

Service Dog Puppy Program



Guardian Angel Shepherds
Puppies & Adults - Stud Service - Training





Puppy's First Night to First Year

Note: The purpose of the puppy program is to condition the puppy to learn, and that learning and doing things are fun. The program aims at preventing problems rather than correcting problems later. This purpose of "puppy program" must be fully understood. Therefore, DO NOT attempt to program any puppy until you are familiar with Clarence Pfaffenberger's "The New Knowledge of Dog Behavior".

Day 0: Puppies whelped

Day 3: Start taking puppies outside on a clean blanket for a couple of minutes a day, then take them inside again.

The First critical period, Days 1-21

Newborn puppies are undeveloped. They do not hear or see. Their senses of smell and touch are functioning. The puppies should be handled a little bit, like for weighing every day. Subject the puppies to small amount of stress, e.g. different undercovers, cold temperatures. Also, they can be conditioned to certain smells at this age.



EEG (Electroencephalograph) tracings show that the puppies waking brain-wave pattern is

identical to their sleeping brain-wave pattern. This means that they do not have true consciousness - and they will remain so until the 20th day of their life. While their "conscious" brain cannot yet be programmed, this is not so with certain reflex pathways in their spinal cords (work researched since Pfaffenberger's book). The first reflex which can be conditioned is the pannus (or cutaneous) muscle reflex. Conditioning of this reflex, so that it becomes abolished, or inactive, or non-responsive to human touch, begins its critical period at Day 14 and finishes at Day 28. We call this "The Critical Period of Touch Conditioning".

Cutaneous muscle, under the skin, all over the body, will twitch (startle response) when skin is touched, throughout life, by human beings of whichever sex do not take part in touch conditioning. In adult dogs (over 4 months), we see this as a dog which will not stand still and be willingly touched (examined) by any men, or by any women, whichever it lacked in its conditioning in this period of 14-28 days. This is the dog (or bitch) which has to be shown "only under female judges" or "won't let a man touch him/her". No type of later "training" will reliably bring a touch-shy dog out of this too frequently seen behavior fault. So do not fail to program your puppies for both male and female touch! This is imperative for pets, show trials, guides, police, etc.

Take the puppies outside on a clean blanket for a couple of minutes each day.

Day 9 - Day 12: Eyes open during this period, but puppies cannot focus, nor is there any conscious awareness of anything "seen".

Day 11 - 13: Ear canals begin to open for function, but are not "hooked up" for conscious interpretation of sounds. No sound

conditioning is possible until day 23.

Day 14: Begin touch conditioning. This is done by having a man and a woman each handle each puppy for 2-3 minutes twice daily. Handle head, muzzle, neck, body, legs, and tail. Touch and rub back against hair gently. Remember to wash hands first!

Day 15-21, week 3: The puppy goes through a lot of physical changes. The baby teeth erupt at about 15 days. Do touch conditioning and expose the puppy to mild stress. Take the puppies outside every day.

Day 20: On this day all puppies brains are slowly (some faster than others) awakening. Begin observing continuously. Note which of each sex "wakes up" first. Mark these two, for example by cutting a small patch of hair on their backs, or marking with nail polish.

Day 21: CONSCIOUS LIFE BEGINS NOW. Touch conditioning. When you do your touch conditioning on this most exciting day, watch the faces! For the first time they react consciously to your presence. You have looked at the puppies many times, but today you are seeing them as never before.



The Second critical period, Days 22-49

Day 22-28, week 4: This is the single most important week in a puppy's lifetime. The puppy is now aware of self-environment. The puppy learns he is a dog. He learns to accept discipline, he learns submission. He moves around on wobbly steps and should curiosity and begin exploring the environment. NOTE: Any puppy intended for conditioning as a compulsive retriever must be weaned absolutely by the end of this week. This is very important for the future obedience dog.

Continue touch conditioning every day this week.

This is the puppy's first week of conscious life as we know it: they should NOT be disturbed or traumatized in any way except for the two brief daily exercise periods of touch conditioning. Any traumatic experience during this week can have far-reaching, lifelong, unpleasant results. During this week, you should organize the gathering of "the puppy toys". These include objects made of ALL of the following: rubber, vinyl, plastic (squeak toys), metal (band-aid rollers, 6" lengths of conduit which later become utility obedience articles-, ice cream tin lids bent in half, etc.), glass (small brown vitamin-pill bottles, etc. with lids removed), fabric (notably 2 long "footy" socks each having two knots tied, one at either end. These are later rolled into balls and become 2 of your most important tracking articles in your early tracking training. Leather - use 6 strips of fresh, new cowhide, 6" long by 1" wide. These also become vital later on in both tracking and obedience, as well as search and rescue, and red cross work. Rawhide - these are 100 % edible treated beef-hide items; the ones shaped like potato crisps and called "pup-chips" are the ones to provide at this time. These provide the ideal teething substance and are instinctively more satisfying to puppies than are any other articles. Do NOT include wooden articles at this stage.

