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WHAT IS KINDERPUP?

KinderPUP makes it easy for fosters to socialize and familiarize their pups while laying the groundwork for manners, potty training, and crate training. This gives puppies a head start when they head to their forever homes!

A puppy benefits tremendously from spending their early life in a home environment. It helps to set them up for success in their future homes by becoming familiar with the sights, sounds, and smells of a home. It is often one of the first experiences they'll have bonding with a human and where they learn to trust and feel safe with humans.

The act of fostering is rooted in generosity, as you open your home to a vulnerable animal in need of a safe place before they go on to find their forever home.

Fosters are often volunteering their time but have a full life outside of fostering, so fosters need to have a practical guide on how to set your foster pup up for success in their future home while being fun and flexible.

The program provides easy-to-follow "lesson plans" that are age-appropriate for the puppy you are fostering.

KINDERPUP GOALS

There are three goals of the Kinderpup program:

CONFIDENCE

Through interacting with a variety of people, objects, sounds, and the like, puppies will exhibit more confidence. Their reaction to something new is marked by curiosity rather than fear.

TRUST

They have learned to bond with and trust humans, setting them up to build a better, stronger bond with their new, forever family.

HOME-READY

Puppies are familiar with the sights and sounds found in most households, like doorbells, flooring, furniture, vacuums, washing machines, and more. They are ready for more formalized obedience training because they've been working on appropriate behaviors, like the beginning of manners, potty training, and crate training.

HOW WE MEET OUR GOALS

We build confidence and trust with puppies by ensuring their early experiences with new people, sights, sounds, and places are as positive as possible. This creates a puppy that reacts to new experiences with curiosity and less fear.

To do this, we use the Five Stages of Growth model to set goals and provide guidance on how to achieve those goals for each stage.

In general, all of the goals are backed by different levels of handling, care, socialization and familiarization, and training.

Handling involves the physical touching of puppies so that they are comfortable with human handling. In the earliest stage, this may be as limited as the touch involved in individual weighing of puppies. In middle stages, this can involve holding, touching, and grooming. We want puppies to grow into adult dogs who can be handled by people from their family to groomers to vets.

Care involves what it takes to provide a clean, safe environment, hygiene, feeding, and anything needed to maintain and support the puppy's health and physical development.

Socialization and Familiarization is the largest component that goes into building confidence and trust with puppies as we expose them to new people, objects, places, and more.

Training in the first three stages of growth focuses on building a foundation of manners, readiness for formalized training, and starting on potty training and crate training.

KINDERPUP FUNDAMENTALS

The KinderPUP program follows the timeline of the Socialization Stage in the Five Stages of Growth a puppy goes through. The Socialization Stage begins around 3-weeks of age and continues through 12-weeks of age.

Even during the earliest part of this stage (3 to 6 weeks of age), puppies show improved confidence when presented with a new object and were quicker to recover from loud noises.¹ However, the benefits of early socialization and habituation will be lost if we do not continue to work with the pup throughout this stage.¹

Fosters should focus on familiarizing pups with common household objects, expected handling (e.g. how a veterinarian or a groomer might handle a dog), and a variety of people (even just putting a hat or sunglasses on can change the pup's response!).²

Multiple studies have demonstrated that the puppy raising environment has a huge impact on the behavior of the puppy through adulthood.³

Passive enrichment of the pup's area is an important part of habituating pups to novel objects over time. This is as simple as changing out toys every few days or introducing noise-making toys.⁴

¹ Stolzlechner, Lisa et al. "Optimising Puppy Socialisation-Short- and Long-Term Effects of a Training Programme during the Early Socialisation Period." *Animals : an open access journal from MDPI* vol. 12,22 3067. 8 Nov. 2022, doi:10.3390/ani12223067

² Dietz L., Arnold A.-M.K., Goerlich-Jansson V.C., Vinke C.M. The importance of early life experiences for the development of behavioural disorders in domestic dogs. *Behaviour*. 2018;155:83–114. doi: 10.1163/1568539X-00003486.

³ McEvoy, Victoria et al. "Canine Socialisation: A Narrative Systematic Review." *Animals : an open access journal from MDPI* vol. 12,21 2895. 22 Oct. 2022, doi:10.3390/ani12212895

⁴ Supplementary guidance for dog breeders on the socialisation ... (n.d.). https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-07/aw_platform_plat-conc_guide_socialisation_puppy.pdf

HOW TO HANDLE PUPPIES

Puppies are ready for increased holding, handling, and interaction with humans at the start of the Socialization Stage (three weeks old).

Puppies who experience frequent, positive encounters with humans are better able to bond with humans and react positively to strangers as adult dogs.⁵

Current studies and the consensus of dog behavior experts agree that appropriate socialization during this stage is paramount to puppies growing into adult dogs that are confident, social, and well-adjusted.⁶

Fosters should feel free to cuddle, snuggle, play, and pet their pups within this stage. If a puppy ever seems distressed, let it go to a safe place (like a hiding spot or their crate) or put it back in its pen.

Some puppies may be genetically predisposed to fear, so they may need more positive experiences and encouragement before they'll allow more handling. Remember, it's a marathon, not a race!

Don't be afraid to gently pull at their ears and tail, inspect their growing teeth, and tickle paws. These are all areas that dogs can be sensitive to as adults but are areas that owners and vets need access to.

