

New Dog Starter Guide

Your first 30 days with your new best friend.

Everything you need to know — from day one through the first month.
Checklists, routines, tips, and must-have essentials.

FREE GUIDE

Welcome, Bestie.

You've just done one of the most beautiful things a person can do — you've opened your home and your heart to a dog. Whether you just adopted, just brought home a new puppy, or you're about to take the leap, this guide is your roadmap for the first 30 days.

Those first weeks can feel exciting, overwhelming, joyful, and chaotic — sometimes all in the same hour. That's completely normal. Every dog takes time to settle in. Every owner learns as they go. We're here to make sure you have what you need to start on the right foot.

From SnoutHub

A dog is a bestie. Not a prop, not a project, not a phase. The time you invest in your dog's first month shapes the relationship you'll have for life.

What's Inside This Guide:

- Before They Come Home — what to set up first
- Day One — what to expect and how to handle it
- The First Week — building safety and trust
- Weeks 2–4 — routine, training, and bonding
- The Essential Checklist — everything you actually need
- Feeding, Health & Vet Basics
- Common Mistakes (and how to avoid them)
- Finding Your Dog on SnoutHub

01

Before They Come Home

Set up for success before day one

The hour before your dog arrives at home is some of the most valuable preparation time you have. A calm, safe, ready environment makes a massive difference in how quickly your dog settles in.

Home Setup Checklist

- ☐ **Designate a 'safe zone'**
A quiet corner or room with a crate or dog bed where your dog can retreat. Dogs need a place that's theirs.
- ☐ **Remove hazards**
Secure electrical cords, move toxic plants, block off stairs if needed, put chemicals and medicines out of reach.
- ☐ **Set up a crate (optional but recommended)**
A properly sized crate is a comfort tool, not a punishment. It should be just big enough to stand, turn around, and lie down.
- ☐ **Pick a potty spot**
Choose one consistent outdoor area for bathroom breaks. Dogs learn faster when the spot is the same.
- ☐ **Have food and water bowls ready**
Stainless steel or ceramic bowls are easiest to clean. Know what food your dog has been eating.
- ☐ **Stock the basics**
Collar with ID tag, leash, poop bags, food, treats. Have everything ready before they arrive.
- ☐ **Ask the shelter or breeder about their routine**
What food are they eating? When do they sleep? Do they have any fears? This info is gold.

First Arrival Rule

Keep the first arrival low-key. No crowd of friends and family. No loud music. Let your dog explore at their own pace with minimal pressure.

02

Day One

Calm is the most important thing you can bring

Day one is overwhelming — for your dog, and often for you too. Here's what to expect and how to respond to it.

What Your Dog Is Feeling

Your new dog has just been removed from everything familiar — their foster home, shelter kennel, or litter. Even if they're excited, they're also reading your home, your energy, and every new smell and sound. This is called the **3-3-3 Rule**:

3 Days	Feeling overwhelmed and confused. May not eat, drink, sleep normally. Give them space. Don't force interaction.
3 Weeks	Starting to understand routines. Personality begins to emerge. Building trust with you.
3 Months	Fully settled. Feels at home. Knows the routine, knows you love them. This is when their true personality really shows up.

Day One Do's and Don'ts

DO	DON'T
Take them straight to the potty spot before coming inside	Invite a crowd over to meet them right away
Keep things quiet and calm	Leave them unsupervised until they understand the house
Let them explore at their own pace	Force cuddles or interaction they're not ready for
Offer water and food (they may not eat right away — that's OK)	Rush them into meeting other pets without a plan
Use a calm, reassuring voice	Panic if they seem shut down or scared — it's normal

03

The First Week

Routine is the foundation of trust

Dogs are creatures of routine. The faster you establish a predictable daily schedule, the faster your dog will feel safe — and the faster the behaviors you want will emerge.

WEEK 1		Establish the Daily Routine
Time	Activity	Notes
Morning	Potty → Breakfast → Short walk	Same time every day
Midday	Potty break + calm play or rest	Quiet time is good
Afternoon	Walk or play → water check	Burn some energy
Evening	Dinner → Potty → Wind down	Avoid high energy before bed
Bedtime	Final potty → crate or dog bed	Keep it calm and consistent

Potty Training Basics

- Take them out first thing in the morning, after every meal, after naps, and before bed
- Always go to the same spot outside — smell cues help them understand the purpose
- Celebrate with calm praise (not wild excitement) immediately after they go
- Never punish accidents — just calmly clean up and take them outside
- Watch for signs: sniffing in circles, squatting posture, or suddenly getting very still

Potty Training Reality Check

Puppies under 6 months need a potty break every 2-3 hours, including overnight. Adult dogs can usually hold it 4-6 hours. Rescued dogs may need extra patience — they may never have lived in a home before.

Building Trust This Week

Trust is built in small moments — a treat dropped quietly near a shy dog, not reaching for them when they're scared, letting them come to you. Here's how to build it fast:

- Get down to their level — sitting on the floor invites approach on their terms
- Use high-value treats for every positive interaction — tiny pieces, often
- Speak softly. Calm energy transfers. Anxious energy transfers too.
- Give them a job — even simple sits rewarded with treats build confidence
- Let them sleep near you if they want to. Physical closeness builds the bond fast.

04

Weeks 2 – 4

Deepening the bond and introducing structure

WEEK 2**Introducing Structure**

By week two, your dog is starting to understand they're home. This is when you introduce more structure — and it makes everything easier.

