

Border Collie Puppy Go-Home Guide

Everything you need to welcome your new puppy home — feeding, crate & potty training, clicker work, voice-whistle recall, and a complete supply checklist.

Prepared for your new Border Collie puppy.

Raised with Puppy Culture socialization, clicker conditioning, and voice-whistle recall.

You have our lifetime support — we love pupdates!

Welcome Home

Congratulations on your new Border Collie puppy! This guide brings together everything we've done to prepare your puppy for life with you — the routines, the training foundations, and the supplies that will make the transition smooth. Your puppy is going home **conditioned** to these methods, not fully trained, so your consistency over the coming weeks is what turns this foundation into lasting habits.

WHAT COMES HOME IN THE GO-HOME BAG

Your puppy's go-home bag includes the starter items to get you through the first days, plus:

- Your puppy's **AKC registration paperwork**
- **Medical records** (vaccinations, deworming, and vet checks to date)
- A small bag of **starter food** — the Purina Pro Plan Lamb & Rice Puppy your puppy is currently eating
- **Pee pads** like the ones your puppy is trained to use
- A few toys and a **scented blankie** that smells like home and littermates
- Treats and age-appropriate chews
- The same **clicker** we've trained with, plus a clicker training guide
- A copy of your puppy's daily schedule to use as a transition tool

ABCA REGISTRATION PAPERWORK

Your **ABCA** (American Border Collie Association) registration paperwork will be **mailed to the address you provided on your contract**. Because we submit the litter's paperwork all at once — only after every puppy has been named — this can take **6 months or longer**.

Please let us know your puppy's name **as soon as you've decided** so we can submit the paperwork promptly. We'll also follow up with you within a month about a name to use.

What's Inside

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1 Feeding

Your puppy will go home with a bag of the food they have been eating. We currently feed **Purina Pro Plan Lamb & Rice Puppy formula**. If you plan to transition to a different brand, do so slowly to avoid stomach upset:

- Week 1: 1/8 new food + 7/8 current food
- Week 2: 1/4 new food + 3/4 current food
- Week 3: 1/2 new food + 1/2 current food
- Week 4: 3/4 new food + 1/4 current food
- Week 5: full amount of the new food

Border Collies are a medium-sized, high-energy, high-drive breed with a hearty appetite. Here's how we recommend feeding through their rapid-growth stage:

DAILY PORTIONS

Offer your puppy **1/2 cup, 3 times a day**. It's completely fine if they don't finish it all in one sitting — they'll grow into it. Feeding this way ensures your puppy is never hungry during the rapid-growth period.

Once you see your puppy eating about **1.5 cups a day**, bump the amount up to **2 cups a day**. Your pup should eventually grow into eating **2-3 cups of food daily** — more when very active. As the daily amount grows, **divide it into 3 and feed 3 times a day**, continuing until your puppy is able to transition to **2 feedings a day, as recommended by your vet**.

Always adjust to body condition as your puppy grows — you should be able to easily feel (but not see) the ribs. You can also refer to the feeding chart on the Purina Pro Plan Puppy bag for your puppy's current age and weight.

- We free-feed our litters throughout the day. Feeding on a schedule (dividing the daily amount into **3 meals**) also makes potty training far more predictable — stay on 3 meals a day until your puppy is ready to move to **2 meals a day, as recommended by your vet**.
- As your puppy demonstrates bladder control and settles into the routine, withhold food about 3 hours before bedtime and water about 1 hour before bedtime.

2 Appetite & Transition Stress

The move to a new home is a big adjustment for a Border Collie puppy, and the stress of that transition can cause a puppy to lose interest in food for the first few days. A puppy that won't eat needs a little help getting back on track. Watch for weakness or lethargy (not the normal sleepiness of a napping pup), and call your veterinarian if you're ever concerned.

If your puppy isn't eating well, try to entice them:

- Soften the food with water or sodium-free beef or chicken broth.
- Offer plain white rice or plain oatmeal with cooked, rinsed ground beef or boiled, shredded chicken.
- If you're using salmon oil, add half a pump to the mixture.
- A canned, gastro-friendly puppy food can also help restart the appetite.

3 Potty Training

Your puppy has been introduced to pee-pads, a dog litter box with naturally scented wood pellets, and grass/greenery. We emphasized **pee-pad** training the most: as the pups learned to walk and eliminate on their own, they naturally moved away from the nesting area (bed/crate) and onto the pad. You can decide whether to transition to a litter box, outside, or both — in the meantime, put pee pads down leading up to your designated potty area.