⁵ Elliott O, Scott JP. The development of emotional distress reactions to separation, in puppies. *J Genet Psychol.* 1961;99:3-22.

⁶ Howell, Tiffani J et al. "Puppy parties and beyond: the role of early age socialization practices on adult dog behavior." *Veterinary medicine (Auckland, N.Z.)* vol. 6 143-153. 29 Apr. 2015, doi:10.2147/VMRR.S62081

INTRODUCING PASSIVE ENRICHMENT

The places the pups are kept, whether their sleeping area or a playpen, should be passively enriched.⁴

Passive enrichment includes having an assortment of textures, toys, and objects rotated in their pen(s) over time.⁴ This allows pups to explore and familiarize themselves with novel stimuli in a safe place, at their pace, and with the comfort of littermates.⁴

Below, we've put together a table of common items that can be added to playpens as a starting point. Refer to our weekly worksheets to ensure you're adding age-appropriate enrichment (e.g. no slippery surfaces for pups just learning to walk!).

TOYS	TEXTURES	OTHER
Ball	Bath mat	Cardboard box
Crinkly	Carpet patch	Music
Plastic/rubber	Cookie sheet	Ramp
Rattling	Cooling rack	Step stool
Rope	Muffin tin	TV
Squeaky	Non-slip mat	Wind chimes
Stuffed	Turf patch	Wobble board

INTRODUCING PEOPLE

Just about everyone loves a puppy, so if you ask, they will come. Puppies should meet a variety of people—as many as 30 over several weeks—from different genders, ages, ethnicities, and body types.⁴

If you are limited on individual people, you can also wear different types of clothing, like adding a hat, sunglasses, oversized jacket, etc.⁷

As always, the key is keeping these introductions and encounters as positive as possible. This means that you should keep introductions to one or two people, lower intensity (like just holding or petting) until the pup shows its ready for greater stimulus.

For example, pups between 3 and 4 weeks old should meet only one or two people at a time, and the duration should be based on their comfort level (likely shorter). As pups get older, they should be able to handle higher intensity encounters with people, including children who can easily mishandle a puppy, so ensuring a pup is comfortable being handled by adults before they interact with children is important.

These encounters should also be safe for the pups! People must sanitize their hands prior to interacting with your pups. They should remove their shoes or wear reusable/disposable booties to avoid exposure to things like Parvo.

⁷ “Early Socialization Project.” International Working Dog Registry, www.iwdr.org/early-socialization-home/.

HOW TO GAUGE SUCCESS

Just about everyone loves a puppy, so if you ask, they will come. Puppies should meet a variety of people—as many as 30 over several weeks—from different genders, ages, ethnicities, and body types.⁴

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These encounters should also be safe for the pups! People must sanitize their hands prior to interacting with your pups. They should remove their shoes or wear reusable/disposable booties to avoid exposure to things like Parvo.

INTRODUCING OBJECTS

Fosters can familiarize their pups with common household items, objects, and textures along with a variety of enrichment and toys.

As previously noted, introduction of objects can be done passively by putting novel stimuli into the pups' space. We can also create more interactive experiences by moving those objects or introducing more complex items or ones that might cause harm if left with pups!²⁴

We recommend giving your pups a “**house tour**” over the time they are in your care. This allows them to encounter the different sights, sounds, and things within different parts of a typical household.

For example, the kitchen is often the hub of a household, which may offer different flooring from other areas of the home, cabinets, trash can, appliances (which may be shiny or reflective).

Similarly, the bathroom can offer different textures for them to walk on (like the shower, tub, and bathmats). This helps them learn to walk on an assortment of textures and not develop phobias of them later on.

Next, we recommend **rotating through toys**. You don't need to be regimented about it, but it's good to offer a variety of toys throughout their foster period so that they get something new/different on a regular basis. Use toys that make different sounds and are made of different materials over time.

HOW TO GAUGE SUCCESS

Whether you've put in a new item into the pups' pen for passive enrichment or you're interacting with the pups and letting them explore a new item, there are clear markers that indicate the encounter is positive and going successfully.

SUCCESSFUL	UNSUCCESSFUL
Approaches with curiosity	Disengages with foster
Engages with	Hides
Explores and moves on	Trembles
Mouths, sniffs, or touches	Whimpers or whines

A successful interaction results in the puppy approaching and engaging with the object with curiosity or playfulness. If a puppy checks out the object and is then indifferent, that is still success.

It is important that puppies are given a chance to resolve inner conflict before lowering the intensity or removing the object. This looks like a pup who might yawn, whine, or be afraid to approach and with handler encouragement (touch and voice) or time (like one or two minutes), becomes more comfortable and then shows curiosity.⁷

If a pup remains stressed out and cannot resolve the inner conflict, try to engage the pup with a toy it enjoys and gentle handling to end the encounter on a more positive note.⁷

INTRODUCING SOUND

While puppies typically do not hear well enough to startle until around three weeks of age, their ear canals may start to open about a week earlier (around the same time as eyes open). Playing soothing music, like classical music, where puppies sleep may help to introduce them to sound and associate that sound to settling behaviors.⁷

Pups in a home environment are typically passively exposed to a variety of novel sounds throughout the foster period. If foster pups are being kept in a room away from typical household noises, we recommend setting up a playpen in a noisier area where pups can be exposed to household sounds for 15 to 30 minutes (more if they are doing well).

