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.