Do not exclude anything from this collection, and replace anything that gets lost. This is being done for several very important

reasons, which you will appreciate more and more as you begin serious training, and you find that while other dogs must learn to retrieve, to find by scent, to tolerate metal in their mouths, etc. - you have a dog with a custom-built mind, who does these things automatically. Virtually anything can be incorporated into a puppy program once we know the critical period.

During this period the puppy should be guarded against trauma of any kind. Make this period a stable period in the puppy's life.

The puppy can be moved to different areas temporarily to be conditioned to different surfaces, but do not change the puppy's permanent area, and do not change the schedule.

Day 28: Last day of touch conditioning.

Week 4, Day 29-35: This is also also a very important week. Begin sound conditioning. This is the abolition of the startle response, which will otherwise occur whenever loud or sudden noises are heard. I should not have to point out the vital importance of this. Remember that dogs do not inherit gun shyness.

4-6 loud bangs daily, when puppies are sleeping, eating, playing but NOT when puppies are looking at you or coming towards you.

This critical period for this is week 4-6. Do these loud noises every day from day 28 through day 42, then review by testing for sound startle once weekly. The program should include all types of sounds to which the pup will be subjected to while working in its adult job. Use guns, cap-pistols, saucepan lids; always expose them to to the sound of a stockwhip being cracked. Use tape recordings of crowds, traffic, babies crying, trains, heavy machinery, etc. Ideally, the pups should be placed individually in a sound proof booth when they are subjected to the tape recordings. The dam should be out of the puppies' range of vision and hearing while sound conditioning is being done. Do not omit any type of these sounds. This is one of the most important parts of the "programmed puppy".

Introduce a stable male dog as "daddy" to teach the puppies a different perspective from the start. Introduce puppies to obstacle course, e.g. tunnel, tires, covered balance walk, etc.

Day 35: Puppies are 5 weeks old. They have better control of their bodies, they can walk over obstacles, walk up and down stairs. They should recognize familiar persons, and and show curiosity about other people, other animals, and new surroundings. Continue sound conditioning. Begin reinforcing the "following response".

Week 5, Day 36-42: Reinforce the "following response" as follows. Take each pup separately to a large, open, grassy area.

Handler places pup on grass and slowly walks away without speaking, or looking back. Go 10 feet, stop, face pup and wait quietly till the pup begins a distress cry "I'm lost". Then, clap hands and move body back and forth till sees you and approaches. Hold the pups head in your hands for 3-4 secs. Then walk slowly away again. Repeat over and over until the puppy follows whenever you move off. Limit this to 5 minutes daily per pup - up to week 7 (day 49). Note: do not reinforce "following" in any areas in which persons other than yourself can be seen or heard by the puppies. The "following" response will occur towards you in a much reduced form if other humans or animals are present. The importance of this response will not become obvious until much later in the puppy's behavioral development

Continue sound conditioning.

Introduce other people, children, wheelchairs, cats, and all else now.

Day 42: Puppies are 6 weeks old. Test for any residue of sound startle. Last day of sound conditioning. Reinforce "following".

Week 6, day 42-49: Puppy proof the environment!*Begin daily car trips with the puppy NOW! Even very short trips will effectively condition the puppy's sensory reactions to car travel.*Man - dog socialization must never begin later than this week. Also work on establishment of your authority as the "alpha".*Begin "bag-work" - using a long, knotted sock.*Begin "play-retrieve"*Isolation conditioning begins NOW and is done daily through week 9.*Location conditioning begins now and continues till the end of last critical period.*Practice on obstacle course.

Day 42: Socialize. Short car trip. Play with long sock. Play-retrieve. Isolate briefly. Go to new location. Reinforce "following".

Make puppy go through tunnel to follow.**Day 43:** Socialize. Car trip. Play with long sock. Play-retrieve. Isolate briefly. Go to a new location. Reinforce "following". Make puppy go through tunnel to follow.**Day 44:** Socialize. Car trip. Play with long sock.

