

WALNUT CREEK SUPPLY

THE COMPLETE CARE GUIDE

Adult Dog

Prime-of-life care: exercise, weight, training and prevention



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New owner? Go straight to Section 1. It is written so you can set up a safe, correct home and get through the first 48 hours without reading anything else first.

The puppy years are a blur of chewed shoes and midnight potty trips, and the senior years come with their own tender kind of care. In between sits the stretch that most dogs spend the longest in: the prime adult years, roughly from age one or two until the senior stage begins (which comes much earlier for a giant breed than for a little terrier). These are the years when your dog is fully grown, fully themselves, and ready for just about anything you are. They are also the years when quiet habits decide a dog's future. The extra five pounds that creep on, the teeth that never get brushed, the walks that shrink to a lap around the yard: none of it looks like a problem in the moment, and all of it adds up. This guide is written for the person who shares a home with an adult dog, whether that dog has been yours since puppyhood, came from a shelter last week, or showed up on your porch with a story nobody will ever fully know. We will cover the first 48 hours with a newly adopted adult, then settle into the everyday work of feeding, exercise, training, grooming, and preventive care. Think of it as a neighbor's advice, shared over the fence: practical, honest, and always happy to say "ask your vet about that one." We are not veterinarians, and nothing here replaces the person who has examined your actual dog. Use this guide to ask better questions and notice more, and let your vet make the medical calls.

SECTION 1

Quick Start: Your First 48 Hours

This section is for a newly adopted or newly acquired adult dog. If your dog has lived with you for years, skim it for the ideas about routine, then jump ahead to Meet Your Adult Dog.

Here is the most important thing to know up front: **a new adult dog does not arrive as the dog you will eventually have.** The dog who walks through your door is stressed, unsure, and possibly exhausted. Many rescue groups and trainers describe a rough guide called "3 days, 3 weeks, 3 months." In the first three days a dog is often overwhelmed and may seem shut down, nervous, or oddly perfect. Around three weeks they begin to learn the routine and relax, and their real personality (including the quirks) starts to show. By about three months many dogs feel truly at home and trust that this is their place. Treat that as a loose guide, not a rule. Some dogs settle in a weekend; some take half a year. Neither is a failure.

1. **Pick up the house before the dog arrives.** Put away shoes, socks, kids' toys, medications, and anything chewable or toxic. Check that trash cans have lids and that food is off the counters. A dog in a new place explores with their mouth.
2. **Make the car ride safe.** Use a secured crate or a crash-tested harness that attaches to the seat belt system. A frightened dog can bolt through an open door or window, so keep the doors shut until the leash is on.
3. **Go to the potty spot first.** Before you go inside, walk your dog to the area of the yard where you want them to relieve themselves, stay calm and quiet, and let them sniff. Reward with a small treat and calm praise when they go.
4. **Keep the house tour small and calm.** Walk your dog on leash through the rooms they will use, then show them their water bowl, their bed, and their sleeping spot. You do not need to show them the whole house on day one. Close doors to rooms you are not ready to share.
5. **Set up a decompression zone.** Choose a quiet corner or a room with a comfortable bed, fresh water, and a crate with the door open if the dog is crate comfortable. Let them retreat there whenever they want, and do not drag them out.
6. **Limit visitors, other pets, and big outings.** No dog park, no parade of neighbors, no big family party for at least the first week. Introduce resident pets one at a time, on neutral ground when possible, and keep early meetings short.
7. **Start the routine immediately.** Feed at the same times each day, take potty breaks on a schedule (first thing, after meals, after naps, before bed), and keep the evening quiet. Predictability is the kindest thing you can give a nervous dog.
8. **Feed what they were eating, at first.** Ask the shelter or previous owner what food the dog has been eating and how often, and keep it going for the first week or two. Switch gradually later (see the Diet & Nutrition section). Stress alone can cause

loose stool for a day or two.

