



## New Owner

Puppy's Name



**THE KENNEL CLUB**  
*Making a difference for dogs*



**DogsTrust**

[www.thepuppyplan.com](http://www.thepuppyplan.com)

# Personal Details

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**New Owners Name**

**Puppy's Name**

**New photo**

# Breeder's Checklist

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## Weeks 1 – 2. Newly born

Early stimulation tasks to kick-start the puppy's neurological system and encourage development and early learning.

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## Week 3. Hello World

Introducing the sights and sounds of household life – and meeting the family (adults, children, other dogs, cats etc). Also lots of handling, textures and surfaces.

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## Week 4. Fun and Games

Lots of new toys, games and challenges to develop problem solving, coordination, strength and dealing with frustration. Individual handling and different locations.

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## Week 5-7. Curiosity

Introduction to as many different types of people as possible, and also to household objects (vacuum cleaner, TV etc). As much novel stimulation as possible. Lots of individual attention. Getting out and about (carried).

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## Week 7 - Check list

By the time he is seven weeks old he should have:

1. Met 7 different types of people
  2. Been on 7 different surfaces
  3. Played with 7 different types of toys
  4. Heard 7 loud and unexpected noises
  5. Been in 7 different locations – and eaten in 7 different locations
  6. Done 7 different problem solving activities (for example climb into a box, over a blanket, go through a tunnel, get a toy from under something....)
  7. Been out and about to see 7 different places or things
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## Notes:

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## Week 8. Starting a new life

Go over everything from previous weeks





# The Puppy Plan



## Introduction

**Dogs Trust and the Kennel Club have come together, with trainer/behaviourist Carolyn Menteith, to launch a unique new initiative that aims to give every puppy the very best start in life – the Puppy Plan**

From the moment a litter of puppies is planned, both the breeder, and then later the new owners, want to do everything possible to make sure that each new life has the chance to grow up to be the very best dog he or she can be. With health testing and responsible breeding, we can do as much as possible to make sure puppies are healthy and 'fit for function' but for the vast majority of dogs, no matter what their start in life, their function will not be as a working dog in the way their ancestors were, but will be that of a much-loved family dog, and we should be doing everything we can to prepare all dogs for that life.

Being a family dog is one of the most difficult jobs we ask dogs to do. We expect our dog to fit into the family – and that might include children, other dogs, cats and much more. He will have to accept loud noises and the unpredictable sounds of his new home, he will have to learn to be left alone when we can't take him out with us, but come everywhere with us when he can, and he needs to learn not to herd the children, chase the cat, knock over granny, steal the Sunday dinner, or threaten the postman (or anyone else).

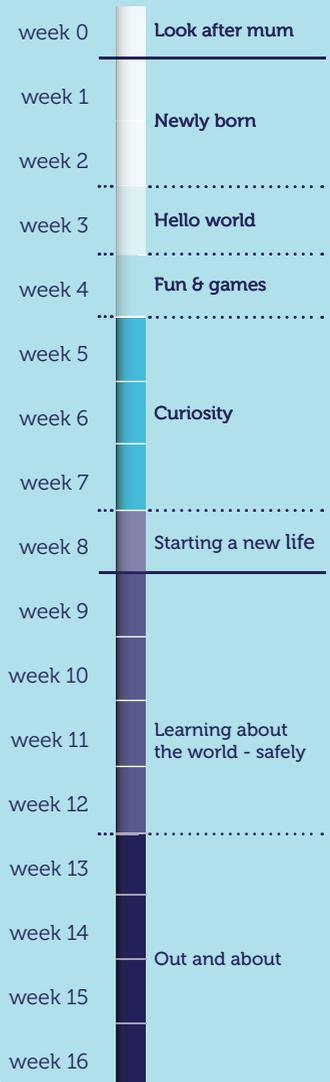
The foundations for all this good behaviour are laid down in the first 16 weeks of a dog's life.

This is an almost magical time when we are able to develop the puppy's brain, and shape the way he will turn out as an adult dog. This is the time when most problem behaviours can be prevented long before they even start, giving the dog a far more certain future – and the new owner far less potential problems.

The Puppy Plan is a step-by-step, simple but comprehensive, socialisation plan that starts with the breeder (or the early care-giver, if different) who works through the first eight weeks (and, we hope, records it every step of the way using diary entries, photos and/or videos), and this then passed onto the new owner to continue.