STARTLE RECOVERY

Between the ages of 3 and 6 weeks, puppies have a reflexive startle reaction where they have an immediate muscle contraction when exposed to sudden or intense sounds that is followed by immediate recovery.¹

This is the response before puppies display a fear response. Puppies' ability to be startled and then recovery quickly without feeling fear means that this is the ideal time to expose them to louder, more intense sounds.

It is important to continue exposing puppies to the sounds they have familiarized themselves with beyond the early Socialization Stage or else they will lose their confidence.¹

SOUNDS

Depending on your pups' responses to more intense sounds, you can keep them closer or further away from the source of the sound.⁷ We've put together a list of ideas for sound introductions and the earliest we would recommend introducing them; the sounds should be introduced throughout the Socialization Stage, so don't do them all at once!

SOUND	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5+
Airplanes and helicopters		Introduce	Continue
Clanging metal bowls	Introduce	Continue	Continue
Dishwasher	Introduce	Continue	Remove
Doorbell	Introduce	Continue	Continue
Dropping things	Introduce	Continue	Continue
Kids playing		Introduce	Continue
Loading/unloading dishes	Introduce	Introduce	Continue
Opening/closing of doors	Introduce	Continue	Continue
Sirens		Introduce	Continue
Trucks		Introduce	Continue
Washer/Dryer	Introduce	Continue	Continue
Vacuum	Introduce	Continue	Continue
Video games		Introduce	Continue

HOW TO GAUGE SUCCESS

With less intense sounds, pups may show slight curiosity and resume what they were doing, or they might not even notice the sound. With more intense sounds, you may find it startles the pup and then you'll gauge its ability to recover (go back to what it was doing).

SUCCESSFUL	UNSUCCESSFUL
Approaches source of sound	Doesn't resume playing
Continues/resumes playing	Hides
Continues/resumes sleeping	Trembles
Tilts head	Whimpers or whines

With louder sounds, like a vacuum, you may see the pup pause in reaction, but you want them to recover quickly, which means they go back to whatever it was they were doing. This reflexive startle reaction occurs between 3 and 6 weeks of age.¹

It is important that puppies are given a chance to resolve inner conflict before lowering the intensity or turning off the sound. This looks like a pup who might yawn, whine, or be afraid to approach, and with handler encouragement (touch and voice) or time (like a minute), becomes more comfortable.⁷

If a pup remains stressed out and cannot resolve the inner conflict, try to engage the pup with a toy it enjoys and gentle handling to end the encounter on a more positive note.⁷

INTRODUCING FOOD + WATER

Puppies can start the weaning process and be introduced to wet food as early as three weeks or when their teeth start to erupt. Puppies who can sit and stand are going to have an easier time figuring out how to eat on their own.

Weaning should be done gradually if mom is present. This process can take a few days to a few weeks. Bottle-fed pups can be transitioned faster, if they take to it.

SUPPLIES

- Shallow bowl or plate or group feeder
- Wet (Canned) Food for Puppies
- Disposable or washable pee pad (for dining on)
- Fork

STEP-BY-STEP

1. Whisk using a fork) wet food to create a whipped texture. Add water if needed to loosen. You want a mousse-like texture.
2. Place in bowl, plate, or a group feeder, then place vessel onto a disposable or washable pee pad (or anything else that works as a “tablecloth”).
3. Offer wet food on your fingertip or a fork to puppy to smell and taste. Try with each puppy a few times.

Some puppies get it instantly, and once you have a few figure it out, the others will learn by seeing littermates.

Once puppies are eating wet food, they need to have access to a shallow bowl of fresh water. Swirl your finger in the water and give puppies a taste to encourage trying it.

INTRODUCING GROOMING

There are three types of grooming that pups will experience during their lifetime that fosters can introduce easily: brushing of their coat, trimming of their nails, and bathing. All experiences should be introduced in a positive manner at the pace the pup allows.

Brushing: If a pup's adult coat will likely need brushing, we want to gently brush pups around three weeks of age and forward. Brushing can work out any hardened poop in their coats.

Allow pup to sniff and explore the brush before using it. Gently place the brush on the pup's coat before applying pressure.

Trimming Nails: Puppy nails need to be trimmed regularly, even at a young age, and will help them get positive experiences in preparation for a lifetime of nail trims. It will also prevent them from scratching their littermates and their mom.

Allow pup to sniff and explore the clippers before using them. Gently hold a paw in your non-dominant hand and clippers in your dominant hand to trim nails. A second person holding the pup in place to be helpful.

Bathing: If pups are dirty enough to merit, they can be bathed at four weeks old with a gentle, puppy shampoo with warm water (but not hot). Use warmed towels to dry them and thoroughly dry each pup before returning to a warm area. Their ability to regulate their temperature improves as they get older but is not complete for sometime.

Set up all your supplies before you get the pup into the sink/tub. Mix shampoo in a cup of warm water to pour onto pup. Turn water on to a gentle stream to give the pup time to react. Turn water off when working soap into their coat. Rinse thoroughly. Work quickly!

INTRODUCING THE POTTY AREA

Around the 3-week mark, puppies will start to eliminate on their own. Even as early as two weeks, they may be mobile enough to stimulate themselves as they crawl and attempt to stand/walk.

Once pups start eating wet food, mom tends to stop cleaning up after them, which means you'll have to do it—and that says it's time to introduce the potty area!