9. **Book the vet visit.** Schedule a wellness exam within the first week or two, sooner if the dog seems unwell. Bring any records you received, ask about a heartworm test, parasite screening, vaccines, and a plan for prevention. Do not be shy about describing everything you know about the dog's past.
10. **Handle ID and microchip right away.** Put a collar with a sturdy ID tag on your dog from day one, since a new dog is the most likely to bolt. Have the vet scan for a microchip, confirm that the chip is registered, and update the registration with your name and phone number. Take clear photos of your dog on the first day in case you ever need them.
11. **Watch quietly and take notes.** Note how your dog reacts to sounds, doorways, strangers, other dogs, hands reaching for the head, and being left alone. These notes help your vet and trainer, and they help you pace the introductions.
12. **Give it time.** Keep expectations low and affection steady. Do not push cuddles on a dog who is not asking for them. Let them come to you.

What to expect from a dog with an unknown history

A dog from a shelter, a rescue, or a rehoming often arrives with little or no background. That is fine. Think of the first month as a getting-to-know-you period. You may see a dog who:

- Does not know basic cues you assumed they knew, or knows them in a different language (a different word for "sit," for example).
- Is not fully house trained at first, even if they were reportedly house trained. New place, new rules.
- Reacts strongly to something specific: men with hats, bicycles, the vacuum, a leash being clipped on. Do not guess at the cause. Note it and work through it slowly.
- Guards a food bowl, a bone, or a bed. Give the dog space, never reach into the bowl, and read the Resource Guarding entry in the Training & Behavior section.
- Has medical history unknown to you, including whether the dog is up to date on vaccines or spayed or neutered. Your vet will sort this out.

You are not obligated to fix everything in 48 hours. Your job in the first days is simple: be safe, be calm, be predictable.

First-Time Starter Bundle

What to have in the house before your adult dog arrives, and what to look for in each category.

Essentials

- **A properly fitted flat collar or a well-fitted harness with an ID tag** that shows your phone number. Check that you can slide two fingers under the collar. A harness with a front clip or a back clip that fits snugly can help dogs who pull or who slip their collars.
- **A standard 4 to 6 foot leash** in a comfortable, sturdy material. Skip extendable leashes for walks near roads and for training; they teach pulling and offer little control.
- **Two sturdy food and water bowls** in stainless steel or ceramic, sized to your dog. They are easy to clean and do not hold odors the way scratched plastic can.
- **A complete-and-balanced adult dog food** appropriate for your dog's size, in a small bag to start, so you can transition if needed.
- **A properly sized crate or a quiet bed area.** The crate should be tall enough for the dog to stand, long enough to turn around in, and secure. Pad the floor with a washable bed or mat.
- **A secure car restraint** such as a crash-tested harness and seat belt tether or an anchored travel crate.

- **A brush or comb matched to your dog's coat**, nail clippers or a grinder, and a canine toothbrush and dog-safe toothpaste. (Never use human toothpaste.)
- **Waste bags and a lidded container** for the yard.
- **Enzymatic cleaner** for accidents. It breaks down odors that can draw a dog back to the same spot.
- **A first-aid kit for dogs** with gauze, self-adhesive wrap, saline, tweezers, and a thermometer, plus the vet's phone number and the poison control numbers posted on the fridge.
- **A baby gate or two** to keep the new dog out of rooms you are not ready to share.

Ready to set up? Browse the essentials in our collections: Dog Food, Dog Harness, Collar & Tag and Dog Beds.

Enrichment

- **Chew toys in durable rubber or nylon**, sized so your dog cannot swallow them whole. Hollow rubber chew toys can be stuffed with a spoonful of plain wet food and frozen.
- **A puzzle feeder or snuffle mat** to turn mealtime into a brain game.
- **A fetch or tug toy** with a good grip. Tug is a fine game when your dog knows a reliable "drop it."
- **A lick mat** for calm, soothing moments.
- **A long line (15 to 30 feet)** for safely practicing recall in open spaces when you cannot be certain of off-leash reliability.
- **A small treat pouch** and soft, pea-sized training treats. Count them as part of the daily calories.

Enrichment, one click away. Shop Dog Toys and Dog Treats.

SECTION 2

Meet Your Adult Dog

All domestic dogs belong to one species, *Canis lupus familiaris*, and are shaped by thousands of years of living beside people. What a dog looks like on the outside tells you a little about their history, but not as much as you might think about the dog on the inside. Two dogs of the same breed can be wildly different, and a mixed-breed dog from a shelter may behave nothing like the breed mix suggested on the paperwork. Size, on the other hand, tells you quite a lot about how your dog will age, so we group dogs by size here.

