



Critical Fear Periods in Puppies

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The Critical Fear Periods in Puppies:

- Seven to Nine Weeks
- Four to Six Months
- Approximately Eight to Nine Months
- Approximately Twelve Months
- Approximately Fourteen to Eighteen Months

During these periods, puppies may show fear of items, situations or people with whom they formerly felt safe. They may start barking at people entering a house or become fearful and startle at benign items like trash cans, drainpipes or even yard gnomes. They may crouch, shake and try to run away, submissively urinate or, tell the scary thing/person to go away by showing an aggressive display, which may include piloerection, snarling, lunging or other unruly behavior.

You must be patient during these periods and keep to a familiar routine. These are not good times to introduce your puppy to new situations or people. Be very careful to avoid doling out punishment or reprimands. It's vitally important that you understand that your dog is afraid and that you add to the problem when you reprimand or punish. This compounded fear, in turn, can set the dog up for future aggression problems.

If you must introduce your puppy to new situations during these periods, do so slowly, with good-tasting treats, so that he or she does not experience fear. Control situations so that you can prevent a fearful response and show your puppy that you enjoy the situation. Use food treats and happy talk to lure your puppy up to scary objects. Teach the targeting exercise (touch your hand with his nose) and work on getting your puppy to "touch the goblin".

When people visit your home during these periods, put your puppy in another room until visitors are settled in, then bring your puppy out on leash and praise him or her for any show of confidence. Have visitors toss good treats toward your puppy without approaching him or her.