Dogs are naturally inclined not to eliminate where they sleep, so we can use this to our advantage by creating a designated potty area and sleeping area.

At this age, the potty area should take up half of the entire space that the puppies have access to. Once they figure it out, it can be about one-third the size of their area. You need to ensure there's enough space for mom to be in the pen to nurse.

You will want to line the potty area with disposable pee pads, while the sleeping area should have softer, cozier bedding.

During the third and fourth week, you will need to quickly replace any soiled linens in the sleeping area with fresh ones to make it clear where the potty area is.



POTTY TRAINING TIPS

The first week or two of adding the potty area can be a lot of work, but the reward is well worth it—just stick with it and be patient!

Most pups figure it out within a couple of weeks, and for the remainder of their foster period, they will use the potty area 90% or more often!

- Be vigilant about removing soiled linens as often as you find them. Keep the sleeping area smelling clean and fresh.
- Make the bathroom area the least cozy spot and sleeping area the coziest spot.
- When a puppy first wakes up, you can place them on the potty pad so they will go and make the area smell like urine. You can also layer a fresh pee pad over a used one to make the potty area sufficiently odorific.
- Make sure to keep the potty area in the same place as much as possible! This makes it easier for young pups to learn where to go.
- Place the potty area directly in front of their sleeping area and then later closer to the pen exit (often where pups will run to when woken up!).

LESSON PLANS

We promise working with your foster pup is easier than it may have sounded up until this point! Pups in foster homes tend to be exposed to many novel stimuli just because they're in a household to begin with.

We have created lesson plans that work as your cheat sheets to helping to your pup be ready for its forever home! Each lesson plan is broken down into four areas:

Care: The daily/weekly tasks needed to provide basic care to your pup, such as replacing linens, grooming, feeding, and so forth.

Socialization: Recommendations for age-appropriate handling and socialization with new people or other animals.

Environmental Enrichment: Recommendations for age-appropriate passive enrichment within pups' spaces.

Interactive Enrichment: Recommendations for age-appropriate enrichment while foster is actively engaged with pups.

Lesson Plans are comprehensive but fosters should always do as much as they're able to do within the time they're able to give to their fosters. **Bonus tasks** are indicated with a star symbol for tasks that take extra time for extra credit, so-to-speak!

Fosters caring for multiple puppies, particularly an entire litter, will need to do what is reasonable based on number of puppies in their care.

WEEK 3 — LESSON PLAN

Your pup should have their eyes and ears open and will be starting to walk. Pups are fearless at this age, which means it is a great time to introduce them to a variety of new stimuli, including louder sounds.

Week 3 involves a lot of introductions, while the remaining weeks in the Socialization Stage will be building on these introductions.

If your pups seem developmentally delayed, you will want to reduce the intensity of socialization and enrichment for another week, e.g. “week 3” will apply to them when they’re actually in week 4.

WEEK 3 — OVERVIEW

- Introduce potty area
- Begin weaning
- Introduce grooming
- Introduce toys, textures, sounds, crate
- Continue body handling desensitization
- Redirect mouthiness
- Reward good behavior
- Sit with pups
- Expose to loud, unpredictable sounds

WEEK 3 – CARE TASKS

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Add potty area	Use half of the pen as potty area, line with disposable pee pads. (See Introducing the Potty Area.)	One time
Replace soiled linens	Support potty training with more frequent linen changes	2x Daily (or more; as often as needed)
Start weaning	Introduce wet food and water once teeth erupt (See Introducing Food and Water.)	3x Daily (Food) As needed (Water)
Nail trims	Trim nails every 7 to 10 days (See Introducing Grooming.)	Weekly
Weigh	Record weights	Weekly

WEEK 3 – SOCIALIZATION TASKS

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Body handling	Gently touch ears, nose, paws, tail; lift lips (~5 minutes) Interact with pups by holding, petting, and cuddling	Daily
Introduce new people	Pups can now have visitors; foster must supervise	Weekly

WEEK 3 – ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT

We recommend rotating toys and textures in the pups' environment during linen changes in a way that feels intuitive.

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Introduce toys	Add toys to pups' play pen, rotate or add new toys (while others are being washed) frequently	2-3x Weekly
Introduce textures	Focus on soft, bumpy, and rubberized textures (nothing slippery or smooth)	2-3x Weekly
Introduce sound	Passively introduce sound by ensuring pups can hear household activities, especially louder ones like vacuuming	Daily
Introduce crate	Place an open crate in pen with bedding in it	One time

WEEK 3 – AGE-APPROPRIATE TOYS + TEXTURES

Toys need to be of the appropriate size to avoid pups swallowing or choking on them. For example, larger-breed pups may require larger toys to start with compared to smaller-breed pups.

Textures need to compliment the pups' mobility level. During this age, more textured, non-slip surfaces are key. Smooth surfaces should be avoided as pups are still learning to walk.

WEEK 3 – INTERACTIVE ENRICHMENT

We recommend rotating toys and textures in tandem with washing used objects and replacing with clean ones!

