

Dog Adoption Checklist

A dog adoption checklist guiding new owners through adopting a dog, from shelter visit to the first days home.

Before you adopt a dog

- ☐ Assess your space, yard, and time for walks and training.
- ☐ Decide on a size, age, and activity level that fits your life.
- ☐ Confirm housing rules, breed restrictions, and deposits if you rent.
- ☐ Budget for food, vet care, grooming, and supplies.
- ☐ Discuss responsibilities and a daily routine with your household.
- ☐ Consider how a dog will fit with children or existing pets.

Visiting the shelter or rescue

- ☐ Research reputable shelters, humane societies, and breed rescues.
- ☐ Confirm hours and whether you need an appointment.
Call ahead to be sure a dog is still available.
- ☐ Observe how dogs respond to people and to the kennel environment.
- ☐ Ask staff about each dog's history, health, and temperament.
- ☐ Note which dogs match your criteria for a follow-up meet.
- ☐ Be patient if the right dog is not there on your first visit.

Meeting and matching

- ☐ Spend unhurried one-on-one time with a dog before deciding.
- ☐ Watch body language for comfort, fear, or stress signals.
- ☐ Take the dog for a short walk if the shelter allows it.
- ☐ Introduce household members and existing dogs in a controlled meet.
- ☐ Ask about energy, training, and any behavior challenges.
- ☐ Choose based on fit, not only appearance.

Adoption paperwork and fees

- ☐ Confirm the adoption fee and what it includes.
- ☐ Collect vaccination, spay or neuter, and microchip records.
- ☐ Sign the adoption contract and keep your copy.
- ☐ Update the microchip registration to your details.
- ☐ Get the dog's current food and feeding schedule.
- ☐ Ask about any recommended follow-up vet care.

Preparing your home for a dog

- ☐ Dog-proof rooms by removing hazards and securing trash.
- ☐ Set up a crate or quiet space where the dog can decompress.
- ☐ Gather a collar, ID tag, leash, harness, bed, and bowls.
- ☐ Stock the food the dog is already eating to avoid stomach upset.
- ☐ Check that the yard and fences are secure with no gaps.
- ☐ Schedule a first wellness visit with your veterinarian.

First days home

- ☐ Keep the homecoming calm and the dog leashed at first.
- ☐ Introduce one room before opening up the whole house.
- ☐ Establish a feeding, potty, and walk routine right away.
- ☐ Give plenty of decompression time and limit visitors.
- ☐ Introduce existing pets slowly and under supervision.
- ☐ Important: This is general information, not veterinary advice. Schedule a checkup and consult a veterinarian about vaccinations, parasite prevention, and your dog's health.