

Preparing Your Home for Your New Pet



Adopting a pet from a shelter can transform your house into a cozy home. But without careful preparation, your new furry friend can turn the old homestead into a mess. The following household and training tips will get you on your way to having it all—furry love and a tidy home.

Get Off to a Great Start

* Put a cozy bed for your pet in every room. Pets are much more likely to keep off of furniture if they have attractive alternatives.

* Until your pet learns house rules, don't give him unsupervised access to rooms with sofas, beds or any other furniture you don't want him on.

Instead, spend time with your pet in those rooms, and be ready to gently but persistently discourage him from jumping up on the furniture.

It may help to leave a short leash on your dog if he tries to hop up on your sofa. The moment he does, say "Oops!" Then take hold of his leash and gently lead him away from the sofa.

* During "chill time" together, teach your dog that you'd like him to hang out on his own bed rather than on your furniture. Tie a short tether (about four feet in length) to the leg of a sofa. Place your dog's bed next to the tether. When you're ready to sit back and relax, tether your dog and give him something exciting to chew.

(Try a new bully stick, rawhide or stuffed Kong toy.) While he works on his treat, you can sit on the sofa and read a book or watch TV.

* If you have a cat, try putting double-sided sticky tape or upside-down carpet runner on furniture to discourage Fluffy from scratching.

Training

* Use dog crates and gates to confine your new dog when home alone until his house manners earn him unsupervised freedom.

* Provide plenty of "legal" things for your dog to chew. If he has attractive toys and bones of his own, he'll be much less likely to gnaw on your things!

* Provide kitty with a variety of

scratching posts and perches—cat trees are helpful.

* Be sure to give your dog at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise—running, fetching, playing or swimming—each day. A tired dog will be much less likely to engage in destructive behavior.

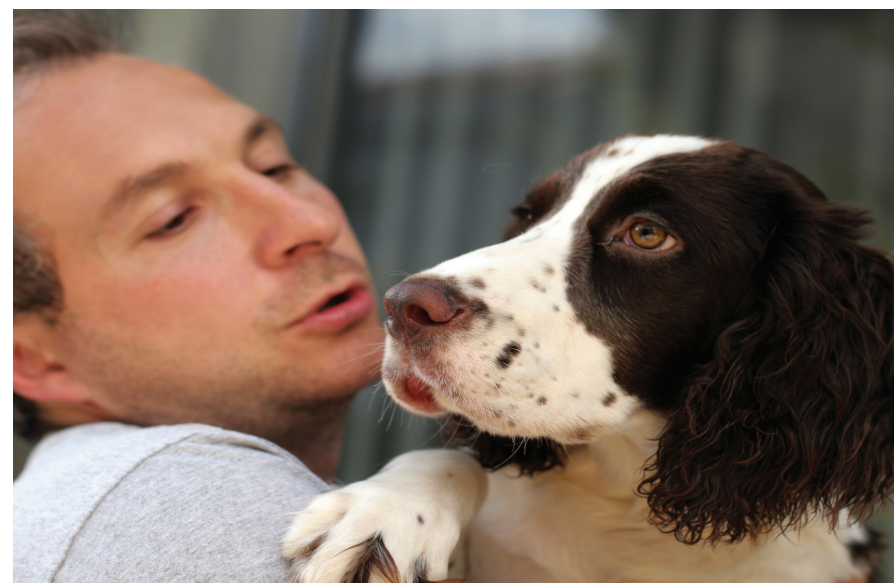
* A busy dog will be much better behaved, too. Consider feeding your pet in food-puzzle toys when he has to stay home alone. If he spends his

time working for his chow, he'll be less likely to look for other ways to alleviate his boredom—like chewing on furniture legs or unstuffing couches.

* Please also research house training for dogs and litter box training for cats.

And remember to increase your pet's roaming privileges slowly, room by room. Going from restriction to complete freedom can set a pet up to fail.

"Provide comfy beds in each room or designate one piece of furniture as your pet's place."



Home Décor

Windows

* Avoid vertical blinds, pooling drapery, ornate tassels and long cords that can become strangulation hazards. If a dog gets caught in any of these, he could panic and bring objects around him crashing down.

* Think twice about mini-blinds, which can get bent beyond repair when a curious dog tries to see the outside world.

* Fabric shades, café curtains and draperies are excellent choices for homes with dogs.

Furniture

* Provide comfy beds in each room or designate one piece of furniture as your pet's place. Cover this piece with a washable throw and teach your pet that this is the only piece of

furniture he is allowed to frequent.

* Make sure slipcovers are machine-washable, especially if a light-colored solid is your upholstery of choice.

* Leather and vinyl furniture is easy to clean, but can be damaged by too-long toenails! Be sure to clip your cat's and dog's nails regularly!



Kids and Pets Interaction A guide to ages and species.

Infants

Primary Issues: Introduction to current pets. Observations: Resident dogs and cats need gradual, supervised introduction to infants.

