

The New Puppy Shopping and Home Preparation Checklist

Essentials, optional items, and room-by-room preparation

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

A practical guide to choosing essential and optional supplies, preparing your home and car, asking breeders or rescues the right questions, and planning the first day.

Part of The New Puppy Survival Kit.



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START HERE

Shopping and preparation checklist

You do not need a shop full of equipment before your puppy comes home. You need a few well-chosen essentials, a safe space, and a plan for the first days.

This guide separates **essentials** from **optional** items, so you can spend on what matters first. Product types are described rather than brands, because the right choice depends on your puppy's size, breed, coat, and temperament, and on the advice of your breeder, rescue, or veterinarian.

THREE RULES FOR SHOPPING

- ☐ Buy for the size your puppy will be in the next few months, not just today.
- ☐ Check the fit and safety of anything worn, chewed, or slept on, and check again as your puppy grows.
- ☐ Wait to buy the optional items until you know what your puppy actually needs.

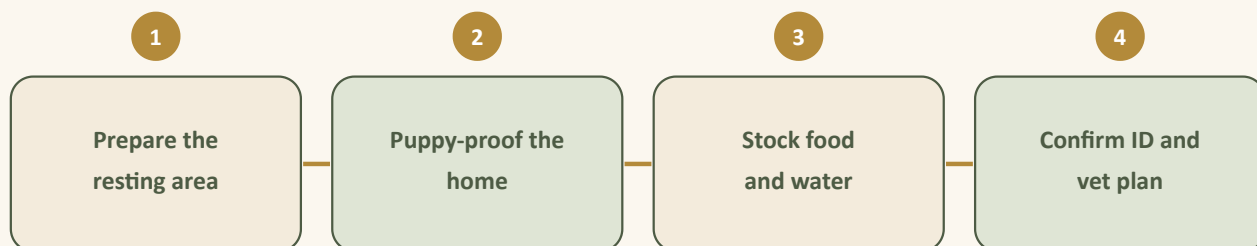
ASK BEFORE YOU BUY

If your breeder or rescue has already given you a feeding plan, a crate training start, or a list of foods the puppy is used to, follow that for the first week. Sudden changes can upset a young puppy's stomach.

PLANNING

Setup order at a glance

Doing the work in roughly this order means that by arrival day your puppy has a safe place to rest, food and water ready, and identification in place.



Read left to right. Repeat the cycle at each session or check.

Setup order for the first week. Work through each step before your puppy arrives.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- ☐ Choose one room, or part of one room, as the puppy's main base.
- ☐ Decide who will be responsible for each daily task, such as feeding, walks, and cleanup.
- ☐ Find your nearest emergency veterinary clinic and save the number on your phone.

ESSENTIALS

Essential supplies

These are the items most puppy owners need from the first day. Buy them before arrival, unless you know your puppy will need something different.

Item	What to look for	Notes
Resting area (crate, pen, or gated space)	Large enough to stand, turn, and lie down stretched out	Plan for adult size only if you can add a divider.
Washable bed or blanket	Machine-washable cover, easy to clean	Expect accidents. Have a spare.
Food and water bowls	Stable, easy to clean, no small parts	Stainless steel and ceramic are common choices.
Puppy food	Suitable for growth, as recommended by your breeder or vet	Keep the same food at first. See the feeding journal.
Collar or harness with ID tag	Adjustable, fits snugly, tag with your phone number	Check fit every few weeks.
Standard lead (leash)	Non-retractable, 1.2 to 1.8 m (4 to 6 ft)	Easier to control for training and walks.
Enzymatic cleaner	Designed for pet urine and odor	Avoid ammonia-based products.
Puppy-proofing gates	Stable, with a secure fit for your doorways	Pressure-fit gates may not suit stairs.
Chew toys	Right size, durable, no small parts	Supervise chewing and check toys often.
Training treats	Small, soft, and healthy, used in tiny amounts	Count them as part of daily food.
Poop bags and gloves	Sturdy, easy to use	Keep a supply in the car and by the door.
Grooming basics	Brush for the coat type, dog-safe shampoo, towel	See the grooming section below.

OPTIONAL

Optional supplies

These items can be useful, but they are not required. Wait until you have a clear reason before buying them.

Item	When it might help	Consider
Second bed or mat	When you want a settle spot in another room	A mat is useful for settle training.
Puzzle or lick toys	When your puppy needs something to do during quiet time	Use under supervision.
Harness (in addition to collar)	For walks or pulling	Ask a trainer to check the fit.
Puppy pads or washable pads	Indoor toileting plans or small breeds	Check with your vet and trainer about your plan.
Car restraint or travel crate	Any car travel	Choose one that fits the puppy at adult size.
Stain and odor kit	Older homes with carpet	Test on a hidden spot first.
Dog-safe toothbrush and paste	Starting a dental routine	Ask your vet which products they recommend.
Sleep or calming aids	Only after talking with your vet	Do not use human products without advice.

