

# Puppy Foster Guide

Fostering puppies can be immensely rewarding as you help to build their first bonds with humans and shape their relationship with the world around them. You are integral in setting them up for success in their future forever homes!

Your responsibility goes beyond just making sure they have food and water and have a clean area to grow up in; you will help them learn how to interact appropriately with their environment and the people they meet.

## Supply List

- Crate (or equivalent)
- Playpen or x-pen
- Bedding, linens, towels
- Disposable pee pads and disposable poop bags
- Scale
- Thermometer and lubricant
- Grooming supplies, tools (shampoo, brush, cat/puppy nail trimmer, wipes)
- Feeding supplies (food and water bowls, wet/dry food)
- Toys
- Video camera (for remote viewing)\*

\* Optional but very helpful!



# Week 3 to Week 4

The Transitional Stage occurs between 14 and 28 days of age. Around 21 days of age, puppies will start to regulate their own body temperature, which means that a source of heat may no longer be needed and can be removed.

They will continue to cry when a basic need is unmet, but puppies become more active as they gain motor skills and will interact more with each other and their handler(s). Their eyes will open between 10-14 days and their hearing starts to come in between 17 and 21 days of age.

Puppies are ready to try wet food as early as 3 weeks old. Some puppies may need to be bottle fed for as long as an extra week if they are less developed or lack coordination.

	3 WEEKS OLD	4 WEEKS OLD
<b>Health</b>	100°F temp. ~5-10% weight gain/day Hearing improves Baby teeth emerge	100°F temp. ~5-10% weight gain/day Teeth continue to emerge
<b>Activity Level</b>	Starting to play and interact with littermates, still sleeping a lot	Moderate; increased interaction with littermates, socialization begins
<b>Movement</b>	Starts to stand and walk, can sit, potties on its own	Walks, stands, sits, potties on its own, may climb
<b>Should not be</b>	Crying frequently	Crying frequently

# Week 3 to Week 4

## Handling

- Weigh each puppy and record weights weekly
- Gently hold puppy and make sure it is clean and in good health
- Begin puppy socialization program
- Take outside (or to a “play space” if you have no outdoor space) beginning at four-weeks of age for 30-60 minutes daily; increase play breaks and duration as pups get older

## Care

- Define potty area within puppy pen setup
- Change out linens and bedding every time they are soiled until 4 weeks of age; then two to three times daily (as needed)
- Replace used pee pads as needed
- Feed puppies *three times* per day with wet food
- Provide fresh water to puppies (shallow enough so they cannot drown)

## What to Watch For (Puppies)

- Chilled
- Excessive crying
- Failure to gain weight or losing weight
- Lethargy
- Missing development milestones (vision, hearing, motor skills)

# Week 5 to Week 12

Puppies should be eating wet food or dry kibble that's been softened with water by 5 weeks of age. Large-breed puppies should be fully transitioned to dry kibble (without water) by 8 to 9 weeks of age. Smaller-breed puppies may not fully transition until up to 12 weeks of age.

Puppies will continue to go through their socialization program. Your job as a foster is to help your puppies understand what living life in a home is like, which includes familiarization and interaction with household noises, objects, and people.

	5-6 WEEKS OLD	7-8 WEEKS OLD	9-12 WEEKS OLD
Health	100 to 101°F temp. ~5-10% weight gain/day Most baby teeth in	100°F temp. ~5-10% weight gain/day	100 to 101°F temp. ~5-10% weight gain/day
Activity Level	Moderate, barking, playing, climbing, exploring	Moderate to high, playing longer, sleeping less	Moderate, barking, playing, climbing, exploring, trainable
Movement	Moves more confidently, mouthiness	Climbing, jumping, running	Climbing, jumping, running, rougher play

# Week 5 to Week 12

## Handling

- Weigh each puppy and record weekly
- Hold, handle, and pet puppies and increase duration and level of interaction each week following their puppy socialization program
- Take outside (or to a “play space” if you have no outdoor space) for at least one hour per day; increase play breaks and duration as pups get older

## Care

- Change out linens and bedding one to two times a day (or as needed)
- Replace used pee pads as needed
- Feed puppies three times a day
- Provide access to water and refill as needed

## What to Watch For (Puppies)

- Excessive or liquid diarrhea
- Failure to gain weight or losing weight
- Missing development milestones (vision, hearing, motor skills)

# Supplemental Handouts

Please refer to the following supplemental handouts that complement our Puppy foster guide:

- Introducing Food and Water
- Introducing the Potty Area
- Introducing Grooming
- Setting Up the Puppy Pen
- Setting Up the Puppy Outdoor Area

We recommend fosters follow the KinderPUP lesson plans to create well-socialized and forever home-ready puppies!

- What is KinderPUP?
- Socialization Stage Fundamentals
- Week 3 Lesson Plan
- Week 4 Lesson Plan
- Week 5 Lesson Plan
- Weeks 6-7 Lesson Plan
- Weeks 8-10 Lesson Plan
- Weeks 10-12 Lesson Plan

