

# Puppy Growth Time Line

**0 to 7 Weeks:** Unless you are a breeder, you should not even own a puppy this age. During this time he's experiencing his environment. His ears and eyes are excited by the world around him. It's also a strong socialization period which is why he should remain with his mother and litter mates. These bonds lead to a well-adjusted temperament.

**By day 10,** he should be experiencing the touch of human hands and be comfortable with it. These first 8 weeks are critical for his physical and emotional growth. The mother passes on about 75% of her temperament to her pups. If she is calm, she will have a calming influence on a hyper puppy. The mother also passes natural antibiotics to the puppy through her milk during this time, and at no time should a puppy be forced to stop weaning in order to rush the puppy to his new home. Mother knows best.

**At 49 days, or 7 weeks,** a temperament test should be done by someone not known to the pup. The testing is done away from the litter, the mother, and is performed by an easily trained 'stranger'. The results of the temperament testing will tell you the temperament you can expect when the puppy/adolescent stages are finished... it is quite accurate.

**8 to 12 Weeks:** Puppies during the third month absorb everything around them like a sponge. They will be curious and anxious to learn to play. As a breeder, it's time for puppy kindergarten. But more important than training is creating confidence. Training should be fun and not overly strict or aggressive. Any negative experiences at this age can create impressions and behavior that will last a lifetime. Keep in mind that this is a very impressionable puppy stage, so be positive when playing or working with your pet. Doing so will help him develop positive patterns in his behavior. Twelve weeks is the optimum age to go to their new home for toy breeds, PROVIDED the breeder has done their job during these past 4 weeks. At the 12-week mark, the puppy will be well established on solid food.

**3½ to 4 Months:** Puppies are now starting to lose their baby teeth. With physical growth there is a hormone surge now affecting his behavior. That means if your puppy was hyper to begin with, he'll be about 30% more hyper during this period. If he is shy, he'll be even more shy. During this puppy stage you want to keep a consistent training schedule.

**4 to 5 Months:** Now is the age when you will feel baffled over your dog's behavior. He'll be housebroken one day, then urinate all over the floor the next. Realize he is not being defiant at this puppy stage so avoid punishment. They are getting a surge of hormones which confuses them. Step back, and reinforce the housebreaking patterns you have already learned.

**5 to 6½ Months:** It's during the fifth month that your puppy will go through a noticeable growth spurt. Some people think they can slow this by spaying or neutering during this puppy stage, but it doesn't help. They will go through this transitional phase.

**6½ to 7½ Months:** Take a brief sigh of relief because your puppy will start to settle down. Notice I said brief, this doesn't last.

**8 to 9 Months:** Your puppy is experiencing his final hormonal surge and turns into an amateur magician. Things around your house, the television remote for example, will begin to disappear. As a pet owner, this may very well be your most challenging puppy stage. Your dog's natural temperament will increase. He'll be about 50% more shy, hyper or aggressive. Male dogs will start to lift their legs when urinating. All the training you have done to this point will seem to go for naught. You'll likely get panicky and frustrated because you think he should know better. He does know better. Keep on with the consistent training and you'll come out of this final stage just fine.

Now you've survived the puppy stage at every stage of puppy development. No, your pet is not a full adult, but you are well on your way to having a loving and loyal companion and friend for a long time to come.

And something else my sister sent me:

Small Poodles in particular need to learn to use ramps when getting off furniture, right from the start. Never let the pup jump off furniture. You'll save your dog a lot of pain, yourself a lot of money, and you'll prevent a major risk to the dog's temperament. If it hurts when someone touches you or picks you up, and you're a dog, you will probably start telling people to leave you alone by growling and snapping. Dogs hide their pain, so people usually don't make the connection between pain and this type of aggression.

Teach the ramp right from the start to protect your little Poodle. Teach your big Poodle, too—it's good education for ALL dogs, it's so much easier to learn it at a young age rather than older when they really need it. The small ones need it urgently starting with growth, so their bones and joints can form correctly.