



## 25 Tips for Successfully Living With And Caring For Your New Pet

1. It takes time for a new pet to adjust to your lifestyle, family members and existing pets--it is important to be patient and understanding; the reward will be a loving, lifelong companion.
2. Pets thrive on structure. Help ease your new pet's transition into your life and set it up for success by: Closely supervising the new pet for the first few days by keeping it on leash or otherwise confined to the room you are in. Gradually increasing privileges, e.g., the run of the house. Maintaining a routine for the first few weeks. Avoiding any intense play, which may confuse your pet, until you and your new pet are comfortable with each other. Postponing visits from family and friends to meet the new pet until the new pet is interacting confidently with core family members.
3. Feed your pet a good brand of dry pet food to help promote healthy teeth/gums. Minimize the feeding of treats--mainly give as training rewards. Avoid feeding "people food". Maintain your pet at a healthy weight. Feed dogs twice a day to reduce the risk of bloat (a potentially fatal condition) and establish a schedule by offering food for only 10-15 minutes and then removing it until the next feeding time. Unless directed otherwise by your veterinarian, cats can have access to dry food at all times.
4. Always let your pet have access to fresh water. If your dog wakes you at night to go out, try removing its source of water after 8 p.m., walking it right before bedtime and providing fresh water again first thing each morning.
5. Be aware of, and keep your pet safe, from items that are potentially hazardous, possibly even fatal; e.g., antifreeze, rodenticides, chocolate, onions and some houseplants.
6. Use only metal or ceramic food and water bowls for your pet--plastic can harbor harmful bacteria.
7. A pet is not a toy--always supervise any interaction between a pet and young children. Children should never be allowed to bother a pet while it is sleeping, eating or drinking. Chewy, food-type toys such as rawhides should not be available to a pet when children are present. Like people, a pet sometimes needs a safe space where it can go for some quiet time and children should understand that the pet is not to be disturbed when it is in its "safe space", e.g., a crate, pet bed or other area where it regularly sleeps.

8. Consistency is the key to successfully training your pet; everyone in the household must apply the same rules, otherwise the pet won't understand what is expected of it.
9. Formal obedience training for dogs is very important--for socialization, to circumvent behavioral problems, and to strengthen the pet/owner bond.
10. Don't wait until a problem with your pet becomes serious before seeking advice from your veterinarian, the rescue group, a pet trainer or an animal behaviorist--the sooner a problem is addressed, the easier it is to resolve.
11. Only exercise your pet in a safe environment. Pets that are allowed to roam can get lost, contract a serious or fatal disease, be hit by a car, or otherwise meet an early death. For example, the average lifespan of a cat allowed outside unsupervised is only 3-5 years compared to 12-15 years for an inside cat.
12. Never leave a choke or other training collar on your dog when it is unsupervised--the animal could be seriously injured or even choke to death if the collar gets caught on something.
13. Always leave a sturdy metal buckle collar (plastic buckles can break) or martingale collar on your dog, with tags to help identify your pet; make sure the collar fits correctly; and, if you walk your pet near roads at night, a reflective leash and collar will enhance both the animal's and your safety.
14. Consider tattooing/micro-chipping your pet for more permanent identification in case it gets lost.
15. Protect your pet from stressful or any other situations in which it could become lost; e.g., holiday and other family gatherings provide many opportunities for your pet to run out the door. Halloween can be particularly scary, with strangely costumed people coming and going. To reduce the risk of a pet bolting out an open door, teach dogs to "wait" at the door until you give the "ok" command before it walks outside; train cats to stay away from outside doors (use a shake can, spray bottle, etc.). Be very careful when you are moving--pets may sense that their life is about to change and, if nervous, they may bolt. When transporting pets to a new home, have ID on pets, keep dogs on leash and place cats in carriers; if it is a lengthy move, have a well-fitting harness and leash so the cat can be exercised
16. If your pet is lost, notify the rescue group, police, animal control and area shelters immediately. Walk through shelters every few days--don't just call. Distribute fliers (with a picture, if possible) where the pet was last seen, in public places, vets' offices, pet-related businesses, and shelters. Advertise in local newspapers - offer a reward. Eliminate prank calls by withholding an obvious feature in fliers/ads (such as an odd marking) and ask the caller to describe it. Leave your pet's favorite food and/or the owner's worn clothing where the pet was last seen to help attract it - monitor the site periodically, day and night. Try a humane, live trap--often available from animal control or a shelter. Most importantly, don't give up!
17. A crate is an important training/housebreaking tool, never to be used as punishment; instead, keep the experience positive--give a treat/favorite toy every time the animal enters its crate.

18. Give your pet stimulation--toys can help entertain your pet when it is alone; inquire at a pet store, pet training facility or veterinary clinic regarding the safest and best toy(s) for your particular pet.
19. When you are away from the house, leave music playing (radio, CDs, etc.) for your pet, not only for "companionship" but also to help drown out potentially disturbing outside noises (such as thunder, mail or newspaper delivery).
20. To help litter box train and reduce the possibility of "accidents": make sure that your pet knows where the litter box is and has access to it at all times and clean the litter box regularly since your pet may use an alternate area if the litter box is dirty. Clean up any accidents with an enzyme solution, available at a pet supply store.
21. To help housebreak and reduce the possibility of "accidents" walk your dog at least five times a day: when you get up, after it eats both in the morning and at night, when you return home and right before bed. Clean up any accidents with an enzyme solution, available at a pet supply store.
22. Don't leave food down all the time for your dog (called free feeding)--this can make housebreaking more difficult since you may not be able to predict your dog's elimination schedule, which can become more frequent and/or erratic by free feeding.
23. Don't bring your dog inside as soon as it eliminates--a dog that enjoys the outdoors will soon learn to "hold it" to be able to stay outside longer, which can be a real problem for you in the winter time! Instead, walk your dog at least five more minutes after it eliminates so it doesn't associate that act with coming back inside.
24. For your pet's well-being, get it regular medical checkups/inoculations as prescribed by your veterinarian; when petting/grooming your pet, check for lumps, bumps and external parasites; be alert to diarrhea, increased frequency of urination or sudden changes in weight or eating habits; use all medications only as directed; ask your veterinarian about ways to protect your dog from lyme disease--it is becoming more prevalent; and don't bombard your pet with multiple chemicals, instead stagger flea preventive (e.g., on the first of the month) and parasiticides, like heartworm preventive (e.g., in mid-month).
25. Let your pet be part of your life--if you do, statistics show that both of you will live longer and happier lives.

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