

Preparing to Bring Puppy Home - Must Haves

People ask me all the time what to buy in preparation for their new puppy. So here it is. The must haves for a new puppy.

1. Collar & Leash

A collar and leash is needed from the day you bring puppy home.

The collar holds your pup's dog identification tag and should contain your name and phone number and will eventually hold the rabies tag (you must get your puppy a rabies vaccine between 4 and 6 months old). The collar attaches to the leash, which you will need to walk your pup. For your dog's first few collars, pick up an adjustable type with the snap buckle. The collar should fit snugly so it won't slip off, but should not be too tight. You should be able to fit two fingers between the collar and the pup's neck. You will likely need to buy several collars as she outgrows them.

The leash should be strong and well made, as should the hardware that links the leash to the collar with a loop for better gripping. Plan to use a shorter 4-foot leash with your puppy. You may opt for a longer one once puppy gets bigger. In general, I do not recommend the retractable leashes as it encourages wandering. Walking takes practice and patience the first couple of times until puppy understands what the process is. But once they get the idea, they should love their walks with you.

I like the use of a harness in addition to a collar for young dogs and if you get the ones that are adjustable you can use it for the car with a safety strap. These are great to use for car rides because it will keep the puppy safe as well as stationary on the seat. The strap looks like a leash that fits into where you would put the seat belt.

For larger dogs who want to pull you along on the leash, I recommend the gentle leader harness. This operates on the

same physics as a horse harness. I personally use them on all my adult dogs when I am walking them as a safety feature for me. I have five adult dogs and in the event of the occasional squirrel taunt - well you get the idea ;-)

2. Crates and Containment

You will need a dog crate or carrier for puppy. Even if you do not plan on crating her when she is an adult, it is highly recommended that you use a crate to confine her as a puppy. When choosing a crate or carrier, make sure that your pup can stand up, lie down, turn around, and stretch inside. Though dogs prefer to have a den-like space, they also need room to feel comfortable, but not too much. She should be crated at night for sleeping and when you leave the house. Also until she is fully and reliably potty trained, she should be housed in the crate when she is not under your close supervision. Keep her crate in a confined area where you can monitor and house train her. When you are unable to keep a watchful eye on your puppy, you may also wish to purchase a pen or some baby gates to keep her corralled. Exercise pens are a set of portable wire panels that confine your pup to a specific area. You can adjust them to fit just about any space. Baby gates, which are used to cordon off restricted areas, prevent him from roaming where she shouldn't.

3. Dog Bed

The first night your puppy comes home, she'll need a comfy bed. While you're house training her, you will have her sleep in her crate or kennel. Smaller beds and bumper beds covered in fleece or sheepskin are designed just for this purpose. Most beds have removable, washable covers. I opt for those if they are available.

After your puppy is house trained she will graduate to a real dog bed. There are a variety of very nice beds to pick from. Some pups like to chew foam. If you have one of those, and by the way

most puppies fit this category, then carefully pick your bedding so that it is not attractive to chew when she gets bored. If you find that she has been chewing on her bedding, immediately take it away from her to prevent possible intestinal blockage. I find that towels and blankets folded up are a good alternative for puppies until they are old enough to not feel the need to chew things.

4. Food and Water Bowls

Your puppy should have her own bowls. There are a number of styles available. The least expensive options are plastic bowls. I like the microban version because they stay sanitary and do not break. Stainless steel bowls, though generally the most expensive, are the best choice. They're strong, easy to clean and sanitize. Many raised feeders and custom-carved bowl holders come with stainless steel bowls. If you choose stainless steel, use the ones that have an untippable base if you can find them.

5. Food, Treats

Puppy will have a big appetite as a result of the energy needed to develop healthy bones, organs, skin, and coat. As a result you will feed her puppy chow formula food until she is a year old.

Kibble is better than wet food because wet food will require you to brush the dogs teeth or they will rot. Wet food tends to stick to teeth. Kibble does not. I will use wet food in small quantities mixed with kibble if I am enticing puppy to eat a food she is less likely to eat. If she is under the weather, or is switching foods this lack of appetite can show up. Wet food should be used sparingly and stopped as soon as possible.

Any high quality dog food that is grain free works. I use Taste of the Wild. They have several flavors for a variety. I don't switch very often though because I don't want any tummy troubles. The Bison and Venison comes in both a puppy and adult formulations and they dogs seem to really love that flavor.

I recommend getting puppy a rawhide or rawhide substitute chew available at all times. There are many kinds, as long as puppy can fit it into her mouth it will work. Your puppy is teething and will have a desire to chew things in your house to satisfy this urge. If you provide a tasty and readily available rawhide or similar chew, then I have found they will leave your furniture and shoes alone. But keep valuables out of reach to avoid temptation for the first year.

