

WINNING WITH YOUR PUPPY — ROOKIE SEASON WORKBOOK

WELCOME TO ROOKIE SEASON

There's a moment every new puppy owner has — usually sometime between the third accident on the rug and the fifth time they've said "no" like it should mean something — where they realize this might be a little harder than expected.

That's normal.

You didn't bring home a trained dog. You brought home a rookie driver with a fast engine, no experience, and absolutely no idea what any of your signals mean. That's not a flaw. That's the starting line.

This workbook is here to give you structure. Not perfection. Not pressure. Just a clear way to move forward without spinning out every time something goes sideways.

Your job is not to control everything.

Your job is to become a steady voice.

EXPECTATION RESET — WHAT YOU'RE ACTUALLY RAISING

Your puppy is not being stubborn.

Your puppy is not being defiant.

Your puppy is not testing you like a tiny, furry philosopher.

Your puppy is learning how the world works through repetition, consequences, and clarity. If something is confusing, they don't reflect — they repeat.

Most frustration comes from expecting understanding before you've actually taught anything.

If you clean this up early, everything else gets easier.

THE 10–20–10 POTTY TRAINING PLAN

This is your foundation. Not your backup plan. Not something you try if things get bad. This is how you avoid things getting bad.

Feed your puppy in the crate.

Give them ten minutes to digest.

Take them outside on leash to the same exact spot.

Stand there for twenty minutes.

Say nothing.

Not a word.

Not encouragement. Not frustration. Not a TED Talk.

The moment they start to go, that's when you speak. Calm, clear, simple.

"Go potty."

That's how the behavior gets labeled.

If they don't go, they go back into the crate for ten minutes. Then you repeat the process.

This works because you remove options.

They are either in the crate, where they won't go...

...or outside, where they should.

No wandering. No guessing. No "I think he went earlier."

You don't guess. You know.

That's how you win early.

CRATE TRAINING — BUILDING A RESET BUTTON

The crate is not punishment.

It's not isolation.

It's not where the puppy goes when you're frustrated.

It's where the puppy goes to settle, decompress, and learn how to turn their brain off.

Most people accidentally create crate resistance by only using it when things go wrong.

If the crate only shows up when energy is high, emotions are high, and voices get tense, the puppy learns exactly what you'd expect.

"Crate equals something's wrong."

Instead, the crate should show up when things are calm.

Feed meals in it.

Let them rest in it.

Use it before they lose control, not after.

A tired, overstimulated puppy is not being difficult. They're just out of gas and still trying to drive.

The crate teaches them how to park.

WHAT NOT TO DO — THE STUFF THAT CREATES PROBLEMS FAST

Most training issues don't come from what people fail to do.

They come from what people do too much, too soon, or too inconsistently.

Talking too much is a big one.

Repeating commands like the dog is going to suddenly learn English on the fifth attempt is another.

Letting guests undo structure because "he's just a puppy" is a classic. Comforting fear in a way that reinforces it instead of stabilizing it happens more than people realize.

Giving freedom before the dog understands boundaries is probably the most common mistake of all.

Freedom is not how dogs learn.

Structure is how dogs learn.

Freedom is what they earn after.

TEACHING THE BASICS — CLEAR SIGNALS, SIMPLE REPS

You don't need twenty commands.

You need a few that actually mean something.

Sit is not about getting the dog to put their butt on the ground. It's about teaching them how to pause.

Touch teaches them how to move toward you and engage.

Focus teaches them how to check in instead of scanning the environment for the next distraction.

These are not tricks.

They are communication tools.

Short sessions. Clear expectations. End before they fall apart.

That's how learning sticks.

FOCUS (LOOK)

Start simple.

Say your puppy's name.

The moment they look at you, reward.

Do it again.

After a few reps, drop the name.

Just say "look."

You are building attention on cue.

Not begging for it.

Not hoping for it.

Teaching it.

TOUCH

Hold your hand out.

Let your puppy investigate.

The moment their nose touches your hand, reward.

Then add the word "touch."

Now you have a way to guide movement without pulling, dragging, or negotiating.

SIT

Use food to guide the motion upward and slightly back.

The moment the rear hits the ground, reward.

Then add the word.

Not before.

The behavior comes first. The word comes second.

Always.

LEASH REALITY — WHY IT FEELS SO HARD

Leash walking feels frustrating because it is unnatural.

Dogs are built to move freely, adjust speed, and travel as a group.

Now they're attached to a rope with a human who stops randomly, changes direction without warning, and expects calm behavior in a stimulating world.

There's going to be tension.

Literally and figuratively.

This is where patience matters.

This is where consistency matters.

And this is where people usually rush.

Slow down early, and the walk gets easier later.

Rush early, and you spend months fighting tension.

EXERCISE, STIMULATION, AND REST — FINDING BALANCE

A tired puppy is not always a well-behaved puppy.

Sometimes it's the opposite.

Overtired puppies lose control faster.

They bite more.

They listen less.

They look like chaos.

Not because they need more exercise — but because they needed more rest.

You're not just managing energy.

You're managing recovery.

If you get that balance right, behavior improves without adding anything

new.

SOCIALIZATION — LESS CHAOS, MORE CONTROL

Socialization is not exposure to everything.

It's controlled exposure to manageable experiences.

Dragging a puppy through overwhelming environments in the name of "getting them used to it" is how you create fear, not confidence.

Confidence comes from successful reps.

Not survival.

Let them observe.

Let them process.

Let them stay under threshold.

That's how you build stability.

ROOKIE SEASON MILESTONE TRACKER

Use this to track progress without overthinking it. You're not looking for perfection. You're looking for consistency improving over time.

Week of: _____

Potty accidents (daily average): _____

Successful potty trips (daily average): _____

Crate comfort level (1-5): _____

Focus response (name / look): _____

Sit reliability: _____

Touch engagement: _____

Leash walking progress: _____

Ability to settle: _____

Biggest win this week: _____

Biggest challenge this week: _____

WEEKLY RESET — WHAT TO ADJUST

What felt easier this week?

Where did things fall apart?

Did I give too much freedom too soon?

Was I clear, or was I talking too much? _____

What will I simplify next week?

FINAL NOTE — STAY IN YOUR LANE

You are going to get advice.

From friends.

From family.

From strangers.

From people who raised one easy dog ten years ago and now feel qualified to coach your entire program.

Everyone wants to be on the pit crew.

Not everyone should be.

This is your dog.

Your structure.

Your system.

If you stay consistent, stay clear, and stay patient, your rookie is going to figure it out.

Not all at once.

But steadily.

And that's how you win.