

SETTLING YOUR PUPPY AT NIGHT



It's extremely common for puppies to vocalise at night. Bitches can traditionally feed their pups until 10 weeks of age, including through the night. It's not surprising then that puppies can feel stressed when transitioning to a new environment around this age, especially if they're alone and without littermates for the first time.

Did you know that humans are one of the only mammals to actively force their young into independence? Dogs on the other hand allow independence to happen naturally, and as a result of secure relationships.

What's the ideal set up for a new puppy at night?

Keeping your puppy close for the first few nights will help them feel secure. Whether you want your dog to sleep in your room, downstairs or outside, it's best to set up a crate next to your bed for at least the first 3 nights. The crate should be close enough to allow you to physically touch and settle the puppy.

After night 3, or when the puppy starts sleeping through the night well, the crate can be moved to the other side of the bedroom and then into a new room if you prefer, as the pup starts to sleep well through the night.

What if the puppy wakes in the night?

The most common reason for waking during the night is that the puppy needs to toilet. Without giving attention simply place your puppy on lead and take them on a boring toilet trip before returning to the crate with a chew.

If your pup is very young and used to being fed through the night, the puppy could be hungry. It's a good idea to have a half-filled Kong in the fridge just in case, then the next night reduce to a quarter-filled Kong and after that reduce to just a toilet trip and a chew.

Should you ignore your puppy when it cries?

On occasion, if between sleep cycles, your puppy might vocalise and then return straight back to sleep. However, if your puppy starts to escalate their body can fill with stress-related chemicals such as cortisol and glucose which will give the pup energy. This of course, is the opposite of what we want in the middle of the night. We recommend waiting a minute or two to see whether the puppy re-settles before then getting up and taking to the toilet as above.

Recommended bedtime routine for puppies:

- Hand-feed at least part of your pup's dinner to teach cues such as sit, down and a hand target. These exercises will tire your puppy out without increasing arousal which can prevent sleep.
- Take your puppy on-lead for a boring toilet trip – no zoomies or games, just a sniff and a toilet.
- Set your puppy up in a crate next to your bed with water, teething toys and a chew.
- Lights out. We recommend that you go to bed at the same time as the pup for the first few nights.

Other tips to help your puppy get used to you not being available all of the time:

- During the day, place a food enrichment toy in another room so your puppy is rewarded for exploring independently.
- Start to introduce your pup to short absences by closing the door when you go to the toilet and sprinkling some kibble or a few treats outside of the door.

Other than this, you should be accessible. Independence will grow naturally, as long as your puppy feels safe and secure.