

Day 1 — Arrival day: keep the house boring

Today is not a welcome party. Today is water, a meal, the patch, a nap, and a quiet evening. Save the nieces, the dog park, and the furniture store run.

Potty trips today: plan on a lot. A working range is **10–16 trips** in 24 hours for an 8–12 week puppy, including night. Older in the 12–16 week range may land closer to **8–14**. If you do 18, you are not overdoing it.

Crate nap plan: after each 15–25 minute awake window, leash to the patch, then crate for about **45–90 minutes**. You may only get two or three solid naps. That is still a win. Do not leave them crated for a workday on day 1.

Morning

Carry or walk them to the patch the moment they are out of the carrier or crate. Wait. Quiet “yes” if they go. Inside to the pen. Water. A meal if it is a meal time. Five minutes later, patch again. Then crate with a safe chew if they will take one. You stay nearby. You do not hover with your face in the door.

If they do not eat, leave the bowl 10–15 minutes, pick it up, call the vet if they also seem dull, vomit, or refuse the next meal too. One skipped meal after a car ride is common. Two plus lethargy is a call.

Afternoon

Keep the contained area. Sit on the floor. Let them sniff you. If they mouth your hands, offer a toy, then pause the petting. Do not tour the house. Do not put them in the yard off-leash “to run it off.” Afternoon is when the first indoor puddle often happens because someone thought they were fine on the rug. They were not.

One short potty trip every half hour to hour while awake, plus after any nap.

Evening

Dim the main lights earlier than you think. Last meal on your written skeleton. Patch. A little floor time. Patch again. Then the crate next to you. Last wait of the night should feel slightly too long. Bring a chair if you have to.

Night

They may cry. See the crate-crying script. Set an alarm if you know they cannot stretch until morning — many 8–10 week puppies cannot. A planned 2–4 a.m. trip is kinder than an accident in the crate. Keep the night trip boring: leash, patch, wait, back, no play, no snack party.

Skill (3–5 minutes): Name look. Say their name once in a normal voice. When the face turns toward you, mark with a quiet “yes” and a tiny treat. Stop after a handful of easy wins. Do this in the pen, not in a busy kitchen.

Good enough today: they emptied outside at least a few times, they took one real nap in the crate or next to it, nobody threw a party, you know where the enzyme cleaner is.

Common miss — a parade of guests at the door.

Script: “We’re keeping today quiet so they can sleep and empty outside. You can come by next week, or you can sit on the floor in the kitchen for five minutes after we get back from the patch. No picking them up at the door.”