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Play with toys	Play with pups using the toys in their pen, encouraging them to approach and interact with the toy you're holding	Daily
Redirect mouthiness	Allow only gentle mouthiness ("yelp" like a littermate would if too firm) and redirect mouthiness to toy	Daily
Reward good behavior	If a pup chooses to sit, reward with affectionate.	Daily
Sit with pups	Interact with pups, allowing them to explore you, climb on your lap, maneuver around you	Daily
Expose to loud, unpredictable sounds	Bang bowls together, drop a book, jangle keys, slam a door (no more than one per day on purpose)	2-3x Weekly

WEEK 4 – LESSON PLAN

Week 4 involves builds on the introductions made in Week 3. Pups remain fearless, which means we want to continue to introduce stimuli, including louder sounds.

We will increase the frequency and duration of encounters with new people while adding outdoor space, play space, and obstacles.

If your pups seem developmentally delayed, you will want to use Week 3's curriculum. If your pup is just starting the KinderPUP program, you will need to work through Week 3's introductions as necessary.

WEEK 4 – OVERVIEW

- Introduce play area
- Introduce outdoor space
- Continue desensitization to grooming (nail trimming, brushing, etc.)
- Continue building bond and trust through handling, holding, petting, and exposure to new people
- Continue to add and rotate through different toys, textures, and objects
- Introduce obstacles
- Introduce loud sounds

WEEK 4 – CARE TASKS

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Add play area	Expand pen space to allow for more playing and movement as pups start to become more mobile	One time
Replace soiled linens	Support potty training with more frequent linen changes	~2x Daily
Add outdoor space	(if possible) Create safe and secure space for pups to be outdoors w/toys and textures	One time
Continue weaning	Feed pups 3x daily, always offer water (See Introducing Food and Water.)	3x Daily (Food) As needed (Water)
Nail trims	Trim nails every 7 to 10 days (See Introducing Grooming.)	Weekly
Weigh	Record weights	Weekly

WEEK 4 – SOCIALIZATION TASKS

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Body handling	Gently touch ears, nose, paws, tail; lift lips (~5 minutes) Interact with pups by holding, petting, and cuddling	Daily
More new people	Pups can meet more people for longer periods and more often	Weekly (or more often, if possible)!

WEEK 4 – ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT

We recommend rotating toys, textures, and obstacles in tandem with washing used objects and replacing with clean ones!

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Rotate toys and textures	Rotate toys and textures each time you clean the pen	2-3x Weekly
Introduce obstacles	Encourage body awareness and mobility with size-appropriate objects for pups to crawl, climb, and maneuver over/around	2-3x Weekly
Passive sounds	Ensure pups can hear household activities, especially louder ones like vacuuming	Daily

WEEK 4 – AGE-APPROPRIATE TOYS, TEXTURES, OBSTACLES

Toys need to be of the appropriate size to avoid pups swallowing or choking on them. For example, larger-breed pups may require larger toys compared to smaller-breed pups.

Textures need to complement the pups' mobility level. If pups are walking competently, smoother surfaces should be added to the texture rotation. If they are not, delay until they are.

WEEK 4 – INTERACTIVE ENRICHMENT

Week 4 looks a lot like Week 3! We are continuing to build the bond between puppy and handler while encouraging politeness.

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Play with toys	Play with pups using the toys in their pen, encouraging them to approach and interact with the toy you're holding	Daily
Redirect mouthiness	Allow only gentle mouthiness ("yelp" like a littermate would if too firm) and redirect mouthiness to toy	Daily
Reward good behavior	If a pup chooses to sit or stop whining, reward with affection	Daily
Sit with pups	Interact with pups, allowing them to explore you, climb on your lap, maneuver around you	Daily
Expose to loud, unpredictable sounds	Bangs, booms, clangs, thuds, whirs, yells - louder, less predictable sounds; like action movies, young kids playing nearby (not with puppies), video games, different types of music, etc.	2-3x Weekly

WEEK 5 — LESSON PLAN

Week 5 involves builds on the introductions made in Week 3 and 4.

Most pups remain fearless, which means we want to continue to introduce stimuli, including louder, unpredictable sounds.

They should also have better body confidence and mobility, so we can give them more difficult obstacles and textures to try.

If your pups seem developmentally delayed, you will want to use Week 4's curriculum. If your pup is just starting the KinderPUP program, you will need to work through Week 3 and Week 4's introductions as necessary.

WEEK 5 — OVERVIEW

- Introduce bathing
- Continue desensitization to grooming (nail trimming, brushing, etc.)
- Continue building bond and trust through handling, holding, petting, and exposure to new people
- Continue to add and rotate through different toys, textures, objects, and obstacles.
- Make toys more interactive by playing with pups or by adding in toys that combine movement or sound
- Encourage pups to come to you and follow you around
- Introduce car rides

WEEK 5 – CARE TASKS

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Bathe	Between Week 4 and Week 5, pups can have their first (quick!) bath.	Every other week
Replace soiled linens	Support potty training with more frequent linen changes	~2x Daily
Play time in outdoor space	Allow pups at least 30 minutes of play outdoors (weather permitting)	At least once daily
Continue weaning	Feed pups 3x daily, always offer water (See Introducing Food and Water)	3x Daily (Food) As needed (Water)
Nail trims	Trim nails every 7 to 10 days (See Introducing Grooming)	Weekly
Weigh	Record weights	Weekly

WEEK 5 – SOCIALIZATION TASKS

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Body handling	Gently touch ears, nose, paws, tail; lift lips (~10 minutes) Interact with pups by holding, petting, and cuddling	Daily
More new people	Pups can meet more people for longer periods and more often, including children	Weekly (or more often, if possible)!

