

# 10 things your dog needs when joining your family

By Joel Kaye, DVM

Adopting a dog can be overwhelming if you don't know where to begin, but bringing home a pup is also fun and exciting! This milestone is the first bonding moment of many between you and your new fuzzy friend. To help ease that stress, here are ten things you can do to ensure a smooth transition for everyone.

1. **Prepare Your Home** – Similar to babyproofing, it's always a smart and safe idea to ready your space before your pup comes home. Walk through your home and stow away items that might be harmful to small or overly curious pups, and pick up those items you don't want to get chewed. You should prepare the rest of the family too. Discuss which family members will take up feeding, walking, and training. If there are other animals in the home, be sure their shots are up-to-date for everyone's safety. And if you have any cats, you should have a designated dog-free area where the cats can retreat, giving them a way to acclimate to the new arrival's excitement in their own time.
2. **Crate** – Dogs are den animals, and they love the comfort and security offered by a snug space of their own. Ideally, the crate will have three "walls" and a front gate your dog can see through. The crate should be large enough for them to stand and turn around, but not so large as to allow them to eliminate in it and avoid the area. Provide comfortable bedding for your puppy, but be aware that a soft plush bed can become a chew target.
3. **Wire Playpen/Gates** – A pen with wire panels can be configured to any size or shape you might need. They can also be used to block doorways to rooms you'd like to keep off-limits.
4. **Collar and Leash** – Introduce your puppy to their leash and collar or harness, and get them accustomed to wearing it by letting them wear it in the house prior to going outside for walks. Don't drag your puppy as they acclimate to the sensation; allow them to move at their own pace.
5. **Food and water dishes** – Food and water dishes should be porcelain or stainless steel. Initially most puppies should be fed three times daily for the first couple of months. You should consult with your veterinarian on which food is best for your puppy.
6. **Dog toys and treats** – Avoid plush toys or toys with squeakers as these can be swallowed and cause gastrointestinal obstruction. I prefer puzzle toys or the hard Rubber Kong toys that can be filled with treats.
7. **Some means of identification** – Initially use a tag with your pet's name and your address and phone number, but eventually an implanted microchip is best.
8. **Tooth brush, nail trimmer, and grooming supplies** – It is never too early to acclimate your pet to handling of their feet for nail trimming and mouth for tooth brushing. Check out [angell.org/video](http://angell.org/video) for tips.
9. **Enzymatic cleaners** – There will be accidents and it is important to use an enzymatic cleaner to remove the scent, so they will not find the spot appealing.
10. **Last, but most importantly** – find a veterinarian you and your pet are comfortable with. This is a 10-15 + year commitment, so do your research and do not settle until you are happy with the pairing.