A NOTE ON GADGETS

Many products are marketed as essential. In most cases, a simple, well-fitting set of basics does the job. Be cautious with anything that claims to train, calm, or correct behavior on its own.

FEEDING

Food and feeding equipment

The food itself matters more than the bowl. Use equipment that is easy to clean and suits your puppy's mouth and eating style.

BOWLS AND FEEDING GEAR

- ☐ Bowls that are stable on the floor, so they do not slide during meals
- ☐ A bowl size that fits your puppy's muzzle comfortably
- ☐ Heavy bowls, or a non-slip mat, if your puppy pushes bowls around
- ☐ Slow feeders or snuffle mats are optional. Use them as a way to add interest, not as a substitute for a steady meal routine.

FOOD STORAGE

- ☐ An airtight container that keeps food dry and fresh
- ☐ A measuring cup or scale kept with the food, so portions stay consistent
- ☐ A note on the container with the food name and date opened

FEEDING AMOUNTS

Ask your breeder, rescue, or veterinarian for the feeding plan that suits your puppy. The amount needed depends on age, size, breed, activity, and food formulation.

REST

Safe resting areas

A resting area gives your puppy a quiet place to sleep, and it helps during house training. It should feel comfortable and safe, never like a punishment.

Option	Good for	Watch for
Crate	Sleep, safe downtime, and car travel	Must be sized for the puppy. Never use it for punishment.
Pen or playpen	Larger space with room for a bed, water, and toys	Check the top and corners for climbing or chewing.
Gated room or area	Sleep and play in a limited area	Make sure the puppy cannot squeeze under or over the gate.

SIZING A CRATE

- ☐ Big enough to stand, turn around, and lie down stretched out
- ☐ Not so big that the puppy can toilet at one end and rest at the other
- ☐ Use a divider panel if you are buying for a large adult size

KEEP IT POSITIVE

Make the resting area a place your puppy chooses to go, with a bed, a chew, and a quiet location. Never shut a puppy in for long periods as a punishment.

FIT AND ID

Collars, harnesses, and identification

Puppies grow quickly, and a poor fit can cause rubbing, slipping, or discomfort. Check fit regularly and make sure every puppy has identification.

FIT CHECKS

- ☐ **Collar:** you should be able to slide two fingers flat under the strap, snugly but comfortably.
- ☐ **Harness:** the chest strap sits behind the front legs, and you can fit two fingers under each strap without the harness shifting.
- ☐ **Check every two to four weeks** while your puppy is growing, and watch for rubbing or hair loss under straps.

IDENTIFICATION

- ☐ An ID tag with your name and a phone number that will be answered
- ☐ A microchip, if your vet or shelter offers it, with your current contact details registered
- ☐ An up-to-date photo of your puppy and a note about any distinctive markings

LEAD CHOICE

A standard lead of 1.2 to 1.8 m (4 to 6 ft) is easier to control than a retractable lead, which can cause injuries and makes training harder.

PLAY

Toys and enrichment supplies

Toys help with chewing, play, and calm activity. The best toy is one that is the right size, durable, and checked often.

Type	Purpose	Safety notes
Soft chew toys	Gentle chewing and carrying	Remove stuffing or squeakers when damaged.
Hard chew toys	Strong, long-lasting chewing	Choose a size that cannot fit fully into the mouth.
Puzzle toys	Problem solving and mental effort	Supervise, and check for small loose parts.
Sniffing games	Scent work with kibble or treats	Count treats as part of daily food.
Fetch and tug toys	Play with a family member	Teach “give” and avoid rough, long tug sessions.

TOY SAFETY CHECKLIST

- ☐ Nothing small enough to swallow, and no button eyes or loose parts
- ☐ Toys that are cleaned and checked for damage every week
- ☐ Rotate toys so the selection stays interesting
- ☐ Put toys away after play sessions when you cannot supervise

CLEAN-UP

Cleaning supplies

Accidents happen during house training. Having the right supplies on hand means you can clean up quickly and calmly.

Supply	Why it helps
Enzymatic cleaner for pet urine and feces	Breaks down the proteins that cause lingering smells
Paper towels and washable cloths	Absorb the mess before cleaning
Bags and gloves	Hygienic removal of solid waste
Washable mat and pad covers	Protect floors and bedding
Odor-free soap and water	General cleaning of hard floors
Bucket and mop	Quick cleanup of wide areas

AVOID THESE

Avoid ammonia-based cleaners, which can smell like urine to a dog and encourage repeat accidents in the same spot. Keep cleaners out of reach, and never mix cleaning products.