WEEK 5 – ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT

We recommend rotating toys, textures, and obstacles in tandem with washing used objects and replacing with clean ones!

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Rotate toys and textures	Rotate toys and textures each time you clean the pen	2-3x Weekly
Add more difficult obstacles	Rotate through obstacles but increase difficulty by adding more slippery or uneven surfaces, like balance/wobble boards, rolling objects, stairs	2-3x Weekly
Passive sounds	Ensure pups can hear household activities, especially louder ones like vacuuming	Daily

WEEK 5 – AGE-APPROPRIATE TOYS, TEXTURES, OBSTACLES

Toys need to be of the appropriate size to avoid pups swallowing or choking on them. For example, larger-breed pups may require larger toys compared to smaller-breed pups. You may also find some pups are more apt to destroy certain types of toys, which should then be removed and avoided.

Textures need to complement the pups' mobility level. If pups are walking competently, smoother, slippery, or uneven surfaces should be added to the texture rotation.

WEEK 5 – INTERACTIVE ENRICHMENT

Now that pups are more confident in their environment and the various objects you’ve introduced them to, you can start combining elements like movement of an object or an object that plays louder sounds.

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Add more interactive toys, keep playing	<p>Play with pups using the toys in their pen, encouraging them to approach and interact with the toy you’re holding</p> <p>Add in more interactive toys, such as ones that roll, have wheels, chime, etc.</p>	Daily
Redirect mouthiness	<p>Allow only gentle mouthiness (“yelp” like a littermate would if too firm) and redirect mouthiness to toy</p>	Daily
Reward good behavior	<p>If a pup chooses to sit, reward with affection</p>	Daily
Sit with pups, walk with pups, call them to you	<p>Interact with pups, allowing them to explore you, climb on your lap, maneuver around you</p> <p>Encourage them to walk towards you, with you, and follow you around</p>	Daily
Expose to loud, unpredictable sounds	<p>Bangs, booms, clangs, thuds, whirs, yells - louder, less predictable sounds; like action movies, young kids playing nearby (not with puppies), video games, different types of music, etc.</p>	2-3x Weekly
★ Take on a car ride	<p>Place pups in a crate and take on a short car ride</p>	Weekly

WEEKS 6 + 7 – LESSON PLAN

Sometime between as early as week 5 and as late as week 8, puppies may start to show signs that they've entered into their first fear period (which can last 2-3 weeks).

They may show these reactions towards things they've previously been fearless of. If you notice this, you may need to reduce the intensity of experiences and objects. The key is to continue keeping experiences as positive as possible and give them a safe space to experience fear and overcome it.

If your pup has not yet entered into the fear period, you can continue to ramp up the intensity of objects and experiences.

WEEKS 6 + 7 – OVERVIEW

- Continue desensitization to grooming activities (bathing, brushing, nail trimming, etc.)
- Introduce crate training by enclosing pups in crate
- Introduce formal potty training by taking pups to potty area when they wake up and after eating
- Begin transition from wet food to kibble
- Continue building bond and trust with pups through handling, cuddling, petting and meeting different people
- Continue to rotate through toys, textures, and objects in environment
- Increase the difficulty or size of obstacles
- Continue car rides, add in cart/wagon rides

WEEKS 6 + 7 – CARE TASKS

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Basic Care	Bathe (every other week), trim nails (weekly), brush (as needed), weigh (weekly)	Weekly to Bi-Weekly
Potty Training	Start proactively taking puppy to potty turf, potty pad, or outdoor space after waking or eating (See Potty Training Guide)	As needed
Crate Training	Crate puppies together after playing for 15 minutes (closed), increase duration gradually (See Crate Training Guide)	At least once daily
Play time in outdoor space	Allow pups at least 60 minutes of play outdoors (weather permitting)	At least once daily
Transition to kibble	Feed pups 3x daily, always offer water (See Introducing Food and Water) Increase kibble, reduce wet food	3x Daily (Food) As needed (Water)

WEEKS 6 + 7 – SOCIALIZATION TASKS

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Body handling	Freely interact with pups by holding, petting, and cuddling; touch their paws, ears, and tail	Daily
More new people	Pups can meet more people for longer periods and more often, try having people wear hats, sunglasses, etc.	Weekly (or more, if foster can do so)

WEEKS 6 + 7 – ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT

From this point forward, you can add novel items if you can think of them or have them available to you, but it is okay to rotate through existing items at this point!

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Rotate toys and textures	Rotate toys and textures each time you clean the pen	2-3x Weekly
Continue using difficult obstacles	Rotate through obstacles but increase difficulty by adding more slippery or uneven surfaces, like balance/wobble boards, rolling objects, stairs	2-3x Weekly
Passive sounds	Ensure pups can hear household activities, especially louder ones like vacuuming	Daily

WEEKS 6 + 7 – AGE-APPROPRIATE TOYS, TEXTURES, OBSTACLES

Toys need to be of the appropriate size to avoid pups swallowing or choking on them. You may also find some pups are more apt to destroy certain types of toys, which should then be removed and avoided.

Textures need to complement the pups' mobility level. If pups are walking competently, smoother, slippery, or uneven surfaces should be added to the texture rotation.

Obstacles must complement the pups' capabilities and their size. A tiered spice rack might make great stairs for smaller breeds while a toddler's step stool may work for larger breeds.