### The first 16 weeks

Up to the first 16 weeks the puppy is learning who his social group is, who he is friendly to, who he plays with and what things he should ignore.



## The Science – and why it matters

The brain of a 16-week-old puppy has exactly the same number of brain cells as a newly born puppy – but it is roughly 10 times bigger. This extraordinary increase in size has nothing to do with the brain cells themselves however but the number of connections established between them. These connections can only form as a direct result of all the experiences the puppy has in these first critical four month of life. Isn't that amazing?

Every single thing your puppy sees, hears, feels, smells and tastes, every meeting he has and every new thing he discovers produces literally trillions of new brain connections in those first 16 weeks, and they will last for life. He is learning what things are part of his new life and his new family, what is safe and who his social group is. A puppy who is properly brought up in this period, will be far more likely to grow up to be more confident, calmer, learn new things easier, be less likely to respond to new things fearfully or aggressively – and in short, be the perfect family dog. In contrast, a dog who has not had this good start in life is more likely to be over-reactive, unable to concentrate, fearful, a slower learner, develop preventable behaviour problems – and in fact have a less well developed brain than his well socialised brother.



So why is this? All animals are by nature scared of new things. It is this self-preservation instinct that stops rabbits bouncing up to introduce themselves to wolves and getting eaten. For a newly-born

animal to be so cautious and fearful however is counter-productive, as everything is new to them and they would be constantly in a state of stress. So in most wild animals, this fearfulness starts at around three weeks old. What an animal hasn't met by then is regarded as scary and they will avoid it or if unable to do that, may in all likelihood, behave defensively.

In domestic dogs however, this sets in at about five to seven weeks old depending on the breed or type. What the puppy hasn't experienced by then, is far more likely to be perceived as scary. For this reason, it is really important that breeders do a lot of socialisation long before the puppies go to their new home.

Up to the first 16 weeks of age however, the puppy is also learning who his social group is. He is learning who the people and animals are that are his family and that he is social and friendly towards. The new owner has to carry on this socialisation to teach the puppy about his new family and what his life with them is going to contain.

All cells within the body have a time to grow and a time to stop growing, and at 16 weeks old (sometimes earlier), the window of opportunity for the majority of this brain development rapidly start to close – and so do the puppy’s learning opportunities. Puppies who have not had this socialisation and input in these valuable weeks, because of poor breeding practices or a lack of understanding of this process, will always be playing catch-up, and so much of their potential will never be realised.

Many, if not most, behaviour problems can be prevented through good socialisation and early education – these include aggression, noise phobias, separation anxieties, over-reactivity and much more.

The Puppy Plan has been developed to try and prevent behaviour problems, owners giving up on dogs and handing them over to rescue organisations, returning them to breeders, or having them euthanased for behaviour problems (the major cause of death in dogs under two years old).

The Puppy Plan aims to be completely inclusive – no matter where the puppy has been bred, whether pure bred or crossbreed, or the circumstances surrounding their birth. It aims to help every dog be the very best he can be, give new owners the confidence to know their puppy has had an excellent ‘primary school education’ and raise the standard of puppy socialisation throughout the country – and hopefully the world.



For the breeders or care-givers of puppies in their first eight weeks, the Puppy Plan follows a fairly fixed and quite in-depth schedule, as their job is to give a broad-based early education – as they will not know where life will take the puppy and so they should be ready for anything.

**Now that you have brought your puppy home, you can totally customise the plan to make sure your puppy fits into his new life and his new family.**



# Welcoming your puppy to his new home is a very exciting time!

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If your puppy has come from a breeder who follows the Puppy Plan, you already know he has had a good start in life, and that he is well on the way to making a perfect addition to your family. You will already have his own Puppy Plan including diary entries, and hopefully also photos and videos, to show what a great start he has had.

If you haven't chosen your puppy yet, try and find a litter that have been raised in a house as similar to yours as possible (so with children if you have children, in a noisy environment if you have a noisy house, with cats if you have cats etc). You can use the breeder's Puppy Plans to check this - especially the Magic 7 checklist.

Behaviour problems can arise from taking puppies from their mum too early, so make sure the breeder keeps the puppies with their mother until around eight weeks old.

