



Irish Pet Advertising Advisory Group

The Teenager – Puppy Plan and life beyond

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) he gives a good impression of not having heard you. He may even be difficult to catch or even run away from you.

If this becomes a problem, avoid complete off-lead exercise but keep him on a long line that he can trail behind him (not a retractable 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. Often this phase doesn't last long!

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.

Consider joining a dog training class to help with further training, and give you support and advice with any problems. Ask your vet for suggestions of good established local clubs, use the Kennel Club website to find a nearby Kennel Club Accredited Instructor, or club teaching the Good Citizen Dog Training Scheme.

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 in a wide variety of situations, and to go exciting places and be a part of your life to keep his social skills well exercised.

NOTES:

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 alone both when you are in the house and then when you leave.

Working breeds – spend lots of time making sure they are well socialised to other dogs and strange people/visitors, and that their natural working instincts are utilised and appropriately channelled onto toys and games.

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 that you provide them with 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 or fast moving 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 for and habituate against.

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 and you can easily find yourself liable for compensation or any financial claims made in connection with any damage or injury caused by your dog.



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