

Pet Adoption Checklist

A pet adoption checklist that walks new owners through the adoption process from research to bringing a pet home.

Research and readiness

- ☐ Decide which species, size, and energy level fit your home and schedule.
- ☐ Confirm housing rules and any landlord or HOA approvals.
- ☐ Budget for the adoption fee plus ongoing food and vet costs.
- ☐ Discuss responsibilities and commitment with your household.
- ☐ Consider how a new pet will interact with current pets or children.
- ☐ Think honestly about your long-term ability to care for an animal.

Finding a shelter or rescue

- ☐ Look up reputable local shelters, humane societies, and breed rescues.
- ☐ Read reviews and ask about their adoption and return policies.
- ☐ Browse available pets online and note ones that fit your criteria.
- ☐ Ask what health, behavior, and history information they provide.
- ☐ Confirm visiting hours and whether appointments are required.
Call ahead so a specific animal is still available.
- ☐ Prepare questions about each pet's temperament and needs.

Application and approval

- ☐ Complete the adoption application honestly and in full.
- ☐ Gather references and proof of address if requested.
- ☐ Meet and spend time with the pet before deciding.
- ☐ Bring household members and existing pets to meet-and-greets if allowed.
- ☐ Prepare for a possible home visit or virtual check.
- ☐ Ask any final questions about health, behavior, and care.

Fees and paperwork

- ☐ Confirm the adoption fee and exactly what it includes.
- ☐ Collect vaccination, spay or neuter, and microchip records.
- ☐ Sign the adoption contract and keep a copy.
- ☐ Update microchip registration to your contact details.
- ☐ Get any feeding instructions or current food the pet is used to.
- ☐ Note any follow-up medical care the shelter recommends.

Preparing your home

- ☐ Pet-proof rooms by removing hazards and securing exits.
- ☐ Set up a quiet space with a bed where your pet can decompress.
- ☐ Gather food, bowls, ID tag, and species-appropriate supplies.
- ☐ Arrange a secure carrier, crate, or leash for the trip home.
- ☐ Plan to be home for the first days to help your pet settle.
- ☐ Schedule a first wellness visit with your veterinarian.

Bringing your pet home

- ☐ Keep the trip home calm and your pet securely contained.
- ☐ Introduce your pet slowly to one room before the whole house.
- ☐ Let them explore at their own pace without crowding.
- ☐ Stick to the food they know, then transition gradually if needed.
- ☐ Introduce existing pets and people calmly and supervised.
- ☐ Important: This is general information, not veterinary advice. Schedule a checkup and consult a veterinarian about your new pet's health, diet, and vaccinations.