CARE

Grooming equipment

Grooming needs depend on coat type, breed, and age. Choose tools that suit your puppy's coat, and ask your vet or a qualified groomer if you are unsure.

Item	What to choose	Notes
Brush	Matched to coat type, for example a slicker or pin brush for long coats, a rubber brush for short coats	Ask a groomer which brush fits your puppy.
Comb	Fine and medium teeth	Useful for checking for tangles behind the ears.
Nail clippers or grinder	Size suited to your puppy	Ask a vet or groomer to show you how to use them.
Dog-safe shampoo	Formulated for dogs	Human shampoo can irritate the skin.
Towels	Absorbent, washable	Keep a separate set for grooming.
Dog toothbrush and toothpaste	Pet toothpaste, never human toothpaste	Human toothpaste is not made for dogs and should not be swallowed. Some contain xylitol, which is toxic to dogs.

WHEN TO ASK FOR HELP

If you are unsure about nail trimming, ear care, or a skin concern, speak with your vet or a qualified groomer. Do not guess.

TRAVEL

Car and travel preparation

Many puppies travel home by car. A short practice ride before you need one can make the first trip much calmer.

BEFORE THE TRIP

- ☐ A secure car restraint, crate, or carrier sized for the puppy at the stage they are now
- ☐ A towel or blanket, a spare, and cleaning supplies for accidents
- ☐ Water in a spill-proof bowl, and treats for rewarding calm behavior
- ☐ Poop bags, a lead, and your ID tag and microchip details
- ☐ Check your puppy's travel plan with the breeder, rescue, or vet, especially for longer journeys

DURING THE TRIP

- ☐ Plan short stops, and always keep the puppy on a lead when outside the car.
- ☐ Keep the puppy secured, not loose in the car.
- ☐ Never leave a puppy alone in a parked car, even for a short time. Heat builds up quickly.

BEFORE YOU COMMIT

Questions for a breeder or rescue

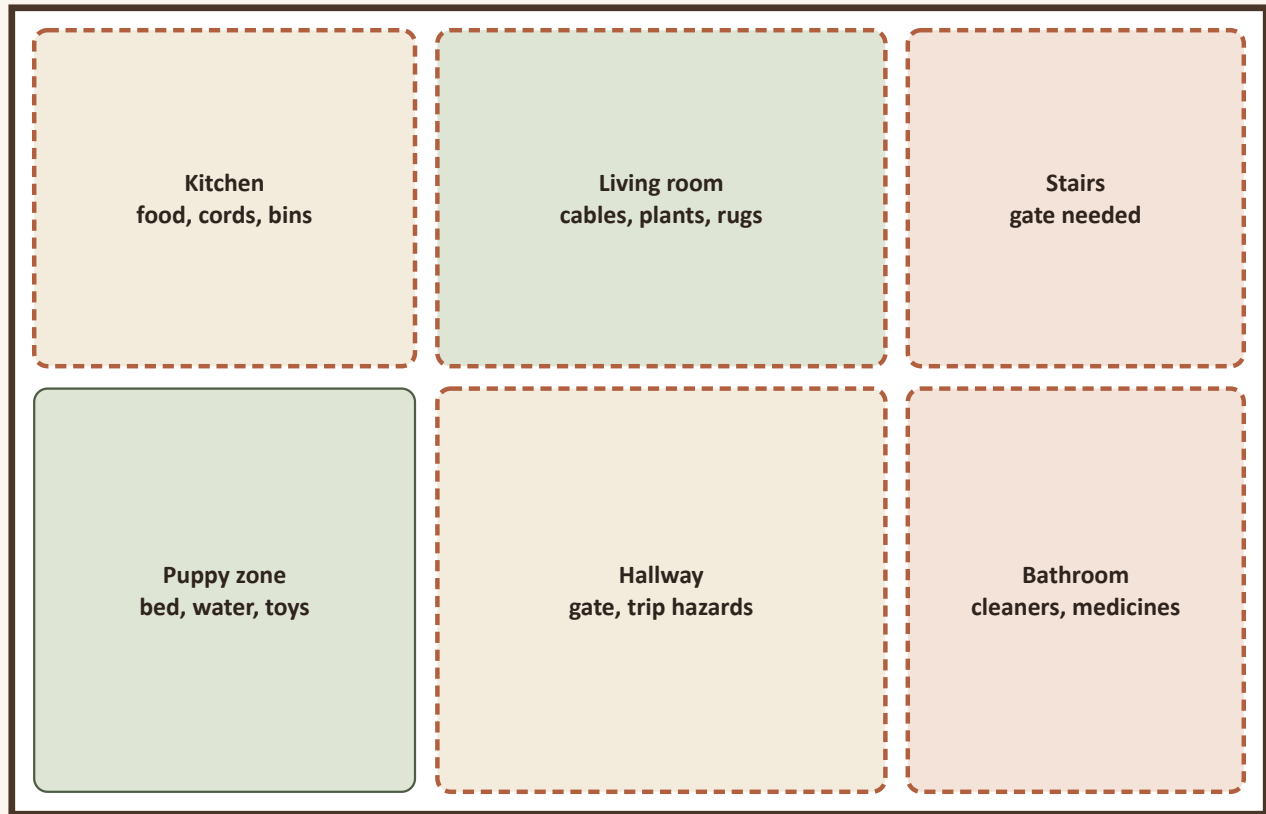
A good breeder or rescue will be happy to answer these questions. Write down the answers, and keep this page with your records.