Size categories

Size	Typical adult weight	Example body type	Typical adult lifespan
Small	Under 25 lbs	Terrier, toy, and small companion types	Often 12 to 16 years
Medium	About 25 to 50 lbs	Spaniel, beagle, and many herding types	Often 10 to 14 years
Large	About 50 to 90 lbs	Retriever, shepherd, and many working types	Often 9 to 12 years
Giant	Over about 90 lbs	Mastiff, wolfhound, and giant working types	Often 6 to 10 years

These ranges are approximate. Individual dogs vary widely, and genetics, weight, dental health, and veterinary care all play a part. The general pattern, that smaller dogs usually live longer than giant ones, is well known, but no one can promise how long your dog will live.

When "adult" ends and "senior" begins

Most dogs are physically adult somewhere between 1 and 2 years old, with smaller dogs maturing sooner and giant breeds taking up to two years or a bit more. Emotional maturity often lags behind; plenty of dogs act like teenagers until they are two or three. Senior status varies with size, and vets often use rough ranges like these:

Size	Approximate start of senior years
Small	Around 10 to 12 years
Medium	Around 8 to 10 years
Large	Around 7 to 9 years
Giant	Around 5 to 7 years

These are guides, not rules. Your vet may recommend a shift to senior-style wellness screening earlier or later based on your dog's health. This guide stops where the senior stage begins, so if your dog is slowing down, stiff on stairs, or needing more naps, talk to your vet about senior care.

Temperament versus breed

Breed gives you a head start on what a dog was shaped to do: herd, hunt, retrieve, guard, hold still on a lap. But two things matter more than a label.

- **Individual temperament.** Some dogs are bold, some are cautious. Some love every person, some are polite but reserved. This is part of who they are.

- **Early experience and daily life.** What a dog saw, heard, and learned in the first year or so, plus how they live today, shapes behavior more than a breed name does.

If you adopted a mixed-breed dog, a DNA test can be fun and sometimes useful for health conversations with your vet, but treat the results as a hint, not a prediction. Spend a few weeks watching what your dog actually does. Do they sniff for hours? Stare at moving things? Shake a toy to pieces? Those habits tell you what they need.

SECTION 3

Home & Daily Routine

Adult dogs thrive on rhythm. They do not read clocks, but they read patterns: the sound of the kettle, the jingle of keys, the particular shuffle that means a walk is coming. A steady routine lowers stress, makes house manners easier, and makes it much easier for you to notice when something is off.

A sample day

This is a framework, not a prescription. Adjust it around your work hours and your dog's energy.

Time of day	What happens
Early morning	Potty break, fresh water, first meal (or half the daily portion), a sniffing walk
Mid-morning	Quiet rest or nap in a favorite spot, a chew or a puzzle toy while you work
Midday	Potty break and a short walk or play session; a mid-day visit from you or a trusted walker if you are away for long hours
Afternoon	Rest, light training practice (five minutes), another potty break
Early evening	Main walk or play session, second meal (or the other half of the daily portion)
Evening	Calm time together, brushing or a gentle cuddle, a last potty break
Night	Sleep in a quiet, comfortable spot, close to the family if that helps your dog feel secure

Most healthy adult dogs do well with a potty break at least every 4 to 6 hours during the day, though many can go longer. Dogs should never be expected to "hold it" for a full workday on a regular basis. If you work long shifts, a midday walker, a friend, or a doggy daycare can make a big difference.

Sleep

Adult dogs generally sleep about 12 to 14 hours a day in short naps. A dog who sleeps far more or less than usual is worth a call to the vet.

Home setup that works

- **A resting place of their own.** A bed or crate in a quiet corner where the dog is not constantly disturbed. Teach children to leave a resting dog alone.
- **Safe spaces to be alone.** A baby gate or a closed door gives the dog a break from household bustle and gives you peace of mind when you cannot supervise.
- **Water everywhere it matters.** Keep a clean water bowl available in the main living area, and wash it daily. Many dogs enjoy a bowl on each floor of the house.
- **Secure fencing and gates.** If you have a yard, walk the fence line. Check for gaps, loose boards, and spots where a determined digger could get out. A fence does not replace supervision.
- **Pick-up zones.** Keep trash, medications, cleaning products, and food out of reach. Many ingestion emergencies start with an open purse or a low trash can.