Toddler

Primary Issues: Curiosity; pulling, touching, etc. Recommend: N/A. Tasks for the Child: N/A. Other Observations: Care must be taken with dog food dishes, toys; litter boxes for cats; aquarium wires.

3-5 Years

Primary Issues: Learning about contact, empathy. Recommend: Guinea Pig. Tasks for the Child: Filling water bottle and food dish. Other Observations: Guinea pigs like to be held, seldom bite and will whistle when excited or happy.

5-10 Years

Primary Issues: Attention span is variable. Recommend: Shelf pets or goldfish. Tasks for the Child: Clean cages with adult help, supervised play with dogs/cats. Other Observations: Adults should always check to ensure that pets have food/water and cages are secured.

Walls

* Use washable semi-gloss paint in areas where your pet may sprinkle spittle on the walls.

* Washable vinyl-backed wallpaper is easier to clean than traditional paper-backed wallpaper.

* Relegate antique wallpapers or fabric wall treatments to the top half of the walls; paint or hang a washable wall covering below.

Floors

* Machine-washable area rugs are easier to keep clean than wall-to-wall carpeting. If urine soaks into carpet backing, it's nearly impossible to remove. If you do decide to stick with wall-to-wall, it's a good idea to stock up on carpet care products, especially enzymatic cleaners made specifically for pet accidents.

* Roll up vegetable-dyed oriental rugs until your new dog is fully house-trained—and if rugs have decorative fringe, don't put them back

down until your pet is well past teething age (over 8 months)!

* Tile, sheet linoleum and Pergo® are pet-friendly floorings that allow you to easily wipe away accidental droppings.

* Seal hardwood floors with polyurethane to prevent urine odor from lingering.



“Adults should always check to ensure that pets have food/water.”

Keep Your Pet's Eating and Sleeping Areas Tidy

* Spill-proof water bowls help prevent drooly drinkers from spilling on the floor.

* A large, absorbent placemat under food and water bowls will make for easier clean-up after messy eaters.

* Frequently wash your pet's

blanket and bedding; use a lint roller on pillows.

* Scoop the poop out of your cat's litter box at least once or twice a day.

Cleaners

* If you use a product that contains ammonia to clean up your pet's urine, you won't be able to smell remaining odors, but your pet will! In fact, ammonia-based cleaners can actually attract pets and encourage them to urinate where they've made mistakes before. Instead, have on-hand a special enzymatic cleaner specifically made for cleaning up pet messes—all major pet stores carry them. For best results, be sure to follow the directions on the product label.

Grooming

* Regularly trim and file your pet's nails to keep her from shredding furniture.

* Brush kitty or pooch regularly to remove dead skin and hair that will

otherwise end up on furniture and floors.

* Wipe off your pet's paws and mouth after meals.

* Trim the hair around your pet's bottom to help keep excrement from clinging.

* Make it easy to give your pet a good rubdown after outdoor romps. Place a machine-washable area rug by the door and keep a towel handy near the entry.

Animal-Friendly Decor

Here are some fun ways to spruce up your home for your companion animals:

* Internal Dutch doors between rooms make it easy for you to manage which pets are allowed where. They also eliminate the need for awkward baby gates.

* Outdoor cat enclosures can be attached to the house with a cat door to allow free access for your feline friend.



* Fenced-in yards should have a buried, inward-facing section to prevent dogs from digging and tunneling.

* If you have cats, be sure to install high-quality metal screens on all windows.

* Install a folding (hinged) cat perch under a window for kitty's viewing pleasure.

* How about a built-in alcove for your dog's crate? * By adding a porthole to a kitchen cabinet, you've got yourself a new place for a cat litter tray! Not only will it look clean and neat, but the porthole will keep dogs from getting in and munching on cat waste.

* A small lift along a wall where the litter box or food and water bowls are placed would make cleaning and feeding a lot easier for senior pet owners. The lift would be used to raise and lower the litter box or food bowls.

* If you're really handy, how about an outdoor septic disposal system for dog waste?!

Adapted from articles by Jacquie Lynn Schultz, Director, ASPCA Companion Animals Program Advisor, and Dr. Stephen Zawistowski, Senior Vice President, ASPCA National Program Office.

10-13 Years

Primary Issues: Greater interest in pets and capacity for responsibility

Recommend: Dogs, Cats, Rabbits

Tasks for the Child: Feed pet; walk dog; clean rabbit cage; clean cat litter

Other Observations: Children this age can be reliable, but adults should always check on food/water, etc. Participation in dog training classes are an excellent learning opportunity for children.

14-17 Years

Primary Issues: Competition for time and attention (i.e. Sports, clubs, etc.)

Recommend: Birds, Aquariums. Tasks for the Child: Most tasks. Use allowance to buy treats, etc.

Other Observations: Developing interest as a fancier, more likely to do research or read about the species. Parents should note that dogs and cats acquired at this age will probably stay in the home when the child leaves for college, etc.

Guide by Stephen Zawistowski, Ph.D, ASPCA Executive Vice President of National Programs.

