



The 3-Night Puppy Sleep Plan

How to settle a crying puppy and get everyone sleeping again.

Pup Playbook · Happy, Healthy Puppies · pupplaybook.com

First, breathe. This is normal.

If your puppy cried, whined, or howled the first night, you did nothing wrong. Your puppy just left its mom and littermates and landed in a strange, quiet house. Crying is how a puppy asks for company. It is not stubbornness, and it is not a sign of things to come.

Here is the good news you need tonight: for most puppies, the worst is the first night or two. With a steady plan, the crying gets shorter each night, and by the third night most puppies settle within a few minutes. You are three nights away from sleeping again.

How to use this plan

- Do the 15-minute setup on the next page before bed tonight.
- Follow the plan for the night you're on: Night 1, 2, or 3.
- Keep this on your phone by the bed. When you're half-asleep and the crying starts, you'll have the steps right there.

One rule holds it all together: **be boring and consistent**. A puppy learns fastest when every night looks the same.

Tonight's 15-minute setup

Do these before you go to bed. They prevent most of the crying before it starts.

- **Put the crate next to your bed.** A crate at bedside almost always means less crying than one in another room. Move it a few feet farther every few nights once things settle.
- **Tire the body and the brain.** In the hour before bed, a little gentle play and a short sniff-around outside. A tired puppy sleeps. Skip the wild wrestling right before lights-out.
- **Pick up the water bowl about an hour before bed.** Less water in means fewer middle-of-the-night potty trips. Ask your vet about very young or very small puppies.
- **Last potty trip, right before the crate.** Same spot, wait for them to go, reward calmly. This is the last thing you do before bed, every night.
- **Make the crate cozy and safe.** A soft bed, one safe chew, nothing they could shred and swallow. A warm, snug space feels like a den.
- **Set the mood.** Dim the lights, keep the room quiet, and consider a low white-noise sound nearby. Steady background sound covers the little house noises that wake a puppy.

The night-by-night plan

NIGHT 1 — Settle in

Expect some crying. That's the puppy adjusting, not a problem to fix.

- After the last potty trip, put your puppy in the crate calmly. No long goodbyes.
- If they cry, wait a moment before reacting. A little settling noise often fades on its own.
- If it keeps going, a quiet hand near the crate or a soft "shh" can help. No playing, no taking them out to cuddle — that teaches crying = party time.
- Very young puppies (8–10 weeks) usually can't hold it all night. Plan one quiet potty trip: lift them out, straight to the spot, reward, straight back. No play, no lights, no chat.

NIGHT 2 — Shorter and steadier

- Run the exact same setup and bedtime steps. Sameness is what teaches your puppy that night is calm and safe.
- Most puppies cry less tonight. If yours doesn't, don't panic and don't change the plan.
- Keep the potty trip if your puppy still needs it, and keep it boring.

NIGHT 3 — The turn

- Same setup, same steps, one more time.
- Many puppies now settle within a few minutes and sleep longer stretches. Some need a night or two more, and that's still on track.
- Once your puppy sleeps calmly, start moving the crate a little farther from the bed every few nights.

Two things that make or break it

Is it "I need to potty" or "I just want you"?

Reading this right is the whole game, because answering a potty need builds trust and answering a want-you cry teaches more crying. Here's the honest tell:

- **Sounds like potty:** the crying starts after they've been quiet a while, sounds urgent or restless, and they're circling or scratching. Take them out, calm and quick, reward, straight back.
- **Sounds like company:** the crying starts the moment you leave or wake, and eases when they sense you near. Stay calm and boring, reassure without taking them out to play, and let them settle.

When you're genuinely unsure with a young puppy, take the potty trip. Keep it silent and dull so it never becomes playtime.

The one mistake that resets the clock

Taking a crying puppy out of the crate to cuddle, play, or bring into the bed "just this once" teaches your puppy that crying works. The next night, the crying comes back louder and longer, and you're back at Night 1. If you take them out, it's only for a quick, boring potty trip, then right back. That single habit is what carries you from Night 1 to a quiet house.

Naps, and what comes next

Daytime naps are night practice

Every calm daytime nap in the crate teaches the same lesson as a calm night, with none of the 2 a.m. stress. Put your puppy in the crate for naps with a safe chew, keep it low-key, and you'll see nights improve faster. Puppies this age need a lot of sleep, often 18 to 20 hours a day, so build naps into the routine on purpose.

You've got the nights. Here's the rest of the first 16 weeks.

If this plan helped, the same calm, one-page approach covers everything else the first weeks throw at you. That's exactly what **The Puppy Playbook Printable Kit** is: a first-48-hours plan, potty and feeding trackers, a week-by-week schedule for weeks 8 through 16, a socialization checklist, and vaccine and vet logs, all in one print-at-home binder. It's **\$14**, one time, yours to reprint forever.

See what's in the Kit: pupplaybook.com/puppy-playbook-kit.html

And when you're ready to build the routine day by day, start with the potty-training and crate-training guides at pupplaybook.com.

You're doing better than you think. Sleep well. — Pup Playbook