

59 Dog Care Tips

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Before You Even Bring a Dog Home

These first few points may not seem like dog care tips. However, being sure you are ready for a dog and understanding the amount of work a dog takes and the commitment is important. It goes a long way toward ensuring your dog's health and care throughout his life.

1. Having a dog is a lifetime commitment. Be sure you have the time for a dog in your life. If you are in college, think about what will happen to the dog when you must move and begin a job. Can you find a place to live that takes dogs? Are you willing to possibly move across the country with a dog? Having moved across the country many times in my life with dogs of various breeds and sizes, I know it is easier to move with a small dog versus a large dog.
2. And this leads to the question of whether a dog is right for you as a young single professional that works long hours. Or what happens to the dog when you are at work for long hours beginning your career? A dog still needs attention, exercise and care.
3. Is a dog right for the family just starting out? Do you really have the time to care for a dog when you have an infant? A puppy has many demands as well as an older dog. Demands you may not have time to meet if you have or will have a newborn. Puppies need to be trained and socialized. Old dogs may need lots of medical care and physical help.
4. Think about when that dog gets older, at 7, 10 or 14 years old, and starts having different medical problems. Will you be able to spend the time taking care of him then and doing all the extras that may be necessary? Such care can be carrying him outside to potty and cleaning up behind a dog that may no longer be able to control his bladder. And there may be the additional expense of vet bills including the final heart-breaking one. If you think you will just get rid of your dog at the animal

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shelter when he becomes inconvenient, then a dog is not for you. Taking on a dog is a commitment.

5. Remember, Mom, no matter how much a child declares he or she will take care of the new puppy, you will ultimately end up being responsible for and caring for the dog. Factor this into your decision to bring a dog into your home. Let your child do what she can but you are responsible. This is especially pertinent if you work outside the home.
6. Don't get a dog if you can't provide a fenced area for him and think you can have him outside all day on a chain. This is just plain hazardous and is no way to treat a dog. Dogs need exercise. Who can exercise all chained up?
7. Research the breed of the dog you are planning to get and make sure that type of dog will fit well into your household and the way you live.

Grooming Tips

8. Begin trimming a puppy's nails when he is about 10 - 12 weeks old. You may need to start with small sessions and work up till you can do all four paws in one session. Start with one paw and do just that. If your puppy becomes agitated with that, start with just one toe. You may find you have to start by holding just one paw and one toe. Remember to praise your puppy when he does allow you to hold his paws and trim his nails. Provide treats and play time after the session. Make your puppy look forward to his dog grooming.
9. Depending upon the surfaces your dog walks on, you may find you need to trim his nails every three to four weeks or even more often. Your dog's dewclaws may need more frequent trimming than the rest of his nails.
10. In between bathing sessions, you can clean around your dog's eyes with a damp cotton ball if you find he "weeps" and this area gets dirty quickly. Wipe from the corners outward just as you were taught to do for your own eyes.

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11. Clean your dog's ears only when you see visible dirt. Never use cotton-tipped swabs. Use a cotton ball dampened with a dog-ear cleaning solution, baby or mineral oil or hydrogen peroxide.
12. If there is a bad smell or signs of redness in your dog's ears, your dog may require a trip to the vet. Keep an eye out for mites as well.
13. Dogs with droopy ears may have more ear problems and need more cleaning due to lack of airflow into the ear.
14. Just like you, your dog needs his teeth cleaned. Why? In the "old" days, the average life span of a dog was about 10 years. That's about how long his teeth would last, so most people didn't have to and did not worry about taking care of his teeth. Now, a dog can live longer to 14, 15 or even longer. You need to take care of his teeth from the time you bring him home as a puppy to prevent future dental problems and to keep him healthy long term.
15. To start the process of teeth brushing with your puppy you may need to start by simply massaging his lips in a clockwise manner with your finger for a couple weeks followed by massaging his gums and teeth for a couple weeks. Then you can use a dog toothbrush, a piece of gauze wrapped around your finger or a soft round-tipped human toothbrush to begin massaging his teeth and gums. Finally you can begin using dog toothpaste.
16. Do not use human toothpaste to brush your dog's teeth. If you find dog toothpaste too expensive, do as people used to do and make a paste of baking soda and water to brush his teeth.
17. Grooming your dog is the perfect time to check him out for any small change in his body that can lead to health problems. Grooming gives you the opportunity to check for lumps, cuts, ear problems, teeth problems and more.
18. Grooming gives your dog lots of one on one attention that can lead to closer bonding between you and your dog. This is good for his and your mental health.

