have them houstrained within days.

Feeding

All dogs should be fed twice a day. The amount varies from age, size, and sex of your puppy. The

following is general, but it will give you a basis to start. German Shepherds are fast-growing dogs; you do not want them too fat or too skinny. As a rule, you want to be able to almost see a shadow of their ribs, but no indent to the gut.

German Shepherds do not need a high protein dog food, they do very well on 22- 26% protein. All dry dog foods will state the protein level on the outside of the bag. Always check, especially if you are changing brands.

Too much excitement and stress can cause diarrhea with a young puppy. It would be a good idea to feed a little yogurt to your new puppy for the first week. Also, do not feed a lot of canned dog food, which can cause diarrhea in a young puppy.

Feeding schedule for the young puppy

8-9 wks of age 1/2 cup of kibble twice a day

9-10 wks of age 3/4 cup of kibble twice a day

10-12 wks of age 1 1/2 cup of kibble twice a day

12-16 wks of age 2 cups of kibble twice a day

I also put in 1 raw egg (after 12 wks of age), yogurt (heaping tablespoon to 1/4 cup depending on age) 1/2 teaspoon wheat germ oil, and mix with warm water.

Medical Record

Your new puppy has had some or all of its vaccinations, depending on the age of the puppy. I have included in your folder your new puppy's Medical Record. It is important that you take this record with you to your veterinarian. Your puppy needs a series of shots by the age of 16 weeks.

Socializing your New Puppy

Proper socialization of your new puppy will create a temperament and personality you will be proud to live with. You want to have a puppy that will become a confident, happy, loving, protective dog.

If your puppy is under 16 weeks of age, you will want to be careful where you take your puppy. It has not had all of its shots and is still vulnerable to diseases. Once your puppy is 12 weeks and has had its series of shots, you can start taking it to public places. Just avoid areas where other animals relieve themselves and where stray animals roam.

Talk to your puppy as you would to a child, always use a friendly voice and always make eye contact. This will create the foundation for a very confident puppy. Making eye contact when you talk to your puppy is very important, even if you have to lower yourself to your young puppy's level in the beginning. It will not take long before your puppy looks up to you and makes eye contact when you talk to it. Eye contact early in life teaches the puppy in the beginning to pay attention to you when you talk to it. Most importantly, positive eye contact early in life creates a very confident dog. Unsound temperaments do not make eye contact and, if they do, they are threatened by it.

Walks help the bonding and also give the puppy plenty of new experiences to touch, smell, and taste.

Playing ball is an activity you can do which brings out the confidence in a puppy. The German Shepherd is a herding breed, the "prey drive" (chasing things that move) is a very strong instinct and your puppy will enjoy the game. They win every time they pounce on the ball and they will bring it back to you just to show off the prize.

It is good to expose your puppy to lots of sounds, objects, and people. If your puppy is startled or frightened by something, reassure by petting. Your puppy will realize that it will not hurt them and will handle the situation better the next time. Unless the puppy really needs the verbal reassurance, it is best not to praise the puppy for frightened behavior, you may be reinforcing incorrectly.

Training and Correcting your Young Puppy

Puppies do need to know when they are doing something you do not approve of. It is also important that your puppy learn some manners. German Shepherd puppies grow very big, very quickly, especially the males. It is much easier to get control of a puppy early on at 15-35 pounds, than 50-80 pounds, which is where they will be at 6 months of age. There are many philosophies about training puppies. You may decide to take him/her to a local obedience class. They usually run 8-12 weeks and cost between \$70-\$100. This would give you structured classes with assignments to practice during the week. If you are interested, call me and I can give you several references.

German Shepherds in general are very intelligent and very quickly learn. They want to please you, and if you as the teacher can explain to the dog what you want, your puppy will comply. Though German Shepherds are very tough as adults, they are very sensitive as puppies. **If you train your German Shepherd puppy with a tough hand, you will end up with a coward of a dog. If you train your German Shepherd Puppy with a soft touch, you will end up with a noble, confident dog that will do anything for you.**

The two commands you will probably use the first day home will be "(name) COME" and "NO". Little food bits really entice young puppies to come when called in the beginning. It makes the process fun, almost a game. When correcting a young puppy, I use a firm voice, but never shout. If they are chewing on something that does not belong to them, I say "NO" and take the object away from them. I then give them one of their chew toys and praise them.

German Shepherds actually have the capacity to learn hundreds of commands. I personally do not like using "NO" all of the time. It is the command I save for very unacceptable behavior. By the firm tone in my voice, the dog knows that whatever they are doing, it is not acceptable, and I want them to stop immediately. I use "Stop" when I really don't like what they are doing; it's not as harsh as NO.

