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Caring for a dog



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Caring for a dog

Dogs are fun, loyal and rewarding companions, if you care for them properly. Dog ownership requires commitment and a responsible attitude. To successfully look after a pet dog, there are many things to consider.

Breed of dog

There are many different types of dog, from small to large, short haired or long – for example, the smallest breed of dog is the Chihuahua; and the fastest is the Greyhound.

Dogs were bred for different reasons and so all behave slightly differently. For example, Border Collies are extremely active as they were bred to work on farms, whereas Yorkshire Terriers are not so active and need much less exercise in a home environment.

Responsible dog ownership

A dog should always wear a collar. The collar should be fitted with an identification tag, by law, which has the owner's name and address on it. This is very important to help identify the dog if he ever escapes or runs off.

All dogs should be given a microchip. It is a quick and painless procedure where an identification chip is inserted into the back of the dog's neck. This chip enables dogs to be reunited with their owners if lost.

Top tip

If you are thinking of getting a dog, it is really important to find out as much as you can about the character of that type of dog and how it behaves.

Top tip

A dog should always be on a lead when in busy public areas and near roads and never left alone and should be trained to come back to call before being let of the lead in other areas.

Exercise

A dog should be exercised every day, regardless of the weather! If there is no access to a garden, a dog will need to be taken for short walks much more regularly.

You will also always need to carry a 'poop scoop' with you when exercising a dog outside so that you can clean up after him. It is important that everyone cleans up after their dog when they are in public places.

Toys and play should also be an important part of a dog's daily routine. Playing games will help to exercise the dog and prevent boredom and destructive behaviour.



Top tip

Ideally toys should not be left on the floor all the time as a dog will simply get bored of them. A toy box could be useful so you decide when it is playtime.

Fantastic fact

Exercise is not only fun for dogs – it helps to keep a dog's heart, muscles, and bones strong, as well as keeping them entertained.

Food and water

Dogs need feeding at least once a day. They should be given specialist dog food rather than the same food as you. However, when they are very young they can require as many as four meals a day. The dog's bowl should be cleaned after every meal.

Don't feed a dog from the dinner table – this will encourage him to scrounge food from you. Save any scraps from your meal that you wish to give the dog and mix these with his food at his dinnertime.

Dogs should be given a bowl of fresh water every day. Their water bowl should be cleaned regularly.



Fantastic fact

Never give a dog chicken, turkey, fish or pork bones – they might get stuck in the dog's throat.

Top tip

Remember to change a dog's water often especially in warm weather.

Fantastic fact

Never give a dog chocolate – it is poisonous to them. There are lots of special doggy treats that you can give your dog as a reward instead.

Healthcare

A dog will need to visit the vet at least once a year to receive an injection (vaccination). Dogs are vaccinated to stop them catching any diseases. This is also a good time for the vet to give the dog a check-up and make sure he is strong and healthy.

It is also important to have a dog neutered, particularly if you have more than one dog. Neutering will mean no unwanted puppies and can also prevent medical problems. It can also help improve a dog's behaviour.

Top tip

You can help a dog with its dental care by brushing its teeth once or twice a week with special doggy toothpaste from a vet surgery. Ask your parents to help with this.

Fantastic fact

A dog's temperature is usually 38° C (101° F).



Grooming

Most breeds of dog shed their hair throughout the year, so require grooming on a regular basis. Regardless of hair length, all dogs should be groomed regularly as it helps to promote healthy skin.

Dogs should only be washed when necessary. Bathing them too often can lead to them losing the natural oils in their coat.



Top tip

If you wish to help groom your dog, ask your parents to help you. Using a soft brush, brush the same way as the hair grows and always reward the dog if he is well behaved.

Fantastic fact

Some dogs have double coats (two layers of hair) – the bottom one being the undercoat. The undercoat helps a dog stay warm and dry in cold weather but also gives protection from the sun.

Love and attention

Just like us, dogs want love and attention too. It is important that a dog is given love, attention and security but does not become over dependent on you. Dogs that are over dependent on their owners may bark, howl, chew or mess in the house when left alone.



Top tip

Try to ignore a dog when he is being bad or demanding attention and give him attention when he is being good. This will help to prevent him becoming over dependent on you as well as teaching him how to behave.