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19. There are several different grooming tools used for brushing your dog. Which you use depends upon the breed of your dog and the type of coat he has. Ask the breeder you bought from or do your research to be sure you are using the proper tools for your dog.
20. Brush your dog before you bathe her. This helps loosen up and get out some of the loose hair and dirt making her bathing session more productive among other reasons.
21. Begin bathing your puppy when he is about 14 weeks old. If he is a very dirty dog you may begin sooner.
22. Most dogs should need bathing only once a month unless he gets very dirty.
23. Wherever you decide to bathe your dog, bathtub, sink or some type of tub, place a rubber mat within to give him something secure to stand on so he won't slip around.
24. The bathing process begins with soaking down his body but not his face. Keep water out of his ears. Lather up your wet dog with a dog shampoo. Rinse well. Any leftover shampoo in his coat is likely to cause dryness or skin irritation. Wipe his face off with a damp cloth. Squeeze off the excess water and then towel dry your dog.
25. Block your dog's ear canals with cotton balls to prevent water from getting into his ears.
26. You may wish to complete the drying process with either a hair dryer set on warm, not hot, or by leaving him in a warm room until dry.
27. Your dog will shake just as soon as you release him after a bath. This is why some people want to run their dog outside quickly on a leash to prevent him from rolling and getting dirty again. Either that or be prepared to be wiping down walls in the bathroom after his bath.
28. A dog, if left inside still wet/damp, will roll around on the floor just as he would if taken outside without a leash. For this reason, if you are able, consider confining him to a smaller

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warm room until he is dry as suggested above. This will protect your carpet and floors.

29. The wire-haired dog breeds require a stripping process to maintain their wire-haired coats. Other dog breeds are famous for their specific haircuts. For this reason you may wish to seek out a professional groomer for some of the more difficult haircuts and the stripping required by some wire-haired breeds. This depends upon your ability to do the required tasks and your desire to do them as well. Either that or accept a dog that won't be quite as "wired" in his coat or that will not look like the books show.

Puppy Proofing Your Home

30. One good step to take towards puppy proofing your home is to look at it from a dog's level. Get down on your hands and knees and look around. It might surprise you to see what is available for a puppy to chew on or get into. Remember your puppy will want to check out all the stuff in his new home that he has never seen before. These are the kind of things that just might be dangerous to him.
31. Be very aware of electrical cords that your puppy can get to and chew on. Can you just imagine what might happen if a puppy chews on an electrical cord both to him and to your home? Place the cords where the puppy can't reach them. Place them behind furniture or up high. Try laying them under something like a rubber mat. (Be careful about this last tip in a place where there is a lot of traffic.)
32. Stairs can provide as much danger to a puppy as to a toddler. They can have trouble getting up and down them. In their boisterousness, they can even fall down a flight of stairs. Just block off the stairway until the puppy has grown and is more capable of getting up and down them. Stairs might also lead to a place you do not want your puppy to be such as the basement. If you have a door, then you must be sure the door is always closed.
33. Be sure there are no hazardous household chemicals where your puppy or dog can get into them. Such things are usually stored

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under the kitchen sink or even the bathroom sink. Can your puppy easily get into these places? You may even have to go so far as to use those plastic cabinet locks that are used for toddlers.

34. Just as with toddlers, you should remove small objects from your puppy's reach as you puppy proof your home. Think of all the things you would not want a toddler getting and move it higher or into storage. Things like loose change on the table, too small toys, jewelry, needles, marbles, etc. must be removed. And remember your puppy keeps growing so what is a safe location one day might not be next week.
35. Think of things you do not want your puppy chewing on and remove those. It is almost proverbial that a puppy will chew on your shoes and socks. You might think it's funny or cute now, but you won't be thinking that when he is a full-grown adult. Not only is chewing your shoes and socks a potential health hazard to your puppy, it can get expensive replacing the chewed up items. Remove the temptation now as you puppy proof your home.
36. Think of the rooms in your home from your puppy's perspective. While the bathroom may not seem so dangerous to you, the trash may hold some items that will put his health into danger such as dental floss, cleaning rags or even feminine products.
37. Keep the toilet lid shut. You wouldn't have that potential drowning hazard available to a toddler, so don't leave it available to your puppy. Best to keep the bathroom door shut.
38. The kitchen trash can pose such a hazard as well not to mention the mess your puppy can make. Be sure your trashcan is substantial enough that your puppy can't knock it over.
39. Another hazard to consider when looking to puppy proof your home is an open window. If you have windows you keep open that somehow your puppy can get to, you can understand that he might easily fall out that window. If it is a high placed window, your puppy might suffer severe injury or even death. A low window could let him get out into the great outdoors where he might become lost, be run over, or run into something much bigger than he is.

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40. Too much candy and certain houseplants can make your puppy very sick. Remove the candy dish from the coffee table and move the houseplants where he can't reach.