- Place pee pads on the opposite side from the bedding and food if your puppy will be in a pen or larger enclosure.
- Take your puppy to the potty area immediately after eating, playing, or chewing, up until 12 weeks of age; after that, about 30 minutes after eating should suffice.
- Do not scold for accidents until after 6 months of age (then only a firm "No" and a hand clap if you catch them in the act). Until then, ignore accidents and only reward for going in the designated area.
- Puppies won't have full bladder control until 4–6 months. Before that, a puppy shouldn't be enclosed without a potty break longer than their age in months plus one — a 3-month-old can hold it about 4 hours, a 2-month-old about 3 hours, and so on.
- If you happen to see your puppy eat their own stool, don't panic — simply pick it up right after they go. This litter's mother was meticulous about cleanliness (mothers instinctively eat their young puppies' stool to keep the nest clean), and occasionally a pup with a very tidy mother mimics the behavior. It typically passes on its own, if it appears at all, and is more common in multi-dog homes.

4 Crate Training

Your puppy has been introduced to the crate and rewarded for their time in it. The crate is an essential tool as your puppy settles into a new routine, and this section works hand-in-hand with potty training.

CRATE SIZING FOR A GROWING BORDER COLLIE

If you plan to crate, **start with a smaller 24" crate**. A crate that's too large lets a puppy sleep on one side and potty on the other, which slows house-training. Once your puppy can reliably make it through the night without needing to potty — usually **around 6 months** — **move up to a 42" crate**, which will comfortably accommodate an adult Border Collie.

Prefer to buy once? Get the **42" crate with a divider** and set the divider to a smaller area at first, then open it up as your puppy grows.

- We recommend white, washable/reusable pee pads — they're less likely to be shredded by a bored puppy if you crate while you're away.

- Puppies won't have full bladder control until 4–6 months. Don't enclose a puppy longer than their age in months plus one without a potty break or a place to eliminate.
- Place the crate in a quiet location. Give a small treat every time you place your puppy in the crate, and pair it with a consistent word such as "**bed**" or "**place.**" You can also click as you leave so the crate is associated with reward. As your puppy grows, that word becomes a command for bedtime.
- Some families use a playpen with a sleeping area or crate inside, plus a pee pad and water — this offers a little more flexibility, especially if you're litter training.
- If you leave your puppy in a room without an enclosure, make sure there's nothing hazardous within reach and plenty of chews and activities available. Border Collies will happily spend **hours** on treat puzzles!

5 Clicker Training

From the very first time your puppy could take a treat, we always paired that treat with the sound of a clicker — building a positive emotional response to the click. Once that association formed, we used the clicker in short 3-minute sessions once a day. Leaning over the weaning pen, we clicked as the pups sat; eventually they learned to sit when approaching the pen. After each session (no more than 3 minutes of clicking), we reward with a treat. We continue this one-on-one outside the pen whenever a pup offers an expected behavior — sitting, approaching something new, or following.

- We've included the same clicker in your go-home bag. Always "pay" after each clicker session, and keep sessions short — no more than 20 clicks in a session, then pay once the session ends.
- You can use the clicker to mark any expected behavior, such as going potty outside. If your puppy starts to lose interest in the clicker, run a reinforcement session once a day for 3 days (about 20 clicks within a 2–3 minute window, paying with a small treat after each click).

6 Voice-Whistle Recall

Your puppy has been conditioned to associate a **voice whistle** — a whistling sound made with your mouth in three short bursts — with a very **high-value** reward. Every meal that included venison and goat's milk in the kibble was announced with three voice-whistle bursts. Later we used the same voice whistle to call the pups out of their play area to a person for treats. This is the foundation of recall. We used a voice whistle rather than a spoken command because tone of voice and accent can change how a puppy interprets a verbal recall from a new owner.

- Practice the voice whistle (three short bursts) alongside a high-value treat at least twice a week until 16 weeks of age, then a few times a month until about 7 months, or as needed. During adolescence, you may need to vary your treats to keep interest high.
- If your puppy ever gets loose or into a dangerous situation, the voice whistle is a powerful recall tool — and because it's your own voice, it's always with you.
- As you practice, you can add your own command (some families use "puppy puppy puppy" or a similar sound) and have everyone in the household practice too. Gradually phase toward your own command until your puppy responds to it alone.

7 Resource Guarding Prevention

Your puppy has been conditioned to accept resources being removed from their possession — especially important in homes with other dogs or children. The protocol is simple: any time you take a bone, a "stolen" item, a toy, or another high-value object, **trade for a treat first**. Let the puppy take interest in the treat (or take it into their mouth) before you remove the object. This is a form of conditioning.