If your new puppy from a rescue centre, hopefully they will have been using the Puppy Plan from the time he came to them – and you can carry on where they left off.

If your puppy is from a breeder or rescue and hasn't had the advantages of the Puppy Plan start in life, don't panic. Just start today and follow the Puppy Plan from now on in order for him to get the chance to catch up with many of the things he has missed.

The work that the breeder or rescue have hopefully done in the past eight weeks will mean that your puppy has had a robust upbringing and he has all the skills necessary to become the perfect family dog. If they have followed the Puppy Plan, this will have given him a good primary school education so he knows about the many different things the world has to offer. Now it is up to you to continue his secondary education in the specific environment of his new life. You are also teaching him to bond to his new family – you.

The most unique and exciting thing about the Puppy Plan is that you design it yourself. This is your plan to make sure you have the dog of your dreams. This Plan doesn't tell you what to do, insist you do things that have no bearing on your life, or waste your valuable time. Instead you create your personal Puppy Plan around your life and the life your new dog will lead.

Even better, it is fun for both you and your puppy!





# New Owners Personalised Puppy Plan

## Week 8 – New home, and making your own personal Puppy Plan

In his first week with you, you are beginning to teach your puppy who his new family are, teaching him to learn to trust them, and begin to want to be with you. This should be a settling-in week.



### First Tasks

1



Create your own personal Puppy Plan by thinking about what things are going to be a part of your dog's life (now or any time in the future). Using the examples below, make a list of all the things that you think are likely to be part of your dog's life – babies, children, different people, other animals, livestock, car journeys, train journeys, pubs, friend's houses, dog shows, vets, traffic.... Everything you can think of that you want your puppy to accept as a normal part of his routine. For the next eight weeks he is still learning about who is part of his social group and who is not. Your job is to make sure he gets plenty of positive experiences with the people, animals and things that matter, and unrewarding experiences with those that are not, so he learns to ignore them.

Fill all those different things in on your Puppy Plan chart and you are ready to go. You can make additions as you go along but try to think of as much as possible to start with.

The chart is in two parts – one is the things you want your puppy to be friendly towards and interact with, play with and look on as being part of his social group (socialisation), and the other is the things you want your puppy to accept as normal, not worry about and so ignore and pay attention to you instead in their presence (habituation).

Puppy Plan Chart  
(can be found in the middle of this booklet)



Why not take photos or videos of your puppy doing these exercises and share them on our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/groups/puppyplan](http://www.facebook.com/groups/puppyplan)

# Examples of things you may want to include:

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## Socialisation

**People** – this should include as many of these as possible (as you want your dog to be friendly to everyone): adult women, adult men, men with beards, people with glasses, tall men, people of different ethnic origins, loud confident people, shy or timid people, people wearing hats, people carrying umbrellas, postmen, elderly people, disabled people, teenagers, younger children, toddlers and babies. Your puppy should be rewarded and given treats and games etc by these people – or you can reward them for interacting with them positively.

**Dogs (and your cats if they are confident and are happy with dogs)** – this should include dogs, other puppies, dogs of all colours, shaggy dogs, dogs with flat faces, large dogs, small dogs (as you want your dog to be friendly with all other dogs). Reward your puppy for positive interactions with these. It can also include any household cats.

## Habituation

**Other animals** – unknown cats or your own cats if they are shy, unfriendly or worried about dogs (as they would far prefer the puppy to ignore them!), horses, sheep, cows, other livestock, small furry animals (rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters etc) – or any other animals that will form part of his life or that he may encounter. In these cases you want to be practising rewarding your puppy for ignoring them and listening to you when they are there, not interacting with them.

**Places** – these can include every room in the house, garden, car, quiet street, busy road, high street, friend's house, outside school, pub, place with slippery floor, park, outdoor market/car boot sale etc, railway station, train, vet's practice, party, farm, stables... wherever you and your dog may find yourselves in the future. You need to make sure he has happy experiences in these places, and so accepts them as part of his life and nothing unusual or scary.

**Distractions** – these can include cars, buses, trains, motorcycles, sirens, noisy machinery, vacuum cleaner... all things you want to reward your puppy for ignoring.



**Others** – cyclists, joggers, skateboarders, children running, squirrels... again things you want to reward your puppy for ignoring (use a treat or a toy to distract him, and then reward him with the food or a game). Add anything else here that is going to be part of your own puppy's life.