WEEKS 6 + 7 – INTERACTIVE ENRICHMENT

Now that pups are more confident in their environment and the various objects you’ve introduced them to, you can start combining elements like movement of an object or an object that plays louder sounds.

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Continue playing with toys, ★ introduce puzzle toys	<p>Play with pups using the toys in their pen, encouraging them to approach and interact with the toy you’re holding</p> <p>Introduce puzzle feeders along with lick mats (stop if resource guarding appears)</p>	Daily
Redirect mouthiness	Allow only gentle mouthiness (“yelp” like a littermate would if too firm) and redirect mouthiness to toy	Daily
Reward good behavior	If a pup chooses to sit, stop whining, etc, reward with affection	Daily
Sit with pups, call them to you, walk with pups	<p>Interact with pups, allowing them to explore you, climb on your lap, maneuver around you</p> <p>Encourage them to walk towards you, with you, and follow you around</p>	Daily
Loud, unpredictable sounds	Bangs, booms, clangs, thuds, whirs, yells - louder, less predictable sounds; like action movies, cartoons, video games, different types of music, etc.	2-3x Weekly
★ Car rides and cart rides	Continue taking pups on short car rides in an enclosed crate. You can take them on neighborhood walks in a cart/wagon (that is safe for them)	Weekly

WEEKS 8 + 9 — LESSON PLAN

As noted previously, puppies can go through a fear period beginning between week 5 and week 8 that lasts 2 to 3 weeks. They may show these reactions towards things they've previously been fearless of.

If you notice this, you may need to reduce the intensity of experiences and objects. The key is to continue keeping experiences as positive as possible and give them a safe space to experience fear and overcome it.

We can also begin more formal obedience training if puppy continues to engage positively and has the attention span for training.

WEEKS 8 + 9 — OVERVIEW

- Continue desensitization to grooming activities (bathing, brushing, nail trimming, etc.)
- Continue crate training by increasing duration
- Start crating during bed time (with potty breaks)
- Continue potty training by taking pups to potty area when they wake up and after eating
- Continue or conclude transition from wet food to kibble
- Continue building bond and trust with pups through handling, cuddling, petting and meeting different people
- Continue to rotate through toys, textures, and objects in environment
- Continue to increase the difficulty or size of obstacles
- Introduce obedience training
- Continue car rides, cart/wagon rides

WEEKS 8 + 9 – CARE TASKS

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Basic Care	Bathe (every other week), trim nails (weekly), brush (as needed), weigh (weekly)	Weekly to Bi-Weekly
Potty Training	Continue taking puppy to potty turf, pad, or outdoor space after waking or eating (See Potty Training Guide)	As needed
Crate Training	Crate puppies together after playing (for 1-2 hours), ★ crate during bed time (2-4 hours, then take out for potty) if possible (See Crate Training Guide)	At least once daily
Play time in outdoor space	Allow pups at least 60 minutes of play outdoors (weather permitting)	At least once daily
Transition to kibble	Feed pups 3x daily, always offer water. Increase kibble, reduce wet food	3x Daily (Food) As needed (Water)

WEEKS 8 + 9 – SOCIALIZATION TASKS

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Body handling	Freely interact with pups by holding, petting, and cuddling; touch their paws, ears, and tail	Daily
More new people	Pups can meet more people for longer periods and more often, try having people wear hats, sunglasses, etc.	Weekly (or more, if foster can do so)

WEEKS 8 + 9 – ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT

From this point forward, you can add novel items if you can think of them or have them available to you, but it is okay to rotate through existing items at this point!

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Rotate toys and textures	Rotate toys and textures each time you clean the pen	2-3x Weekly
Continue using difficult obstacles	Rotate through obstacles but increase difficulty by adding more slippery or uneven surfaces, like balance/wobble boards, rolling objects, stairs	2-3x Weekly
Passive sounds	Ensure pups can hear household activities, especially louder ones like vacuuming	Daily

WEEKS 8 + 9 – AGE-APPROPRIATE TOYS, TEXTURES, OBSTACLES

Toys need to be of the appropriate size to avoid pups swallowing or choking on them. You may also find some pups are more apt to destroy certain types of toys, which should then be removed and avoided.

Textures need to complement the pups' mobility level. If pups are walking competently, smoother, slippery, or uneven surfaces should be added to the texture rotation.

Obstacles must complement the pups' capabilities and their size. A tiered spice rack might make great stairs for smaller breeds while a toddler's step stool may work for larger breeds.

WEEKS 8 + 9 – INTERACTIVE ENRICHMENT

Continue to increase the duration and/or intensity of prior weeks' tasks. Continue to encourage and reward puppy politeness!

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Continue playing with toys	Play with pups using the toys in their pen, encouraging them to approach and interact with the toy you're holding	Daily
Redirect mouthiness, introduce chews	Allow only gentle mouthiness ("yelp" like a littermate would if too firm) and redirect mouthiness to toy Provide supervised time to chew on fish sticks, harder chews, etc.	Daily
Reward good behavior	If a pup chooses to sit, stop whining, etc, reward with affection	Daily
Sit with pups, call them to you, walk with pups	Interact with pups, allowing them to explore you, climb on your lap, maneuver around you Encourage them to walk towards you, with you, and follow you around	Daily
Loud, unpredictable sounds	Bangs, booms, clangs, thuds, whirs, yells - louder, less predictable sounds	2-3x Weekly
★ Introduce obedience training	Lure puppy into a sit using soft, puppy treat and mark with "sit" Can continue to "come," "down," and "look at me" if pup engages in training	At least once daily
★ Car rides and cart rides	Continue taking pups on short car rides in an enclosed crate. Take them on walks in a cart/wagon (that is safe for them)	Weekly

WEEKS 10-12 – LESSON PLAN

Puppies should largely be through any early fear period, which means we can continue desensitization, socialization, and familiarization at full speed! Remember, the process is a marathon, and each week builds on the prior week.