Whichever way you want to train your dog, here are the most important items to keep in mind:

1. **Be Consistent** Always use the same command for the same reaction. Make sure all family members understand this concept. A confused puppy could get to the point they just stop listening.
2. **Keep the Commands Simple** Puppies will not understand a critic. Say your puppy's name to get its attention and then say the command. I also try to stick to one-syllable words when possible, for example:

COME Come to me Now
STOP I do not like what you are doing
NO Stop whatever you are doing NOW
OFF Do not jump on me Get off the couch

DOWN Lay Down
STAY Do not move
SETTLE Settle Down
SIDE Do not go through this door when I open it. (I do not use the STAY command here)
HEEL Walk by my side
LETS GO You can pull at the end of the leash
OK Now you can do what you want

3. Always Praise your Puppy Praise is very important when training. Praise the puppy when they listen to you, but especially when they do what you have asked of them.

Leash Training your Puppy

This is usually one of the first training sessions you will have with your new puppy. You want to enjoy taking your puppy lots of places with you. Most places today have leash laws, and for the safety of your puppy, you will want to leash train as soon as possible. You will want to make the first experience with the leash a very pleasant one because puppies do not forget bad experiences for a long time.

Have a soft nylon collar that fits your puppy snugly and a lightweight leash. The puppy will struggle against the leash at first. Do not pull the puppy around, instead, move with it for a couple of minutes. Pulling will cause the puppy to fight the leash even more and possibly injure itself. Food bits really help in this process. Give an easy tug and call your puppy. When he/she comes to you, give it a food bit. You are also teaching come and the puppy does not even realize it). As the puppy relaxes, they will begin to moving easy with you. Remember to praise your puppy every time he/she moves easy beside you. Young puppies (2-4 months) have a very short attention span and also tire easy. Keep your walks short when you have a young puppy.

Grooming your Puppy

German Shepherds are quite easy to care for, but as with all dogs, they require some grooming. German Shepherds have two coat layers, the coarse long outer coat and the softer woolly undercoat. Shepherds "Blow coat" (shed their hair) usually twice a year. Unlike human hair which continually grows, the dog's fur actually grows in cycles. It grows a beautiful coat, the coat dies and then falls out, and then they grow a new coat.

Shepherds do not need baths often, but it is important to brush your dog at least once a week. Dogs do not sweat through their skin, so brushing helps keep the skin and fur clean and healthy. It also brings down the natural oil from the skin through the coat and protects your dog's skin and fur from the weather. It is especially important to brush your dog daily while it is going through the shedding process. Besides keeping much of the fur out of your house, if you do not remove the dead fur immediately, it has a tendency to mat and hold water. This can cause skin problems and then you also have a stinky, miserable dog.

When you do your weekly grooming, always check your puppy's ears. Gently clean them with a cottonball and alcohol. Unlike water, alcohol dries quickly, so it will not cause ear infections.

I also check teeth weekly on a puppy. As they are teething, it is important to know when they have a tooth coming in or swollen gums. You can make sure that the food is softened, and that they have chew toys or rawhide to help break those new teeth through.

You will want to trim your puppy's toenails at least every two weeks, every week if you have hardwood floors. If you hear clicking on the floor, they are too long. Your puppy will keep its good tight feet if the toenails remain short. As they get older and are allowed to run on hard surfaces, sometimes you can get away with trimming less often.

You will find that your puppy enjoys his/her grooming time. Shepherds love the attention.

Growing Pains of the German Shepherd Puppy

The following is some information to help you through an occasional problem with growing puppies. As the breeder of your puppy, if you do run into problems or just have questions, I want you to contact me. The following situations are not limited to German Shepherds, so your veterinarian can also be a good source of remedies.

Ears

German Shepherds, with few exceptions, have their ears up strong by 7 months of age. Ears have a tendency to go up and down during the teething stage. It is important the ear bases are up by 12-14 weeks of age. If at 12 weeks, your puppy's ears are flat to the sides of its head, please contact us.

Teething

Puppies begin teething at about 14-16 weeks and are close to having all their adult teeth by 7 months of age. Their gums are very sore and swollen. You will see a little bit of blood and an occasional baby tooth on the floor. Puppies are well-known for chewing on things during this stage. It is important that you have plenty of chew toys for your puppy at this time. If your puppy starts chewing on wood pieces or rocks, stop the habit if you can by supplying the puppy with toys. If they get in the habit of chewing sticks, but especially rocks, they do not seem to outgrow this and they wear their teeth down very quickly.

Pano

Occasionally, fast growing, big-boned puppies get Pano. It is an inflammation of the marrow of the long bones in the legs. All large-breed dogs can get it and the inflammation is very uncomfortable for your puppy. Its onset is between 6-15 months of age, usually during a large growth period. The Pano itself is not treatable, but your puppy will outgrow it. Please contact us or your veterinarian for treatment options.

How to know if it's pano? Your puppy would start limping. He might limp for a couple of days, then not limp for a while. Then he might start limping again, possibly on another leg. Your vet can diagnose Pano with an X-ray of the leg. If your puppy gets Pano, it is important to limit activity, and usually they are well within days to several weeks.