Have a look at the Notes section to decide if your puppy needs extra attention on certain parts of his Puppy Plan.

Now you have your very own tailor-made Puppy Plan, you are ready for the next few weeks.

**If your puppy has come from somewhere that hasn't been practising the Puppy Plan, you can still follow the New Owner's part of the Plan – but don't expect too much from your puppy. Take things a little slower, making sure your puppy is happy and confident at all times – using high value treats or favourite toys to distract him whenever he seems worried. If you are concerned that your puppy is very fearful or nervous, consider seeing a behaviourist who specialises in puppies (ask your vet for recommendations) before this becomes too much of a problem.**

If you are not sure how to fill in your Puppy Plan, have a look at an example on the Puppy Plan facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/puppyplan/>



**Why not take photos or videos of your puppy doing these exercises and share them on our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/groups/puppyplan](https://www.facebook.com/groups/puppyplan/)**

# Puppy Plan



Name:

Fill in details of all the people, dogs, animals, places and distractions that will be part of your new puppy's life. Then try to make sure your puppy meets or gets positive experiences with each one three times in each week, and tick in the box whenever he does. This will help you keep track of how well you are doing – and which bits need more attention. If you meet anything or anyone not on your list, make a note of it in the 'Other' section.

| Age                  | 9 weeks | 10 weeks | 11 weeks | 12 weeks | 13 weeks | 14 weeks | 15 weeks | 16 weeks |
|----------------------|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| People               |         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|                      |         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|                      |         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|                      |         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|                      |         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| <b>SOCIALISATION</b> |         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| Dogs                 |         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|                      |         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|                      |         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|                      |         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|                      |         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |





2 Find a good puppy party or playgroup in your area run by either a reputable trainer, training group or your veterinary practice and go along and watch a session. Your puppy is still too young to join as he is unvaccinated and the immunity he has inherited from his mother is now weak, but he will need to socialise with lots of other dogs in the next few weeks if he is to grow up with good social skills. Make sure the class you watch is full of fun, rewards, and a chance for the puppies to play one on one, or in equally matched but small groups, in a controlled way (not a off-lead free for all – which just teaches pushy puppies to be pushier and shy puppies to be even more fearful and avoid others!). A bad puppy playgroup will undo all your good work – and sadly there are a lot of them out there. If you like what you see, sign your puppy up for as soon as his vaccination status allows him to mix with others. Also, if you know of an older dog that is well-behaved, calm and friendly with puppies, they are ideal to teach your new puppy how to behave around other dogs. They must however be fully vaccinated.



3 In the first couple of days, take your puppy to your vet for a check up. Insist that your vet does nothing to your puppy except have a look at him, handle him gently – and give him treats. This is not the time for vaccinations etc (even if you have to come back in a couple of days time for that) – you do not want your puppy's first visit to your vet to be anything other than positive! Your vet will thank you for this when your puppy is a large adult dog who likes the vet! This isn't just a health check – it is a part of his socialisation! Use this time to talk about worming and also his vaccination schedule however, as you want him to be out and about as soon as possible. Remember your puppy is not vaccinated and so carry him and do NOT put him on the floor at the vets.



4 Make sure the puppy gets to meet the whole family – and have positive experiences with them so he learns to like and trust you all. That means everyone handles him gently, rewards him, plays with him – and begins to do some basic training with him (even just giving him a reward for coming to them or following them) so he learns to enjoy working for everyone. Download the Dogs Trust iPhone or iPad app You and Your Puppy, or look at [www.youtube.com/dogstrusttraining](http://www.youtube.com/dogstrusttraining) to get an idea of how to start your puppy's training at home. Do not let anyone handle him roughly or play boisterous games with him – no matter how excited everyone is about the new arrival.



5 Make sure your puppy is used to wearing his collar and tag (the breeder should already have started this, but continue this by putting it on when he has his mind on something else or good things (like dinner!). Do not leave it on in a crate or puppy pen.