Other General Tips

41. Be sure to keep your dog's vaccinations up to date. If you live in an area where heartworm is a problem, get on the proper control and schedule to prevent this. See your veterinarian.
42. When you take your dog out in public, perhaps as a training session or for socializing, be aware of what is going on. Know what situations your dog is walking into. Beware of other dogs and things such as traffic and other people (people who may not be paying attention to their aggressive dogs, for instance) that may be hazardous to your dog. Be alert and prevent problems before they happen.
43. Take precautions to keep your dog from running loose. A dog running loose can run into all types of hazards such as other ferocious dogs, predators (depending on your area, maybe even a bear), cars that may hit your dog and even the potential for bringing unwanted puppies into the world.
44. Unless you are into serious dog showing, your family dog should be spayed or neutered. Not only does this help to prevent unwanted puppies from coming into the world (to end up being destroyed at the local animal shelter) but also it helps to prevent some cancers.
45. Give your dog some basic training. When it's a new puppy, your dog will need to be housebroken and regardless of its age, you need to establish your authority over the dog. He needs to understand who's boss. [Dog Training Secrets](#) by Charlie LeFave will teach you how to give your dog obedience training and to keep your dog from developing bad habits.

Older Dog Care

46. As dogs age, their joints may start to hurt, their eyesight and hearing start to fade and they may need more frequent trips outside. You may need to make some accommodations to help your dog through this stage of life.
47. Bringing a new puppy into your home as your aging dog starts to decline may be an answer for you to the future heartbreak. However this new puppy will most likely make your older dog's last few months or years miserable and may rush the decline. Your older dog needs to feel secure and bringing a new puppy in will not ensure that feeling. Think of all the attention that a new puppy needs to be properly trained, cared for and socialized. This is attention you will not be able to give to your lifelong companion when he needs you most.
48. Know the average life span of the breed of your dog and pay attention to your dog. A dog that was easily going up and down the stairs may quickly become incapable of this. Although I now must assist our older dog up and down the stairs and indeed to walk, she still enjoys her moments outside smelling the fresh air. She is still a very bright and loving dog. She simply needs assistance now.
49. Older dogs need more frequent potty breaks. Indeed some older dogs will have problems with their backs or hindquarters and be unable to take a potty break without your support. You may need to provide a way for the dog to access the outdoors on his own or provide support to him as he goes in and out.
50. And if your older dog does begin having "accidents" due to his age, do not punish him because you did not get him outside often enough. Your dog has provided you with companionship and maybe even guarded you. Now is your turn to provide for him.
51. If your older dog does begin to have back or rear end problems that affect his ability to stand by himself or get around by himself, consider buying or building a dog wheelchair.
52. Some dogs as they become older can become crankier. Do not submit such a dog to young children. Allow your dog a place to

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go where he can have peace and quiet away from the commotion of every day life.

53. Older dogs may lose their sight or hearing. It may be lost so gradually you don't even realize it till one day you notice your dog didn't even hear the doorbell ring. This means you will have to work differently with your dog. Using hand signals for a dog going deaf is a good idea and indeed it may be wise to begin this even as a puppy. For a dog going blind, realize he has probably memorized where everything is, inside and out, and it would be cruel to rearrange your furniture or move a planter.
54. You must be more alert to potential hazards for a dog which may be losing it sight or hearing such as a child that runs up to pet him on the head while you're walking or the aggressive dog or even car he doesn't hear or see.
55. As a dog ages, he will probably develop arthritis and other joint related ailments. You may find you need to stop him from going up and down stairs. If you had previously allowed him on furniture, you may need to keep him from getting on it now. It's best to train him as a puppy to not climb on furniture so when he begins to have these problems, it will not come as a shock to him, and you, when he no longer can get up on the bed or couch.
56. When you see a change in your dog's habits or find a lump or notice he walks differently, visit your vet right away. Some things can be treated more easily and for less money if looked at right away. That small lump that could easily be removed, if left, could become and inoperable cancer.
57. Do not begin feeding your older dog "treats" that you would not have fed him previously. Such foods could actually be hastening his final days rather than making his old age more special. It is also easy for such treats to make your dog, which may become more inactive due to his ailments, overweight. This could lead to an uncomfortable and even unhealthy old age for your dog.
58. Conversely, you may notice your older dog losing weight. In such a case consult your veterinarian about the diet your dog

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should eat. You may find you need to add canned dog food to his kibble or even other foods as advised by your vet.

59. As your dog ages, you may find he becomes lazy. Provide him with appropriate activity to keep his muscles exercised. Walking is good exercise for older dogs. Just fit the exercise, and exercise location, to the abilities of the dog. Realize these abilities may change over time. Whereas three months ago your dog could easily walk up a hill, he may only be able to walk on a level surface now.

I hope you can make good use of these tips to caring for your dog.

Now that you have learned to care for your dog or puppy, you may also want to learn more about training your new pet to help him adjust to your family, and the household rules. You can register to have my [Basic Puppy Training Course](#) sent directly to your email "inbox", totally free.

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