

# PUPPY'S RULE OF TWELVE

A puppy is most willing to try new things before she reaches the age of five (5) months. The Puppy's Rule of Twelve is handy guideline for puppy owners to ensure that a puppy is exposed to a variety of things during this critical time-period. It is very important to ensure all experiences are positive – so be ready to reward your puppy with lots of super, yummy treats and praise. If your puppy is scared or frightened of something slow down, decrease distance or intensity and reassure her.

## By the time your puppy is five (5) months old, your puppy should have:

**Experienced** twelve (12) different surfaces – Wood, woodchips, grass, asphalt/cement, tile, wet grass, rocks, gravel, dirt, mud, puddles, grates, uneven surfaces, metal, on a table, on a chair, etc.

**Played** with twelve (12) different objects – Fuzzy toys, hard toys, big & small balls, funny sounding toys, wooden items, paper/cardboard items, milk jugs, metal items, etc.

**Experienced** twelve (12) different locations – Front yard, other people's homes, lake, pond, river, boat, elevator, stairs, car, moving car, veterinarian (just to say "hi" & get lots of treats – no vaccinations), kennel, grooming salon (just to say "hi" & to get lots of treats – no grooming), etc.

**Met & Played** with twelve (12) different people (outside of the family) – Include children, adult men, adult women, elderly adults, people in wheelchairs, people on crutches, people with hats, people with sunglasses, etc.

**Exposed** to twelve (12) different noises – Garage door opening, doorbell, sirens, children playing, babies crying, loud/big trucks, motorcycles, laundry machines, skateboards, shopping carts rolling, motorboats, clapping, loud singing, vacuums, lawnmowers, pan dropping, etc.

- It is very important to observe your puppy's body language during this exercise to ensure she is not frightened or uncomfortable. Reduce the distance to the object or the level of the noise until she is comfortable and reward her with lots of super, yummy treats and praise. See Canine Body Language tip sheet for more information on body language.

**Exposed** to twelve (12) fast moving objects (don't allow to chase) – Skateboards, roller skates, bicycles, cars, trucks, boats, people/children running, cats, wild critters, scooters, vacuums, horses running, etc.

**Experienced** twelve (12) different challenges – Climbing stairs, climbing off/in/around a box, going through a tunnel, climb over obstacles, going in & out of doorways, walking on a wobbly table, play hide-n-seek, jump over something, getting a bath, etc.



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**Handled** by owner & family members twelve (12) times a week – Hold under arm, hold to chest, hold on floor near owner, hold in-between owner's legs, hold head, look in ears, hold paws, hold and take temperature (with veterinarian's assistance), hold like a baby, hold & trim toenails (with veterinarian's assistance), hold in lap, look in mouth, etc.

**Eaten** from twelve (12) different containers – Wobbly bowl, metal, cardboard, paper, coffee cup, pie plate, plastic, frying pan, KONG, dog-safe puzzle toy, spoon fed, etc.

**Eaten** in twelve (12) different locations – Back yard, front yard, crate, kitchen, basement, bedroom, laundry room, friend's house, car, school, bathtub, up high (supervised), under an object, etc.

**Played** with as many puppies and safe adult dogs as possible.

**Left alone** safely, away from family and other animals twelve (12) times a week for a period of 5 to 45 minutes.

- Start with a short time period and gradually increase the amount time your puppy is alone. See Crate Training tip sheet for more information.

**Experienced** a leash and collar twelve (12) different times in twelve (12) different locations.