# Week 9 – 12 – Learning about the world – safely!

## The Science

This can be a difficult period for you because you need to spend as much time socialising your puppy to his new life as possible but of course he is not yet fully vaccinated. It is always a bit of a balancing act – but the benefits of socialisation are too important to ignore especially given that the largest cause of death in dogs under two years old is not disease but euthanasia because of behaviour problems. Your puppy's vaccination status doesn't stop you taking him out and about – he just has to be carried, and should only meet dogs whose vaccination status you are 100% sure about. It also doesn't stop you inviting people to come and meet him at home and in the garden, him going out in the car, or him being carried around the town... Be creative!

## Tasks



**Try and do each of these tasks at least three times a week - but as often as you like. Don't forget to complete the checklist to record each time you have done it and to help you keep track.**

1



Try and make sure your puppy meets everything on your personal Puppy Plan three times (or more) in these very important four weeks. Tick each one in the Puppy Plan chart so you can see easily which ones you need to do more work on. These experiences need to be totally positive – so if it is a person, they should give the puppy a treat, and if it is an experience (car, traffic, pub etc) you need to make sure you treat and reward the puppy in that environment (or play a game with him, feed him his dinner there etc). Socialising a young puppy is easy – as most people you meet will want to see him and will be happy to help!

2



Use interactive toys stuffed with food, give your puppy problems to solve, to teach him to control his frustration, and continue his brain development in his new home. Introduce him to tunnels, steps, things to clamber over, and different surfaces to walk on.

3



Teach your puppy that part of his new life includes being left alone for short periods of time – or not having constant access to you. Use a crate or a baby gate to separate him from you at least once every day at times when there are positive things happening (eating dinner, chewing a stuffed Kong etc).



Continue to use a sound CD to play unexpected noises (if he hasn't had the benefits of the first 8 week Puppy Plan, start these very quietly at meal times or game times, and slowly build up the volume). You can buy sound CDs from retailers such as Amazon - try 'Sounds Sociable' and 'Sounds Scary'.

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Introduce him to friendly healthy vaccinated dogs if you know any. If not, speak to your chosen puppy training class – some have days where your pup can meet friendly staff dogs in a safe environment. These are the best teachers of canine social manners.

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Encourage your puppy to follow you – rewarding him with a treat or a game when he does (this means a constant supply of treats in the pocket). This will simplify recall training and also build the relationship between you.

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Teach your puppy about relaxation, being calm around you etc. This includes being groomed, and being handled around his feet, face, mouth, ears etc (rewarding him all the time when he is still and relaxed). Many owners miss this one in all the excitement and so the dog thinks everything is a game and never keeps still when the owner is around.

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**Why not take photos or videos of your puppy doing these exercises and share them on our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/groups/puppyplan](http://www.facebook.com/groups/puppyplan)**



## Week 13 – 16 – Out and About



Now your Puppy Plan can move up a gear, as your puppy should be fully vaccinated.

### Tasks

1



In this four-week period, once again make sure your puppy meets everything on your Puppy Plan chart three times (tick them off as you go) – but now he is on the floor and under his own steam! Things will look very different to him from here! Make sure all of these meetings are positive and he is well rewarded either by you or the people he meets.

2



As your puppy is out and about exploring and meeting all the new things in his life, make sure you get him used to listening to you (for a treat or a game) no matter how big the distractions are! It is an exciting world out there but he should learn that you are the most exciting thing in it. This will help a lot with your training.

3



Start attending the puppy playgroup you found in week 8 so your puppy learns how to socialise with all kinds of other dogs. These social skills are very important – even if you have other dogs in the house.

4



If you are ever going to use a boarding kennel, a groomer etc this is the time to introduce this into your puppy's life. This could include a two hour stay in the boarding kennel (with a nice stuffed Kong), or a gentle brush over by the groomer.

5



Continue his training, problem solving, the 'leaving him for short periods', and also the unpredictable noises throughout this period.

6



**Have fun and enjoy spending time with your puppy!**

#### **Puppy Plan certificate**

**Well done – your puppy has completed the Puppy Plan! To record your achievement, print off the certificate and put it into your dog's own Puppy Plan.**



# Notes 1

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## **Teenager 1 – Spreading his wings**

While your 16 week Puppy Plan is over, there are a couple of other developmental phases you need to be aware of – otherwise they can come as a shock when suddenly your lovely cuddly puppy turns into a teenager!

The first one comes anywhere between four and eight months and can last anything from a few days to a couple of months. The puppy will begin to wander a little further from you – and instead of coming to you (as he has been doing) instead he gives a good impression of not having heard you. He may even be difficult to catch or even run away from you. He is testing his wings...