Your puppy should have better control over its bladder at this age and be able to be crated for longer periods, especially at night time. Smaller breeds may take longer to potty train than larger breeds, though.

It should also have a longer attention span and be even more receptive to obedience training. As always, keep experiences short, sweet, and positive!

WEEKS 10-12 – OVERVIEW

- Continue desensitization to grooming activities (bathing, brushing, nail trimming, etc.)
- Continue crate training
- Continue potty training by taking pups to potty area when they wake up and after eating
- Continue building bond and trust with pups through handling, cuddling, petting and meeting different people
- Continue to rotate through toys, textures, and objects in environment
- Continue to increase the difficulty or size of obstacles
- Continue obedience training
- Continue car rides, cart/wagon rides

WEEKS 10-12 – CARE TASKS

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Basic Care	Bathe (every other week), trim nails (weekly), brush (as needed), weigh (weekly)	Weekly to Bi-Weekly
Potty Training	Continue taking puppy to potty turf, pad, or outdoor space after waking or eating (See Potty Training Guide)	As needed
Crate Training	Crate puppies together after playing (for 1-2 hours), ★ crate during bed time (4-8 hours, then take out for potty) if possible (See Crate Training Guide)	At least once daily
Play time outdoors	Allow pups at least 60 minutes of play outdoors (weather permitting)	At least once daily
Food/Water	Feed pups 3x daily, offer access to water during/after meals and play time; remove water at least one hour prior to bed time	3x Daily (Food) As needed (Water)

WEEKS 10-12 – SOCIALIZATION TASKS

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Body handling	Freely interact with pups by holding, petting, and cuddling; touch their paws, ears, and tail	Daily
More new people	Pups can meet more people for longer periods and more often, try having people wear hats, sunglasses, etc.	Weekly (or more, if foster can do so)

WEEKS 10-12 – ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT

From this point forward, you can add novel items if you can think of them or have them available to you, but it is okay to rotate through existing items at this point!

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Rotate toys and textures	Rotate toys and textures each time you clean the pen	2-3x Weekly
Continue using difficult obstacles	Rotate through obstacles but increase difficulty by adding more slippery or uneven surfaces, like balance/wobble boards, rolling objects, stairs	2-3x Weekly
Passive sounds	Ensure pups can hear household activities, especially louder ones like vacuuming	Daily
Give treat-filled toys	Give puppies frozen treat-filled toys to encourage settling into crate during day time	Daily

WEEKS 10-12 – AGE-APPROPRIATE TOYS, TEXTURES, OBSTACLES

Toys need to be of the appropriate size to avoid pups swallowing or choking on them. You may also find some pups are more apt to destroy certain types of toys, which should then be removed and avoided.

Puppies will become mouthier as their adult teeth start to come through, so care needs to be taken to remove toys they outgrow or can readily destroy. Substitute for harder chews or toys.

WEEKS 10-12 – INTERACTIVE ENRICHMENT

Continue to increase the duration and/or intensity of prior weeks' tasks. Continue to encourage and reward puppy politeness!

TASK	RECOMMENDATION	FREQUENCY
Continue playing with toys	Play with pups using the toys in their pen, encouraging them to approach and interact with the toy you're holding	Daily
Redirect mouthiness, introduce chews	Allow only gentle mouthiness ("yelp" like a littermate would if too firm) and redirect mouthiness to toy Provide supervised time to chew on fish sticks, harder chews, etc.	Daily
Reward good behavior	If a pup chooses to sit, stop whining, etc, reward with affection	Daily
Sit with pups, call them to you, walk with pups	Interact with pups, allowing them to explore you, climb on your lap, maneuver around you Encourage them to walk towards you, with you, and follow you around	Daily
Loud, unpredictable sounds	Bangs, booms, clangs, thuds, whirs, yells - louder, less predictable sounds	2-3x Weekly
★ More obedience training	Lure puppy into a sit using soft, puppy treat and mark with "sit" Can continue to "come," "down," and "look at me" if pup engages in training	At least once daily
★ Car rides and cart rides	Continue taking pups on short car rides in an enclosed crate. Take them on walks in a cart/wagon (that is safe for them)	Weekly

ABOUT CHRISTINE MIELKE

Christine Mielke is an avid puppy foster and rescue philanthropist who is active in donating her expertise, time, and resources to local dog rescues. She has fostered over 150 puppies, including pregnant moms, nursing moms, neonates, and orphaned puppies.

Her passion lies in caring for newborn puppies, particularly orphaned ones, and hand-raising them. She also dedicates her time to improving the efficiency of local rescue organizations, providing free resources, and improving documentation and processes.

Christine's professional background includes a successful career as a writer and publisher, data analyst and manager, and editor and manager. Her educational background includes a BA in Political Science and BA in Economics; along with a JD/MBA.