

Stages of Development from Puppy to Adult

Did you ever wonder when your puppy will become a mature adult dog? Well there are many developmental, behavioral stages your puppy will go through before they are the adult dog you will soon be longing to own.

It all starts long before you even have your cute, cuddly puppy. So let's begin to learn the stages. These stages are briefly stated, for additional information see the resources at the end of the article.

FIRST STAGE:

Neonatal period (birth to 2 weeks)

- An undeveloped brain, few sensory capacities and poor motor abilities.
- Puppy has enhanced taste and smelling abilities.
- Puppies can't regulate their own body temperature internally.
- Pup's behavior is largely reflexive.
- It is suggested that careful/gentle brief handling such as stroking, carefully picking up and holding for a few seconds - help the pup tolerate "stressors" later in life.

SECOND STAGE:

Transitional period (2-3 weeks)

- The puppy behavioral capabilities begin to reorganize and puppy begins to explore.
- Pups begin to develop sensory and ability to move.
- Vision and hearing improve dramatically.
- Puppies may show agonistic behavior with other little mates, such as pawing at each other.
- Puppies show signs of being able to startle to sounds about Day 20.

This is the beginning of the "socialization period" which is the most important period of the puppy's life and should be allowed to explore on various surfaces, begin feeding on the gruel and be allowed to crawl away (short distances) from the resting area to eliminate.

THIRD STAGE:

Critical Socialization Period (3-12 weeks)

- Puppies have ability to distinguish between familiar and unfamiliar people, objects, locations, etc.
- Puppies begin to form social attachments (or lack thereof.)
- Puppies respond to certain visual stimulus, smells, noises etc.
- This period is when the lack of "socializing the pup" is often referred to as the "kennel-dog syndrome."
- It is crucial that all "new things" are pleasant for the puppy since it makes an impression on the pup for the remainder of its life.

FOURTH STAGE:

Juvenile Period (12 weeks to maturity)

- Pup forms secondary social relationships.
- This is often when people, breeders, some trainers, and plenty of books like to use "anthropomorphic interpretations" (assign human emotions) as to what the dog is doing at this age.
- The active and curious puppy is not "testing the rules" rather the puppy/dog has not been completely trained.
- The dog is becomes increasingly more independent and self-reliant.
- Dependency on human decreases while the environmental interest increases.
- Dogs become less attentive to owners and are not quite as reliable in responding to owner's requests and not because the dog is "rebellious." It is just because of this stage of development.

HOW TO GET PAST THIS STAGE

- The rules need to become more consistent.
- Return to successful puppy hood rules (*management - management.*)

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- Allow the young dog more "freedom" as the dog begins to demonstrate more consistency in its responsiveness and behaviors become more consistent.
- **Management tools:** leash, tether, "head-halter," "no pull harness," exercise pens, kennels, crates.
- *This stage is usually when the dog is surrendered to the shelters - people can't get through this stage - because often time they think the dog "knows" and is just being "bad". This is NOT the case! Your dog is simply not mature yet.*
- *A few years of good management...you get an awesome dog!*
- *Unfortunately, often times, the dog is banished to the outdoors forever because it is "wild" when allowed inside because people think it is "mean" to tether the dog until it learns acceptable manners in the house.*
- **LAST - MATURITY! Yeah - Finally! It was worth it if you were consistent and taught your dog.**

Sources:

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