Safety through the seasons

Heat. Dogs cool themselves mainly by panting, which is far less efficient than human sweating. Never, under any circumstances, leave a dog in a parked car, even for "just a minute" and even with the windows cracked. A car's interior can reach dangerous temperatures within minutes on a day that feels pleasant. On warm days, walk early or late, provide shade and cool water, and slow down. Flat-faced breeds, heavy-coated breeds, overweight dogs, and dogs with heart or airway problems are at higher risk. See the heat stress entry in Common Challenges & Solutions.

Hot pavement. If the pavement is too hot for the back of your hand to rest on for five seconds, it is too hot for your dog's paws. Walk on grass or in the shade, or wait until evening.

Cold. Short-coated, small, or older dogs may need a coat and shorter outings. Wipe paws after walks on de-iced sidewalks, since the chemicals irritate paws and can upset the stomach if licked.

Water safety. Not every dog is a swimmer, and even strong swimmers tire. Introduce water gradually, use a well-fitted canine life jacket on boats and in open water, and never leave a dog unattended near a pool, pond, or river. Avoid stagnant ponds, where algae blooms can be toxic. If your dog swims in a natural pond, ask your vet about leptospirosis (a bacterial infection from contaminated water and wildlife urine) and whether a vaccine makes sense for you.

Car travel. Dogs should be restrained in a crash-tested harness attached to the seat belt system or in a secured crate, never loose in the cab and never in the open bed of a pickup truck. A dog hanging out of a window can be hit by debris. Plan for stops every couple of hours with water and a potty break.

Children and dogs. Even the sweetest dog needs rules around children, and the best tool is supervision. Teach kids to approach calmly, pet gently along the body rather than hugging the head and neck, never disturb a dog who is eating, sleeping, or in their bed, and never to climb on the dog. Teach the family to notice when a dog is uncomfortable: lip licking, yawning, turning away, a stiff body, or showing the whites of the eyes. Never leave a young child alone with any dog, no matter how gentle the dog is.

SECTION 4

Exercise & Mental Enrichment

A tired dog is a good dog, but a mentally satisfied dog is better. Physical exercise keeps a dog fit, but mental work is what keeps the sofa cushions intact.

How much exercise?

Exercise needs vary with age, breed type, fitness, and health. These are starting ranges for a healthy adult. Your vet can adjust them if your dog has joint, heart, breathing, or weight concerns.

Energy level	Examples of typical dogs	Daily walk and active play	Notes
Low	Many giant breeds, some toy and flat-faced breeds, mellow couch-loving mixes	About 30 to 45 minutes total	Short, easy outings; avoid hard exercise in heat
Moderate	Many small companion dogs, spaniels, and mixed breeds	About 45 to 75 minutes total	Mix of walks, sniffing, and a play session
High	Many retrievers, shepherds, pointers, and terrier types	About 60 to 120 minutes total	Add running, fetch, swimming, or hiking once fully conditioned
Very high	Many herding, working, and sporting dogs bred for long days	Often 90 minutes or more, plus real jobs	Need structured outlets such as training, sports, or scent work

These are approximate. Watch your dog, not the clock. A dog who is destructive, hyper in the evening, or constantly bugging you for attention may need more. A dog who is limping, lagging, or panting hard may need less.

Sniffing walks

A dog's nose is their main tool for understanding the world. A "sniffari," where you let your dog lead the pace and stop wherever they like, can be more satisfying than a brisk power walk. Try letting your dog choose the route at some intersections. Ten minutes of good sniffing can tire a dog out more than twenty of trotting past everything.

