

# CANINE ADOLESCENCE!



A QUICK GUIDE FOR  
DOG OWNERS



Wednesday  
Distro

## **FURTHER RESOURCES:**

**Article (and links to more) from The Whole Dog Journal:**

<https://www.whole-dog-journal.com/blog/canine-adolescence-the-great-unconsidered-life-stage/>

**Article from the RSPCA:** <https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/dogs/health/adolescentpuppies>

**Article from the American Kennel Club:** <https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/health/adolescent-puppy-changes/>



## TRAINING TIPS

### **Be Patient:**

Your dog is learning to navigate new experiences. Patience and understanding go a long way.

### **Be consistent with training expectations and methods:**

Stay the course. Keep using uniform communication and expectations. Don't jump around trying new things because your dog appears to be stubborn. And most importantly, do the reps! Most people don't meet their training goals because they just haven't done the requisite amount of reps—and teenage dogs need a lot of reps!

### **Stay Positive:**

You will get through this! Keep your eye on your end goals, and celebrate every tiny step of progress. Don't take any good behaviors for granted.

### **Short Sessions:**

Keep training sessions short and engaging. Adolescent dogs tend to have short attention spans and flit like a butterfly from thing to thing. Several short sessions are better than fewer longer ones.

### **Seek Professional Help:**

If you're struggling, consider enlisting a certified professional trainer. They can provide personalized guidance and support.

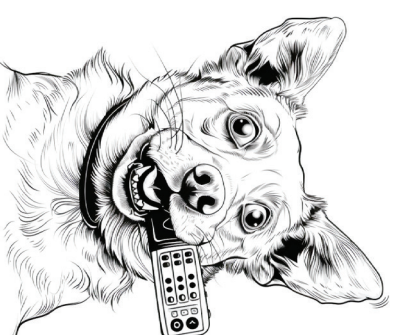
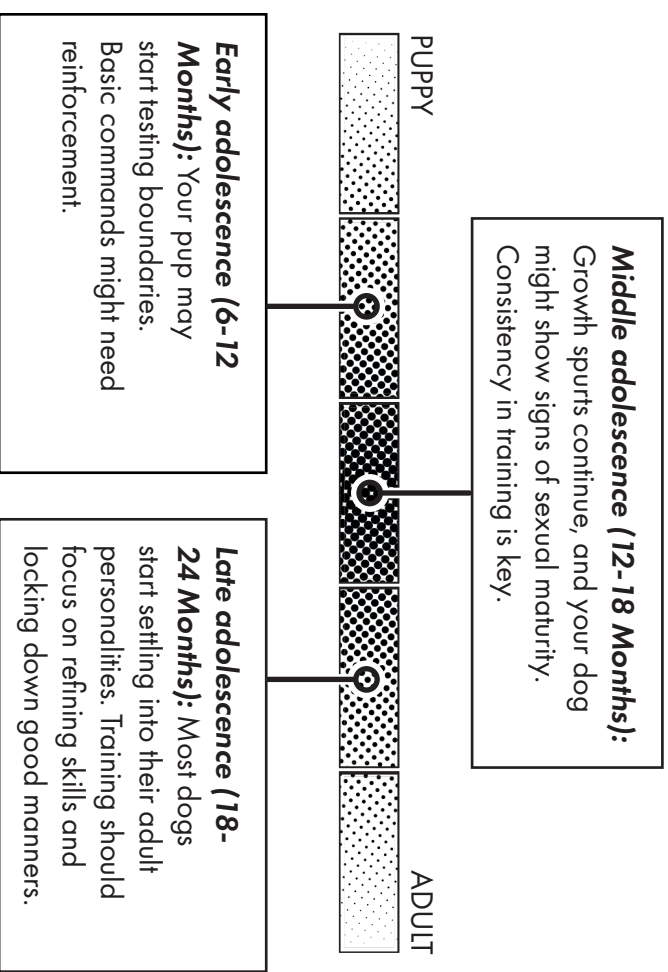
Canine adolescence can be challenging, but it's also an opportunity to strengthen your relationship with your dog. With the right strategies—patience, consistency, and positive reinforcement—you can help your dog navigate this phase and emerge as a well-adjusted, happy adult. Remember, every dog is unique and with support, you'll both thrive (and survive!) through the teenage phase.

**GOOD LUCK!**

## WELCOME TO THE TEENAGE YEARS!

As your puppy grows, they enter a phase much like human adolescence. This period, typically ranging from 6 months to 2 years, is marked by significant physical, hormonal, and behavioral changes. Understanding these changes is not just beneficial, but empowering, as it can help you support your dog and strengthen your bond.

### TIMELINE OF CANINE ADOLESCENCE



## PHYSICAL, HORMONAL, & NEURAL TRANSFORMATIONS

A teenage dog undergoes numerous changes, from their brain to the tip of their tail. With so much happening beneath the surface, understanding these rapid shifts can significantly enhance your ability to support your dog (and keep your sanity).

### **Growth Spurts:**

Your dog will experience rapid growth, leading to increased appetite and bursts of energy. Larger breeds tend to mature slower, often remaining in adolescence longer than smaller breeds.

### **Hormonal Surges:**

Just like human teens, dogs undergo hormonal changes that can affect their behavior. This includes the onset of sexual maturity, which might lead to marking territory, mounting, and, for some, increased aggressive, reactive, or anxious behaviors.

### **Neural Changes:**

Adolescence is a critical period for brain development. In a process called “synaptic pruning,” your dog’s brain is literally pruning unused neural connections like a gardener, making the connections they keep more efficient. However, this pruning can also temporarily lead to wildly fluctuating behavior as they learn to navigate their world more effectively.

### **Learning and Forgetting:**

You might notice your dog “forgetting” commands they once knew. This forgetfulness is a normal part of synaptic pruning. Be patient and consistent with training. Be prepared to re-teach as necessary.

### **Behavioral Changes:**

Dogs in adolescence can exhibit increased independence, testing boundaries, and seemingly random bouts of stubbornness. This is developmentally appropriate.

## YOU CAN DO IT!

### **Owner Frustration:**

It’s extremely common for owners to feel frustrated during this phase. However, it’s important to remember that this is a temporary stage in your dog’s development. We were all teenagers once (and probably drove our parents crazy, too!). So, stay patient and remember, *this too shall pass*.

### **Routine and Structure:**

Maintain a consistent routine and procedures. Regular meal times, walks, and play sessions provide stability and help you with efficient management. It’s all about structure, schedule, and supervision!

### **Positive Reinforcement Training:**

Reward-based training is essential. Utilize rewards, praise, and affection to reinforce positive behavior. Avoid punishment, which can lead to fear, aggression, and reactivity during this critical developmental phase. Remember to keep *your emotions in check and avoid taking things personally!*

### **Mental and Physical Exercise:**

Make sure to keep your dog mentally and physically stimulated. Consider using puzzle toys, attending obedience classes, and playing interactive games. Tailor the activities to your dog’s breed and individual preferences. For example, herding dogs might enjoy different activities than scent hounds; terriers might want different things from guardian dogs.

### **Socialization:**

Dogs can de-socialize with isolation. Continue to expose your dog to different environments, people, and other dogs. This helps them become well-rounded adults.

Like when your dog was a puppy, “socialization” doesn’t always have to be direct contact. Protected Socialization—where your dog can observe novel stimuli from a distance—is still powerful. Make sure to take your dog off the property and let them see, notice, explore, and experiment. Incorporate some practical training while doing this to keep building your dog’s skills. Also, continue to provide ongoing feedback for the behaviors you want to reinforce.