If you have multiple dogs, feed your new puppy **separately** for at least the first several weeks, then progress to hand-feeding in the presence of your other dogs where you control the situation. You may need to hand-feed your other dog(s) as well when establishing designated eating areas.

8 Nighttime Routine

Your puppy has had a nighttime routine engrained since birth. The very first sound your puppy heard, in their most comfortable state, was classical music — we keep an Alexa Echo in the whelping room, which moves with them into their sleeping room as they grow. That music plays in their sleep space with a light essence of lavender essential oil, and we switch to low light around 10 p.m. (starting at 6 weeks of age). They're at their most relaxed here and sleep quietly through the night. After an initial adjustment period, we hope this helps your puppy settle easily into your schedule.

- Before placing your puppy in their nighttime enclosure, make sure they've eaten and gone potty.
- Recreating a calm, consistent sleep environment — soft music, dim light, the scented blankie from the go-home bag — goes a long way toward quiet nights in the first week.

9 Off-Leash Walking & Heeling

Your puppy has been positively conditioned to **off-leash walking and heeling** — following and staying at your side without a leash. For the first 16 weeks, puppies are naturally inclined to follow their caretaker, which makes this the ideal age to practice off-leash. Off-leash work becomes harder once your pup reaches adolescence and develops preferences of their own, so starting now (while following you is still their default) pays off. Always pair off-leash work with the voice-whistle recall — essential for calling your dog back from anything dangerous.

Off-Leash Practice

Bring treats and a clicker. Let the puppy follow you. Slow down to let them approach from behind whenever possible, and click and reward as they come up beside you. When they move ahead, stop, use a command to get their attention, then turn and walk away; when they catch up, click and reward. In the beginning you can leave a lightweight collar and drag line on so you keep a measure of control, and always reward immediately after the click.

Heeling

Work on having the puppy walk in close at your left side. Bring them into that position now and then, and click each time they move to your left. You can reward with a treat at intervals, since the click already tells the puppy what you want. If they lag or wander, stop, encourage them forward verbally, and click the moment they fall in beside you.

10 Redirecting Undesirable Behaviors

Most days, a young puppy will do something you'd rather they didn't — chewing, rough play or nipping, getting into things, whining, accidents, zoomies. Many of these improve with time. The two most important things are **patience** (reward only the behavior you want) and **consistency** (keep a steady routine). Your puppy has been on a routine since birth, so settling into yours is completely achievable. We include a copy of your puppy's schedule from their time with us as a transition tool.

With Border Collies especially, redirect their intelligence and drive rather than trying to suppress it — a bored Border Collie invents their own jobs (often herding, nipping, or dismantling something). Use the "power of redirection" until they fully understand your expectations, usually around 4 months or older:

- **Overly playful / biting at hands:** end the play session; once the puppy has calmed, offer a chew or toy they *can* bite. Placing them in the crate with the chew works well.
- **Overly vocal or struggling to settle:** start a clicker/focus session. Do this any time overstimulation is "taking over."
- **Whining (all needs met — not hungry, doesn't need to potty, not sick or uncomfortable):** ignore it and give it no attention.

- **Jumping up:** practice clicker with the "sit" command. If jumping continues, turn your back or move away until they settle. Ask guests to do the same, or to ignore the puppy when they first enter — this teaches your puppy that bombarding people earns nothing good.

Once your puppy is 4 months or older and fully vaccinated, a safe, clean, positive-methods puppy class is a great option.

11 Continuation of Socialization

Your puppy goes home with about two weeks remaining in their **crucial socialization window**, so it's imperative that socialization continues with you in the new environment. Keep creating positive introductions to new people, places, and things — for the first 16 weeks, your puppy is like a sponge. A good local puppy class is excellent, as long as it's safe, clean, controlled, and never uses fear tactics. Avoid dog parks and busy pet stops (anywhere frequented by unfamiliar dogs) until your puppy's parvo vaccination series is well underway and your veterinarian gives the go-ahead.

FEAR PERIODS — WHAT TO EXPECT

Puppies go through normal developmental **fear periods** when they may suddenly act wary of things they were previously fine with. The **first** usually appears right after going home and typically lasts just a few days. A **second** can occur sometime between **6 and 12 months** of age.

During these windows, don't force or flood your puppy — instead, offer extra praise and positive conditioning, keep new experiences calm and rewarding, and let your puppy approach at their own pace. Staying upbeat and patient helps these phases pass smoothly.

12 Complete Puppy Supply Checklist

Print this section and check items off as you gather them. Notes in gray reflect what we've found works best.

ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES

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| ☐ Crate (appropriately sized, with divider if needed) | ☐ Stainless steel or heavy glass water bowl |
| ☐ Exercise pen (x-pen) — optional; keep the space free of cords & choking hazards | ☐ High-quality puppy food (continue the same food initially) |
| ☐ Washable puppy bed | ☐ Treat pouch — optional |
| ☐ Lightweight blanket | ☐ Small, soft training treats (chicken, duck, lamb — beef can upset the tummy in pups not fed a beef-based food) |
| ☐ Snuggle toys | |
| ☐ Stainless steel or heavy glass food bowl | |

WALKING & SAFETY

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| ☐ Flat buckle collar | ☐ Seatbelt restraint or secured travel crate for car rides — optional (keep pup away from airbags; the floorboard is safest if passenger airbags can't be disabled; keep pup within arm's reach at first) |
| ☐ ID tag with owner's phone number | |
| ☐ 4-6 ft leash | |
| ☐ Long line (15-30 ft) for recall training | |
| ☐ Harness (optional, once puppy is older) | |

POTTY TRAINING

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| ☐ Enzymatic cleaner to eliminate odor (we use Pooph and K.O.E. Apricot — honestly the only two that work) | ☐ Pooper scooper (optional) |
| ☐ Poop bags | ☐ Pee pads, paper or reusable (use white or light-colored — that's what pups were trained to go on) |

CHEWS & ENRICHMENT

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| ☐ Bully sticks (supervised) | ☐ Puppy-safe rubber toys |
| ☐ Pumpkin-flavor puppy teething rings (a favorite) | ☐ Food puzzle toys |
| ☐ Yak cheese chew (age-appropriate) | ☐ Lick mat |
| ☐ Collagen chews | ☐ Stuffable toy (such as a Kong) |
| | ☐ Slow feeder bowl (if puppy eats quickly) |

GROOMING

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| ☐ Puppy shampoo | ☐ Toothbrush and puppy toothpaste |
| ☐ Slicker brush | ☐ Ear cleaner recommended by your veterinarian |
| ☐ Comb | ☐ Grooming wipes |
| ☐ Nail clippers or nail file (we avoid a Dremel — it can break a young pup's nails; pups are socialized to clippers) | |

TRAINING

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| ☐ Clicker (included) | ☐ Place cot or training mat |
| ☐ Treat bag | ☐ Training journal (optional) |
| ☐ Long training leash | |

HEALTH

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| ☐ Digital thermometer | ☐ Heartworm preventative, per your veterinarian (we use Quattro) |
| ☐ Styptic powder (for nail trims) | ☐ Puppy-safe first aid kit |
| ☐ Tick remover | |
| ☐ Flea/tick preventative, per your veterinarian (we use Quattro) | |

CLEANING

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| ☐ Lint roller | ☐ Baby gates |
| ☐ Extra towels | ☐ Storage container for food |
| ☐ Washable blankets | |

HELPFUL EXTRAS

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| ☐ White noise machine, or classical music from an Alexa (we played "Relaxing Music for Dogs" in the sleeping room) | ☐ Portable water bottle for outings |
| ☐ Camera to monitor the puppy when away | ☐ Portable travel bowl |
| | ☐ Car hammock or seat cover |
| | ☐ Puppy backpack for supplies |

Border Collie Essentials

A few extras we especially recommend for this smart, high-drive breed — mental work matters as much as physical exercise.

- ☐ A **flirt pole** — used in moderation, with low-impact movements
- ☐ **Multiple food puzzles** to keep their minds engaged
- ☐ A variety of **textured chew toys**
- ☐ A **30-foot biothane long line** for recall practice
- ☐ A **sturdy exercise pen** for safe management while they learn the household routine

ITEMS TO AVOID

- ✗ Retractable leashes
- ✗ Cooked bones
- ✗ Rawhide chews
- ✗ Cheap stuffed toys that are easily destroyed
- ✗ Rope toys without supervision (they can fray and be swallowed)
- ✗ Choke, prong, or e-collars for young puppies

You have our lifetime support.

Feel free to reach out to us for anything you need. We're always striving to improve — please let us know how your puppy is adjusting. We love pupdates!

Disclaimer: Your puppy will not come to you fully trained — they will, however, come conditioned to the training methods described in this document. You must continue working with your puppy to achieve the behavioral outcomes you prefer. We are not professional dog trainers; we do have years of personal experience with many dogs and regularly participate in and have completed programs in puppy socialization, cognitive development, and behavior.