- Start a simple 3-command routine: Sit, Stay, Come — 5 minutes, twice a day
- Introduce leash manners on walks — short, reward-based sessions
- Begin crate training if you haven't — it prevents anxiety when you leave
- If you have other pets, continue supervised intros — don't force it

WEEK 3**Settling In**

- Your dog's true personality starts to emerge — embrace it
- Address any concerning behaviors now, not later — the earlier, the easier
- Build in daily enrichment: sniff walks, puzzle feeders, training games
- Schedule the first vet visit if you haven't already

WEEK 4**You're Bonded**

- Celebrate! A month in is a real milestone for both of you
- Your dog trusts you, knows the routine, and feels safe
- Continue training — dogs never stop learning and neither do you
- Socialize more — dog parks, other calm dogs, new environments

When to Ask for Help

If something doesn't feel right — behavior that worries you, health signs, or a bond that isn't forming — reach out to a professional. A positive reinforcement trainer or your vet are your best resources.

05

The Essential Checklist

What you actually need (and what you don't)

You don't need to buy everything the pet store sells. Here's what actually matters for a healthy, happy first month — and where to find great options.

Must-Haves

- **Food & Water Bowls**
Stainless steel or ceramic — easy to clean and durable
- **Dog Bed or Crate Pad**
Comfortable, washable, sized for your dog — a safe spot is everything
- **Crate (if crate training)**
Wire crates are breathable and easy to clean. Get the right size.
- **Collar + ID Tag**
Flat collar with an ID tag. Add a QR code tag for extra safety.
- **6-foot leash**
Standard 6-foot leash for walks and training. No retractable for new dogs.
- **Toys (2-3 to start)**
A chew toy, a tug toy, and something they can carry. See what they prefer.
- **High-value treats**
Soft, small, smelly — for training. Kibble won't cut it when learning.
- **Enzymatic cleaner**
For accidents. Regular cleaners don't break down the smell — dogs will return to the spot.
- **Brush and basic grooming**
Even short-haired dogs need brushing. Start early so they get used to it.

Nice to Have

- **Puzzle feeder or snuffle mat**
Mental enrichment — tires them out faster than a walk
- **Harness**
Great for pullers or dogs who need extra control on walks
- **Calming supplements or spray**
For anxious dogs — ask your vet first. Adaptil and Zylkene have good track records.

Shop SnoutHub

Shop the SnoutHub store at shop.snouthub.com for curated essentials handpicked for new dog owners. Every purchase supports our mission to help more dogs find homes.

06

Feeding, Health & Your First Vet Visit

Keep them healthy from day one

Feeding Basics

- Start with whatever food the shelter or breeder was using — switch slowly over 7-10 days
- Feed twice a day for adult dogs; 3 times for puppies under 6 months
- Portion size matters — follow the bag guidelines adjusted for your dog's weight
- Always have fresh water available
- Don't feed from the table — it creates begging habits that are hard to break

Foods That Are Toxic to Dogs

NEVER Feed	Safe in Moderation
Grapes and raisins	Plain cooked chicken or turkey
Chocolate and caffeine	Carrots (great low-cal treat)
Onions, garlic, chives	Blueberries
Xylitol (sweetener in gum)	Plain rice or oatmeal
Macadamia nuts	Watermelon (seedless)
Alcohol	Plain pumpkin (not pie filling)

First Vet Visit — What to Bring

- ☐ **Any medical records from the shelter or breeder**
Vaccination history, microchip number, any known conditions
- ☐ **A stool sample if possible**
Your vet will test for parasites — common in rescue dogs
- ☐ **Your questions written down**
Food recommendations, behavioral concerns, vaccination schedule
- ☐ **A list of anything unusual you've noticed**
Scratching, unusual stools, lethargy, anything that worried you
- ☐ **Your dog on a leash or in a carrier**
Vet waiting rooms can be stressful — keep them secure and close

07

Common First-Month Mistakes

What to avoid and what to do instead

Giving too much freedom too fast

Let your dog earn freedom gradually as trust and training builds. Too much too soon leads to accidents, anxiety, and bad habits.

Inconsistency in rules

If jumping on the couch is sometimes OK and sometimes not, your dog can't learn. Every person in the house needs the same rules.

Skiping crate training

A crate-trained dog is a safe dog. They have a den, they can't get into trouble, and they're less likely to develop separation anxiety.

Punishing accidents

Dogs don't connect punishment to something they did minutes ago. All you teach them is that you're unpredictable. Catch them in the act, say 'outside,' and go immediately.

Expecting too much too fast

Your dog doesn't know your name yet. They don't know the rules. They're not being stubborn — they're learning. Give them time.

Skiping the vet

Many behavioral issues are actually health issues. A vet check in the first week sets the foundation for everything.

Isolation during adjustment

Leaving a brand-new dog alone for long hours before they've settled in can cause fear and separation anxiety. Start slowly.

08

Find Your Next Best Friend on SnoutHub

Browse adoptable dogs near you

SnoutHub connects dog lovers with adoptable dogs across the country. Browse thousands of dogs looking for their forever home — and find the one that's been waiting for you.

snouthub.com

Find adoptable dogs · Dog-friendly places · Resources for dog lovers

Active Cities

Phoenix, AZ	Chicago, IL	Las Vegas, NV
Denver, CO	Atlanta, GA	Austin, TX
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Jacksonville, FL	Memphis, TN	Sacramento, CA
Kansas City, MO	Tucson, AZ	Calgary, AB ■■

Shop the SnoutHub Store

Everything in this guide — the beds, the bowls, the toys, the calming aids — you'll find curated and ready at the SnoutHub store. Free shipping on orders over \$100.

shop.snouthub.com

Essentials for new dog owners · Free shipping over \$100

A dog is a bestie.

Thank you for choosing to adopt, advocate, and open your heart to a dog. This is how we change the world — one bestie at a time.

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Find your dog

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Shop essentials

SnoutHub supports animal rescue. A portion of proceeds from every purchase goes to rescue organizations in the cities we serve.