Extreme Moving Puppies

German Shepherds are bred for movement. We attempt to breed for an animal that could trot all day as smooth as a thoroughbred horse. Though we do not want an extreme adult, we do want an animal that moves very smooth and very freely. To get the free, easy motion as an adult, fast-growing puppies sometimes get very leggy and uncoordinated. The ligamentation could get loose in the legs. If your puppy is going to go through this, it will be between 3-6 months of age and it will outgrow it, as everything else catches up with the legs. It is important that they get exercise, but not a lot of running on hard surfaces.

If your puppy's ligamentation gets very loose in the front legs, occasionally a puppy will go down in the pasterns. If this happens, please call us as soon as possible. There are currently several ways to help bring them back up, some as easy as change of diet. We would just want to start as soon as possible.

There are a couple of things to keep in mind: If your puppy does go through this extreme stage, they will grow out of it, and still become a beautiful adult German Shepherd Dog.

Elbows

Your German Shepherd puppy has elbows quite similar to you and I in the front legs. There is a

small bone that does not fuse until 4-5 months of age. It is very important that your puppy is not allowed to jump off of, or out of anything until we know that the elbows have fused. The results of non-fusing is called elbow dysplasia. The German Shepherd puppy is really quite tough, but they do not realize their own limitations. A good rule of thumb: If what they are jumping off of is as high as they are tall, that is the maximum.

First Heat Cycle (Female)

Your female puppy will come into heat for the first time usually between 5-12 months of age. She may get a little moody or quiet weeks before starting. The average female is in heat for 3 weeks, though I have seen as short as 2 and as long as 5 weeks. She will spot for the first 7-10 days, and could conceive for the next 10-12 days. It is very important that you keep her quarantined in a safe place so you do not have an accidental breeding. If you plan to spay your female puppy, it is simpler to do so before the first heat cycle. Most vets do not like spaying during the cycle or if they are already pregnant.

Breeding your Pet

If you have purchased a breeding quality animal, and are unfamiliar with the breed and bloodlines, we will probably discuss breeding options as your dog matures. If you are unable to contact me, I would suggest that you contact another reputable breeder. They will be able to help you determine which bloodlines might compliment your dog. You are working with my bloodlines and I could save you some time if you contact me.

It is much simpler to spay or neuter the animal if you are not going to breed it. In addition, you have the benefit of your male not jumping the fence to get next door, or unwanted, unregistrable puppies because your neighbor's dog jumped your fence to visit your female.

Animals do not miss something in life by not having puppies. Actually, they make much better pets if you spay or neuter them. Your male will stay home and not have the tendency to "mark" everything. Your female will not leave you to deal with a messy heat cycle every 6 months, where she needs to be quarantined 3-4 weeks twice a year.

If you are interested in breeding, contact us. Animals can change a lot from 12 weeks of age. If your dog is of breeding-quality or pet-quality, I will be honest with you. If she is of breeding-quality, I will ask that you have her x-rayed, both hips and elbows, first. If it is of pet-quality, I will ask that you not breed the animal. The same applies to males.

Because the American Kennel Club requires that you keep a stud book, you will want to make sure the female is AKC-Registered and get a copy of her AKC Registration and pedigree. You will definitely want to have her checked for Canine Venereal Diseases. If you have not attended many dog breedings, you will want a vet to supervise the breeding to make sure nothing gets broken during the tie. If you are going to breed your female, you will want to have her checked for vaginal obstructions which could cause problems during breeding and birthing. You would want to know ahead of time if a cesarean section might be in your plans.

You will need a warm, dry, quiet place for her to whelp her puppies. You will also need a good size safe area for 6-15 puppies to play and sleep until they are old enough to find homes for them. You can start placing the puppies at 8-12 weeks of age after they have had at least 2-3 series of shots.

One puppy is a lot of fun, 10 puppies is a lot of work. If you are going to breed your pet just for another dog, you will probably find it simpler and cheaper to just purchase another puppy. If you have come to the decision that you want to become a breeder of German Shepherds, take some time to learn about the breed. As subtle as it may be, learn the difference between a pet and breeding quality German Shepherd. Most breeders study pedigrees, progeny, and many dogs

before deciding on breeding. Attend some local dog shows or trials, talk to some local breeders, and purchase several books on the German Shepherd Dog and dog breeding. You can also contact a local German Shepherd Specialty Club for information. Find out what recessive genes you are dealing with in your dog's pedigree. Know the strengths and weaknesses of your bloodlines.

As breeders, we attempt to better the breed with each generation. If you really want to become a breeder do your homework and plan your breeding well. Have a clear idea on what you are trying to accomplish. Get a copy of the breed standard and know what traits you are trying to keep and which ones you are trying to improve. Remember, you are creating living beings. You will want to give them the best chance they can get to become healthy, mentally and physically sound animals. If you decide to become a breeder, I wish you much success.