If this becomes a problem, avoid off-lead exercise but keep him on a light-weight long line that he can trail behind him (not an extending lead which doesn't allow you enough control and can cause injuries if misused) so he can still get plenty of experience, socialise freely with other dogs but you can prevent him ignoring you when you call him.

Be careful with a long line not to get rope burns (put a foot on it rather than grabbing it with your hands) or trip people up!

Use the lead, and plenty of rewards when he comes to you, and this period should not last long. If however he discovers that he can ignore you, this may continue for far longer – or even become a habit.

## **Teenager 2 – Is it scary?**

The other period that you need to know about happens anywhere between six and 14 months old. In this period, the young dog can start to behave fearfully to things and people that he has previously been interacting with happily. This period coincides with the onset of sexual maturity and the surge of hormones that brings.

As soon as you notice these fear responses starting, revisit your Puppy Plan chart, and give him a refresher socialisation course – aiming to give him plenty of positive experiences with everything that is on the chart using treats, play and fun to overcome his fears.



## Adult dog

Having had the best possible upbringing, your adult dog should now have all the skills necessary to be a model canine citizen – and of course a much loved part of the family. Don't forget though – use it or lose it! Make sure he still gets to mix with other (nice) dogs, go to training classes or have the chance to socialise and to go exciting places and be a part of your life to keep his social muscles well exercised.

# Notes 2

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## Breed and type considerations:

Depending on what breed or type you choose (or what breeds make up your puppy), you may find that you have to pay more attention to certain things. Here are some starting points to help you:

**Toy/Companion breed** – more prone to separation anxieties. Spend more time making sure they are happy being left.

**Working breeds** – spend lots of time making sure they are well socialised to other dogs and strange people/visitors.

**Hounds** – try and encourage them to pay attention to you when there are interesting smells or small animals around. Work hard on recall and following you. Be careful around small animals.

**Pastoral/herding breeds** – make sure they have plenty of mental stimulation, and have things to occupy their minds so they do not go self-employed chasing or herding things.

**Terriers** – use toys and games/yummy treats to distract them from small animals and to prevent them ignoring you. Be careful around small animals.

**Remember** – think about what the breed was originally bred to do – this will give you clues to what you need to socialise or habituation for or against.

**NOTE: Insurance** – Even if you choose not to have health insurance for your dog, it is a good idea to have third party liability insurance as accidents can happen even with the most well-behaved of dogs.

# Important Notes

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**The material documented is intended for information purposes only and is not a substitute for professional advice.**

The Puppy Plan will suggest socialisation advice, but since each dog varies in slightly different ways, your questions may require more tailored information which only a suitably qualified professional can give in a one-on-one consultation. Puppy Plan is not meant to be a substitute for the “face to face” advice of a qualified behaviourist who would have the advantage of being able to see your puppy and being able to ask more detailed questions as may be needed.

Therefore, if a particular problem develops with your puppy then we do recommend that you seek further advice from your veterinary surgeon – who may identify or eliminate medical issues and then refer you to a qualified canine behaviourist for further and specific tailored advice and guidance.

Puppy Plan shall not be liable nor responsible for any person or organisation with respect to any loss or damage arising from the information or the use of the information on its website or within printed materials. Puppy Plan promotes responsible dog ownership but ultimately of course it is your responsibility to attend to your dog’s needs including socialisation which is so important for your dog’s safety and happiness and we assume no liability by offering any advice on its website and published materials.

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# Reference

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**This is by no means an exhaustive list – nor does it mean that everything in every publication or article mentioned is in the Puppy Plan, or is fully agreed with!**



Carolyn Menteith DipCABT, KCAI is a qualified and experienced dog trainer and behaviourist with over 20 years experience working professionally with animals both nationally and internationally.

As well as working with dogs and their owners to help them have a happy life together, Carolyn has written several books, many articles, and has appeared on a variety of TV and radio programmes as a dog expert.

Carolyn also works with a variety of rescue and welfare organisations, and has written and presents the Dogs Trust iPhone app 'You and Your Puppy from Dogs Trust', as well as presenting some of their dog training films online.

Additional input from Robert Falconer-Taylor BVetMed, DipCABT, MRCVS

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# Notes

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# Notes

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