Question	Answer
What food is the puppy eating now, and can I have some to keep it going?	
What was the puppy's feeding routine, and how many meals a day?	
What vaccinations and worming treatments has the puppy had, and when?	
Has a veterinarian examined the puppy, and can I have the records?	
Has the puppy been microchipped and registered?	
How has the puppy been socialized so far, including sounds, people, and handling?	
How has the puppy been toilet trained, and what routine does it follow?	
What is the puppy's temperament like, and how did they behave around other dogs?	
What health issues run in the parents, and what screening has been done?	
What is your policy if I cannot keep the puppy, and what support do you offer?	

HOME SAFETY

Puppy-proofing the home

Puppies explore with their mouths. Before your puppy arrives, walk through the home at puppy height and remove or secure anything that could be swallowed, chewed, or tripped over.



Example layout only. Dashed borders mark hazard areas in a typical home.

A sample room map. Mark the hazards in your own home and fix them before arrival.

CHECKLIST

Room-by-room checklist

Tick off each item as you complete it. Add anything specific to your home.

Room	Check and secure	Done
Kitchen	Bins with lids, food left out, cleaning products, cords, medicines, bones	☐
Living room	Electrical cords, small objects, houseplants, loose rugs, low furniture items	☐
Hallway and stairs	Gate fitted securely, rugs that slide, loose cables	☐
Bedroom	Shoes, socks, phone chargers, small toys, medications, clothing on the floor	☐
Bathroom	Medicines, cleaning products, razors, bin, toilet lid	☐
Garden or yard	Fence gaps, toxic plants, chemicals, slug bait, pond access, secure gate	☐
Garage or shed	Antifreeze, paints, fuel, tools, rodent bait, small parts	☐

PLANTS AND FOOD

Check a plant guide before you bring plants indoors or into the garden. Ask your vet about any plants, foods, or chemicals you are not sure about.

BUDGET

Shopping budget worksheet

Use this worksheet to plan your spending. Estimate the cost first, then record what you actually spend.

Item	Essential or optional	Estimate	Actual

Total estimated _____

Total spent _____

Set aside for vet and emergency costs _____

BEFORE ARRIVAL

Before-arrival checklist

Work through this list in the week before your puppy comes home.

- ☐ Resting area set up in the chosen room, with a bed and a washable cover
- ☐ Food in the same brand and form the breeder or rescue used, with a feeding plan
- ☐ Fresh water bowl and a food bowl that is stable and easy to clean
- ☐ Collar or harness with an ID tag, and a standard lead
- ☐ Gates fitted, and hazards removed from the main rooms
- ☐ Enzymatic cleaner, paper towels, and bags ready
- ☐ Toys and chews checked for size and safety
- ☐ Vet clinic and emergency clinic numbers saved
- ☐ Microchip and registration details checked, if applicable
- ☐ Calm plan for the family, including who will be home for the first few days
- ☐ Car restraint and travel supplies ready

FIRST DAY

First-day checklist

Keep the first day quiet and calm. Your puppy is in a new place, and too much attention can be overwhelming.

- ☐ Let your puppy relieve themselves outside soon after arrival, and praise them when they do
- ☐ Show your puppy the resting area and let them explore on their own terms
- ☐ Offer water, and a small meal at the usual time if you have been told one
- ☐ Keep visitors to a minimum, and introduce family members one at a time
- ☐ Plan regular toilet breaks, particularly after eating, sleeping, and play
- ☐ Keep handling gentle, and stop if your puppy seems stressed
- ☐ Note anything unusual, and call your vet if you have concerns

NOTES FOR THE FIRST DAY