Mental enrichment ideas

- **Puzzle toys and food puzzles.** Start easy, so your dog wins, and then increase the difficulty.
- **Snuffle mats and scatter feeding.** Toss a portion of dinner in the grass or in a snuffle mat and let your dog hunt for it.
- **Training games.** Five-minute sessions of "find it," name-the-toy games, hand targets, or learning a new trick keep the mind working.
- **Scent games.** Hide a favorite treat or toy in the house or yard and ask your dog to "find it." Start easy and build up.
- **Play with other dogs.** Many (not all) adult dogs enjoy good play with a compatible friend. Choose dogs you know and watch for loose, bouncy, give-and-take play. A dog park is not a good fit for every dog.
- **Rotate toys.** Swap a few in and out each week so familiar toys feel new again.

Breed-group needs

Dogs were developed for different jobs, and the old jobs still show up in the living room. Use these as clues, remembering that mixed-breed dogs may show several at once.

Group	What they were bred to do	What they often need	Common behavior to watch
Herding	Move and control livestock	Daily running, training, and a job to do	Nipping at heels, circling, staring, chasing cars or bikes
Hound	Track by scent or chase by sight	Sniffing time, secure fencing, long walks	Following their nose, baying, wandering off, ignoring recall
Working	Guard, pull, or protect	Structured exercise, training, and socialization	Guarding, size-related strength, strong opinions
Sporting	Find and retrieve game	Swimming, fetch, long outings, and mental jobs	Carrying things in the mouth, high energy, bounciness
Terrier	Hunt small animals and vermin	Digging outlets, play, and training games	Digging, chasing small animals, tenacity, barking
Toy	Companions in the lap	Short walks, play, gentle training, and company	Small-dog habits such as barking, being carried too much, or becoming clingy

Toy dogs still need walks, training, and manners. A little dog who is carried everywhere can become nervous and underexercised.

SECTION 5

Weight, Condition & Daily Numbers

If there is one thing that can add healthy years to your adult dog's life, it is keeping them lean. Many veterinary sources report that overweight and obese dogs are very common, and excess weight is linked to joint trouble, breathing problems, and other health issues. The good news is that this is one of the few areas where owners have enormous power.

Body condition score

Vets use a 9-point body condition scale, where 1 is severely underweight, 9 is severely obese, and the ideal is around 4 to 5. The scale is more useful than the number on the bathroom scale because dogs vary so much in frame size.

Score	What it looks like	What it means
1 to 3	Ribs, spine, and hip bones easy to see; no fat covering; a sharply tucked belly	Underweight; see your vet
4 to 5	Ribs easy to feel with light pressure; clear waist from above; belly tucked up from the side	Ideal range
6 to 7	Ribs harder to feel under a layer of fat; waist barely visible; no obvious tuck	Overweight; time to adjust
8 to 9	Ribs very hard to feel; no waist; rounded belly; fat deposits on back and base of tail	Obese; plan with your vet

The hands-on check

1. **Feel the ribs.** Run your fingers along the side of the chest with light pressure. You should be able to feel the ribs easily, like the back of your hand with the fingers spread, without pressing hard. If it feels like the knuckles of a closed fist, there is more padding than ideal.
2. **Look from above.** Stand over your standing dog and look down. You should see a gentle hourglass shape with a visible waist behind the ribs.
3. **Look from the side.** The belly should tuck up from the chest toward the hips rather than hanging level or sagging.
4. **Check the base of the tail and the hips.** You should feel a thin layer of padding over the bone, not thick layers of fat.

Long or thick coats can hide weight gain, so rely on your hands. Take a monthly photo from above, and weigh your dog regularly. Many vet clinics will let you stop in and use the scale for free.

Calories: a starting estimate

Calorie needs depend on weight, age, neutered status, activity, and metabolism. Package feeding guides are a starting point, not a prescription. Many veterinary sources use a formula based on resting energy requirement and multiply it by a factor for the dog's life stage, and that estimate is exactly that, an estimate. The practical approach:

1. Use the label's feeding guide for a starting amount, based on your dog's ideal weight (not current weight if overweight).
2. Weigh your dog and check body condition every two to four weeks.
3. Adjust by roughly 10 percent up or down if your dog is gaining or losing when you do not want them to.
4. Ask your vet for a target calorie range, particularly if your dog is overweight, underweight, very active, or has a health condition.

Measure food with a proper measuring cup or, better, a kitchen scale. A "scoop" can vary by a surprising amount, and a few extra kibbles daily add up over months.