Play-retrieve. Isolate briefly. Go to a new location. Reinforce "following". Help the puppy walk on the balance walk.**Day 45:** Socialize. Car trip. Play with long sock. Play-retrieve. Isolate briefly. Go to a new location. Reinforce "following". Help the puppy walk on the balance walk.**Day 46:** Socialize. Car trip. Play with long sock. Play-retrieve. Isolate briefly. Go to a new location. Reinforce "following". Help the puppy walk on the balance walk.**Day 47:** Socialize. Car trip. Play with long sock. Play-retrieve.

Isolate briefly. Go to a new location. Reinforce "following". Sit in a swing and swing with the puppy. Call the puppy over a small obstacle. **Day 48:** Socialize. Car trip. Play with long sock. Play-retrieve. Isolate briefly. Go to a new location. Reinforce "following". Sit in a swing and swing with the puppy. Call the puppy over a small obstacle.

Day 49: 7 weeks old. Test for any residual startle to sound.

*First swim. If weather is ok, swim outside, if weather is bad, use the bath-tub. DO IT!

The Third critical period, Days 50-84

Week 7, day 50-56: The puppy has the learning ability of an adult dog from 7 weeks onwards. Start house training, and crate training. Start conditioning the puppy to grooming, and to wearing a collar and leash. Start puppy obedience, using a flat-strap padded puppy collar. 5 minutes only per session.

All week do the following: *Handling and restraining the puppy. *Obedience (habitual) training, follow on your left side off leash, sit. *Man-dog socialization. *Dog-dog socialization. *Location conditioning in different places. *Isolation conditioning, start in the crate. *Play retrieve and bag work. *Practice gaiting and show-posing everyday. *Practice obstacle course work. **INCLUDE NIGHT WORK!** Note: Begin collecting your "set of 12 articles", i.e. those required in the "reversed incentive" system of tracking training. A set of 12 objects, all known to the dog, is accumulated and includes one special or favorite article - usually one of the puppy's toys. It also includes 4 black leather gloves and 18 utility scent discrimination articles (6 leather, 6 metal, 6 wood).

Day 56, 8 weeks old: Test for sound startle. The puppy can go to his/her new home. Socialize. Car trip. Play with long sock. Play-retrieve. Isolate briefly. Go to a new location. Last day for reinforcing "following". 1st vaccination. Swim (5-10 minutes in still water).

Week 8, day 57-63: This is a fear period when traumatic experiences have a profound effect. Keep the puppy in stable circumstances, and keep the puppy safe from trauma. *Continue house training *Do handling and grooming *Do puppy obedience, using the flat collar. Do attention training, sit, stand, down. *Man-dog and dog-dog socialization. *Location conditioning and longer isolation conditioning. *Retrieving now includes a wide variety of objects. Include all the "puppy toys" in the set of retrieved objects. *Bag work. Introduce a piece of Hessian (burlap). *Show stance and gaiting practice. **INCLUDE NIGHT WORK!!!** *Take the puppy into traffic. *Take the puppy into crowds.

Day 63, 9 weeks old: Test for sound startle. Swim.

Week 9, day 64-70: *Puppy obedience training sessions can be increased to 15 minutes. Still use flat collar. Introduce the finish, introduce the go-out. *Take puppy for walks in the neighborhood. *Continue location conditioning and continue with longer periods of isolation. *Practice retrieves, bag exercises; test for sound startle. *Practice show stance and gaiting. *Practice obstacle course. *Do some dominance exercises. Handle the puppy a lot. **INCLUDE WORK AT NIGHT, AND IN TRAFFIC AND IN CROWDS!**

Day 70, 10 weeks old: Test for sound startle. Swim in still water, or surf.

Week 10, day 71-77: *Take the puppy into crowds and traffic; work at night often. *Continue with man-dog and dog-dog socialization puppy obedience training retrieving, bag-work location training: do elevators, many different places isolation training, longer periods posing and gaiting obstacle course handling and grooming walks in the neighborhood

Day 77: 11 weeks old: Test for sound startle. Swim.

Week 11, day 78-84: The puppy receives the first polyvalent vaccination this week. Continue exactly as in previous week. This week you must decide whether or not your puppy is going to undergo "bite-inhibition" conditioning. This is normally done between week 12 and week 16, as follows:

The puppy must have free periods to engage in play fighting with one or more puppies of the same approximate age. When they "attack" each other, they learn to inhibit or soften their bites. Do NOT omit this unless you are skilled in handling and living with a Schutzhund dog.

