

# FROM DAVY'S PUPPY DIARY



## PUPPIES & EXERCISE

You may have seen charts, outlining how much exercise young puppies need or should be allowed at different age levels. Forget all that and here's why!

**Puppies don't really need walks** during their first few weeks in their new home, especially if you have a secure yard. It's tempting to tire them out with exercise, but this can put unnecessary strain on their growing bodies and lead to a cycle of needing more and more exercise to achieve calmness. Instead, we focus on teaching puppies to settle through training games, enrichment and overall creating good habits.

At the time of writing, my border collie puppy **Davy is 9 weeks old**, and his "exercise regimen" consists mainly of regular potty breaks in the backyard and spending time with me and the other dogs. I haven't put him in the fenced run with the adult dogs yet for several reasons:

1. He should **bond with me** first. If puppies spend too much time with other dogs, they can bond with them more than with their humans which can be a problem later on.
2. As the grown-up dogs run around, there's a risk of the puppy getting run over and I want to avoid any potential injury.
3. The farm fencing of my dog yard isn't suited for a little puppy as he could slip through the fence. This won't be a problem once he gets bigger.

All of **Davy's outings are supervised** to ensure his safety when the older dogs are around and to solidify me as his main contact (rather than the environment or my older dogs). We also go for short strolls in my agility training field, just the two of us, where he learns to follow me. This area is fenced, so he can be off-leash and I reward him with some tasty treats for checking in and paying attention to me. **By first learning to follow me freely, he'll easily transition to walking on a leash later.**

[Watch Davy's first lesson in learning to heel \(off leash\)](#)

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## Some of the things I don't do:

- **Throwing balls:** The repetitive run-stop-turn-run-stop motion puts too much strain on a puppy's growing body (this applies to adolescents as well).
- **Stairs:** A few steps are fine, but I carry Davy for full flights to avoid him potentially tumbling. Repetitive climbing or descending stairs can also put strain on a young puppy's joints.



## Instead, I offer:

- **Enrichment activities with food:** special toys that are stuffed with food can provide a great mental and physical workout: licking, grabbing and rolling on the floor with it. As a side-benefit, puppies learn to work through frustration when it takes effort to get the all food out! That's an important life skill and relevant for many sports.
- **Licking** soft food off a Lickimat.
- **Kibble stuffed in a food ball** or an empty water or salad dressing bottle.
- **Scatter feeding** in the grass or in his toy box, encouraging him to use his nose.
- **Gentle play** with a soft tug toy.
- **Rolling a ball** a short distance on a soft surface.
- **Boundary games** to teach and reinforce CALMNESS on his dog bed.
- **Short and fun training sessions** throughout the day, 2-3 minutes is all it takes!



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At this young age, it's better to err on the side of caution and avoid over-exercising a puppy. There are plenty of ways to tire them out mentally, which is just as effective (and safer) than physical exhaustion.

It's also okay for you to decide when it's time for a nap in their crate or x-pen, as puppies rarely fall asleep on their own unless they're already overtired. You are the adult and set the tone for creating calm habits. I don't wait for my puppy to grow up and settle; that could take years! Instead, I focus on teaching and rehearsing calm behaviors, especially indoors, so we can achieve a harmonious household sooner. And remember, it's a work in progress!

*Click on the picture to watch Davy's first session learning Boundary Games.*



## Useful Links:

[Calm is a Way of Life Blog](#)

[Puppy training playlist on YouTube](#)

[My PAWSome Dog Connection FB group](#)

[Subscribe to my YouTube channel](#)

[Visit my website for local and remote training classes & behavior sessions](#)

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