Treats

Keep treats to **under about 10 percent of daily calories**, and subtract them from the meal portions. Training treats should be pea-sized. Healthy options include small pieces of cooked lean meat, a few green beans, carrot sticks, or blueberries, as long as your dog tolerates them. Dog-safe foods still count.

Daily numbers at a glance

Item	Typical adult guideline	Notes
Body condition	4 to 5 out of 9	Check monthly by feel and sight
Meals	Two per day for most adults	Some dogs do fine with one; ask your vet
Treats	Under about 10 percent of daily calories	Count them in the daily total
Water	Roughly 1 ounce per pound of body weight per day, often more in heat or after exercise	Always available and fresh; sudden big changes are worth a vet call
Exercise	About 30 to 120 minutes depending on energy level	See the exercise table
Sleep	About 12 to 14 hours	Large dogs often sleep more
Potty breaks	At least every 4 to 6 hours	Healthy adults may stretch longer

A sudden change in how much your dog drinks or urinates is worth a call to your vet. So is a gradual change in weight, even if the dog seems fine.

SECTION 6

Diet & Nutrition



A complete-and-balanced adult food, measured to the dog's body condition. Fresh extras stay small, and treats stay under about a tenth of the day's calories.

Good food is the foundation, and the label tells you more than the front of the bag does. Our philosophy is simple: **Clean Fuel, No Junk.** Choose a food made for your dog's life stage, from ingredients you can understand, with a company that answers your questions.

Complete and balanced

Look for the nutritional adequacy statement on the label. In the United States, AAFCO (the Association of American Feed Control Officials) sets model standards, and a quality food states that it is "complete and balanced" for **adult maintenance** (or for "all life stages"), either by meeting the standard's nutrient profiles or by passing feeding trials. A food without this statement, such as a treat or a topper, is not meant to be the whole diet. Large and giant breeds do best on foods formulated with their needs in mind, and your vet can guide you.

Reading a label

- **The ingredient list is by weight, before cooking.** Fresh meat contains a lot of water, so a "meal" ingredient may contribute more actual protein than it appears.

- **The guaranteed analysis** gives minimum protein and fat and maximum fiber and moisture.
- **Dry matter basics.** To compare a wet food to a dry food fairly, remove the water. If a canned food is 78 percent moisture, then 22 percent is dry matter; if it lists 8 percent protein, divide 8 by 22 to get about 36 percent protein on a dry matter basis.
- **Calorie statement.** Look for kilocalories per cup or per can. This is how you measure portions.

Food types, honestly

Type	What people like	What to watch	Notes
Dry (kibble)	Convenient, shelf-stable, usually the most affordable, helps with portion control	Calorie-dense, so easy to overfeed	Store in a cool, dry place in the original bag
Wet (canned)	Highly palatable, high moisture, helpful for picky eaters	Can be costly for large dogs; refrigerate leftovers	Often mixed with dry food
Fresh cooked (commercial)	Real-food appeal, appealing to picky eaters	Cost, refrigerator or freezer space; confirm that the food is complete and balanced	Look for the adult maintenance statement
Freeze-dried or dehydrated	Lightweight, minimally processed, loved by many dogs	Cost; follow rehydration directions; confirm completeness	Raw versions share the raw-food cautions below
Raw	Owners often report shiny coats, smaller stools, and enthusiasm at mealtime	Pathogens such as Salmonella and Listeria can affect the dog and the people in the home; a risk of unbalanced diets	Discuss with your vet before starting; strict kitchen hygiene is essential
Homemade	Control over ingredients	Easy to get nutrient ratios wrong over time	Work with your vet or a board-certified veterinary nutritionist to use a complete recipe

We are not here to pick a winner. Plenty of dogs do beautifully on a quality kibble or a mix of types, and what matters most is that the diet is complete and balanced, fits your dog's calorie needs, and agrees with their digestion. If you are drawn to raw or homemade feeding, please be honest with yourself about the risks (bacteria that can sicken people as well as dogs, bone hazards, and nutritional gaps) and bring your vet in on the plan. Whatever you choose, "no mystery ingredients" is a good rule.