I have found there are two kinds of treats. The high value training type and the lower value anytime treat. High value treats can be used for training as they will be highly desired. Normally a very small, probably smelly liver or other meat flavored item is used. I like dried liver treats for training. Don't overfeed these as they will ruin appetites. I only train for 5 minutes at a time and try to keep the treats down to under 10 treats at a session. Pig ears are fantastic high value treats. I usually save these to give after grooming sessions - cutting nails, or baths, or combing. But if you have another event that puppy should be rewarded for being very good, this is a great treat. I try not to overuse these again but only because they are greasy and can stain light fur. In the lower value category we have milk bones and cracker type cookies. These can be used for training if puppy likes a certain kind. They are filling so monitor the amounts given per day so as not to ruin dinnertime. With any treats, watch for and avoid one that contain grains if you are concerned about allergies.

6. Grooming Supplies

It's best to get puppy used to grooming even while young and probably doesn't need much at all done. Her coat will need regular washing, combing. It is recommended every 8 weeks to have a bath. I will often bath more frequently. But watch to see if puppy does well with the level of washing whatever you do and hold back if you find dry skin and itching. I trim nails at the same interval as bathing. Take care not to get water in the ears while

bathing. The only exception to this is if there is dirt or wax. Then I use vinegar and water in equal amounts sprayed into ears and rub gently. Labradoodles require hair to be tweezed out if the hair grows too thick. Most puppies/dogs do not mind this. If puppy has had wet food, then teeth should be brushed as well. To be prepared for the grooming routine as soon as she comes home, have these grooming supplies ready:

- Wide tooth steel comb
- Ear cleaning solution
- Nail clippers
- Scissors - I use small people hair cutting kind
- Shampoo - oatmeal is best
- Tweezers - same as you use for tweezing eyebrows
- Toothbrush and dog toothpaste (not needed if only feeding dry kibble)
- Towels

Store items together in a tote so you can find easily next time you groom.

7. Identification

Your puppy will require some identification. While there are two options — identification (ID) tags and microchips — it's a good idea to use them both. An ID tag, which is a plastic or metal medallion that hangs from your pup's collar, lists specific contact information that will reunite you with your dog should she run off. Some people include the dog's name and their name, phone number, and address; others, for safety reasons, list only their name and phone number with no information about the dog. At the very least, list your name and the best way to contact you, whether it's a cell phone, office phone, or home phone. You can get these at any pet store and they can be customized cheaply and quickly on site before you leave.

A microchip is a rice-sized device that contains a code that is stored in a database with your contact information. Your veterinarian injects the chip between your dog's shoulder blades, and when your dog is found, a staff member at the shelter uses a handheld scanner to read the code in the microchip. The code is then entered into the database, which tells the shelter your name and phone number, so you and your dog can be reunited.

Remember to take the time to register your contact information and keep it up to date. I will microchip any dog that came from me for free after 6 months of age. I used to do it before they left me at 8 weeks but the vet recommends 6 months or older to prevent wandering. I use Avid microchips because they are the most economical for the puppy parents to keep active.

8. Toys

Toys can be categorized into chew toys that satisfy the need to gnaw, like hard-rubber toys; plush toys, like stuffed animals, that provide comfort to dogs; fetching toys, like balls and flying discs; rope and tug toys.

Despite all the toy choices you should only offer your puppy strong, durable, well-made toys that are sized appropriately for her age. If your puppy does destroy a toy remove the damaged item immediately. Exposed squeakers can be dangerous, as are stuffing, frayed rope toy strands, and small torn-off pieces that can be ingested.

Purchase these products before your puppy comes home and set them up in advance mostly because you'll be too busy playing with her.

9. Clean ups

Nature's Miracle with enzyme for spotting accidents is the best product that I have used. There are other similar products, but I

personally like the smell of this one. When accidents occur - blot up as much liquid as you can by pressing paper towels down on the spot. Once you have as much liquid up as you can get, then pour Nature's Miracle to soak the area completely. Then blot again. And once it dries you should not have any remnants of urine on your carpet. If you have a spot that you didn't catch until it dried - then do the same process but after it dries use hydrogen peroxide on the spot. I have never ever had a spot that wouldn't come out using this method.

If you have a stubborn stain, you can use hydrogen peroxide, but be sure and test a spot in an inconspicuous spot first before ruining carpets and upholstery

If you I have missed something that you find in your puppy adventures that I have missed in my list, please be sure to send me an email and I will update the list. I am always looking for great products and ideas.

Best of Luck with your new puppy!!!

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