Puppies which do not undergo bite inhibition grow up to be very hard biters. This is very useful for dogs that are intended for for the Schutzhund sport or for service. These dogs will have to be played with using an object such as a burlap sack, or other pulling and biting object, because they are too rough for play using one's hands or unprotected arms for the dog to grasp in play. NOW is when you must decide on this part of your puppy's program.

The Fourth critical period, week 12-16, Days 85-112

Week 12, day 85-91: If puppy is to undergo bite-inhibition, place him/her in yard or pen with peers of approximately similar age for at least 2 hours daily.*Continue obedience training to include introductions to all the AKC obedience exercises.*Do longer isolation periods, socialization, location conditioning; crowds and night work.*Do retrieves, bag work, show posing and gaiting.*Swim*Practice obstacle course.*Take puppy traveling and include overnight stays.The puppy is working off-lead now if you have been following the program.

Day 91: 13 weeks old. Work in crowds and traffic at night. Test for sound startle. Swim.

Week 13, day 92-98*Bite-inhibition.*Socialization (man and dog). If you stop now, your puppy may become desocialized.*Bag-work; play-retrieves; location and isolation conditioning continues.*Puppy obedience training session.*Show standing and gaiting.*Do crowds, traffic, and night work.Do not let up on any of these programs. You are your last 3 weeks.

Day 98: 14 weeks old. Test for sound startle. Swim.

Week 14, day 99-105*Bite-inhibition.*Socialization (man and dog). Bite-inhibition can be combined with dog-dog socialization, only if the same-age peers are being used in both.*Location, and isolation conditioning. Retrieves and bag-work.*Posing and gaiting.*Obedience training, now you can start increasing the demands on attention.

Day 105: 15 weeks old. Test for sound startle. Swim.

Week 15, day 105-112*Bite-inhibition.Review all parts of the program. Test responses. Expose the puppy to as much as possible.

Day 112: 16 weeks old. CELEBRATE!The puppy receives the second polyvalent vaccination today (distemper, hepatitis, leptospiroses, and parinfluenza).The dog gets a yearly booster for the rest of his/her life.

Postscript: If you have not followed your program, you can now prepare to begin months or even years of "remedial" or "corrective" training. If you have progress into any type of advanced obedience, guide dog work, hunting, herding, guard, Schutzhund work - or just know that you have a companion animal which is steady, fearless, and reliable among men, women, and children, in crowds, traffic, storms, gunfire, etc, and around other dogs.

If you are going to proceed with formal obedience training, you are now ready to begin in earnest, to learn to communicate with your programmed dog.

From birth to 16 weeks puppies follow the same development. After 4 months, the larger breeds develop slower than smaller breeds.

4-6 months. Teething. This puts stress on some puppies. Some puppies are oblivious to the teething, others seem to get painful gums. Be careful and show and tell rather than correcting a puppy during this period. Puppies tend to chew a lot during this period, so provide lots of safe chew toys. Feed 2 meals a day from now on throughout the dog's life. The puppy should receive a rabies vaccination.

4-8 months. Some time between 4-8 months fear periods may appear with the flight instinct dominating the puppy's behavior. A fear period may last up to two weeks. Handle onsets of fear calmly. Do NOT under any circumstances "comfort" the puppy. Do not make a big issue out of the puppy's fear. Try to make the puppy investigate, or at least ignore the object that he/she found scary. Allow the puppy to work it out. Walk past the object many times, so the puppy gets used to it again.

6-14 months. Some breeds are mature at 10 months. Larger breeds tend to take longer, and could take up to 2-3 years to fully mature. During this period, the puppy could have more fear periods of new situations. These fear periods may be correlated with growing periods. Allow the puppy to work it out. Do not push, but continue training. The training is a confidence builder in itself. If you followed the whole puppy program there will be considerable fewer, if any, instances of fear periods. Teach a 30 minute Down-Stay.

Between 1-2 years. There will be tests for dominance. The dog, particularly the males, attain a new level of assertion. The first serious dog fights occur. Use obedience training to assert yourself, particularly the 30 minute Down-Stay. If you have a submissive dog, the obedience training is even more important as a confidence builder. However, if you have followed the puppy program from Day 1, you should be able to assert yourself over the dog with just a look and a voice reprimand.