Changing foods gradually

Switch over **7 to 10 days**, or longer for sensitive dogs. See the FAQ for a sample schedule. Sudden changes are the most common cause of food-related diarrhea.

Feeding schedule

Most adult dogs do well with **two measured meals a day**, roughly 8 to 12 hours apart. Some owners prefer one meal, and some dogs (especially deep-chested breeds) benefit from smaller, more frequent meals; ask your vet. Free-feeding, or leaving food out all day, makes it hard to monitor appetite and often leads to weight gain. Pick up the bowl after 15 to 20 minutes. A dog who suddenly refuses meals for more than a day is worth a call to the vet.

Puzzle feeders

Puzzle feeders, snuffle mats, and slow-feeder bowls slow down fast eaters and add mental work to mealtime.

Safe extras and foods to avoid

A few dog-safe extras (plain cooked lean chicken without seasoning, plain green beans, carrot, plain cooked egg, blueberries, plain pumpkin) can be nice treats within the 10 percent allowance. Introduce one new food at a time.

Some everyday foods are dangerous. **Never feed these:**

Food	Why it is a problem	Notes
Xylitol (a sugar substitute)	Can cause a dangerous drop in blood sugar and liver damage, even in small amounts	Found in some sugar-free gum, candy, baked goods, mints, and some peanut butters; always check the label
Chocolate and cocoa	Contains theobromine and caffeine, which affect the heart and nervous system	Darker chocolate and baking chocolate are the most dangerous
Grapes and raisins	Can cause kidney failure in some dogs, and the toxic dose is not predictable	Includes currants and foods that contain them
Onions, chives, and leeks	Can damage red blood cells	Cooked, raw, and powdered forms are all a concern
Garlic	Same family; can damage red blood cells	Treat as unsafe, and check labels on prepared foods
Macadamia nuts	Can cause weakness, tremors, and vomiting	Watch cookies and trail mix
Alcohol and raw yeast dough	Alcohol is toxic, and rising dough can expand in the stomach and produce alcohol	Keep drinks and bread dough out of reach
Cooked bones	Can splinter and cause choking or injury	Ask your vet about safe chews instead

Other hazards include caffeine, very fatty table scraps (which can trigger pancreatitis, a painful inflammation of the pancreas), corn on the cob, and moldy food. If you suspect your dog ate something dangerous, call your vet, the **ASPCA Animal Poison Control at (888) 426-4435**, or the **Pet Poison Helpline at (855) 764-7661** right away. Do not wait for symptoms, and do not induce vomiting unless a professional tells you to.

Shop the food and supplies: Browse Dry Dog Food and Dog Wet Food.

SECTION 7

Training & Behavior

An adult dog can learn almost anything a puppy can, and often faster. The methods that work best are the kind ones.

Positive reinforcement

Reward what you like, and your dog will do it more. Rewards can be small treats, a toy, a favorite game, or praise. Keep training sessions short (five minutes, a few times a day), end on a success, and keep your tone upbeat. Avoid methods based on pain, fear, or intimidation. They can make behavior problems worse, damage trust, and increase aggression. Mark the right moment with a word like "yes" or a clicker, then reward.

Leash skills

Pulling is the most common leash complaint, and the fix is simple but takes practice: **the walk goes forward only when the leash is loose**. When the leash tightens, stop. When it slackens, move on. Reward your dog for staying near you. A well-fitted front-clip harness can help while you train. Practice in quiet places first and let your dog sniff as a reward.

Recall

A reliable "come" can save a life. Use a happy voice, a special treat that is reserved for recall, and practice on a long line. Reward every single time, never call your dog to something unpleasant, and keep your dog on leash or in a fenced area until recall is solid.

Common behavior challenges

Reactivity. Barking, lunging, or growling at other dogs, people, or bikes is usually fear or frustration, not "dominance." Create distance, reward calm behavior, and practice from far enough away that your dog can still think. Reactive dogs need a patient plan, and a trainer can help.

Separation distress and boredom destruction. These look alike but have different causes. Separation distress shows as panting, pacing, drooling, howling, or house soiling shortly after you leave, even with plenty of exercise. Boredom destruction usually happens in dogs who are under-exercised and under-stimulated. See Common Challenges & Solutions.

Resource guarding. Growling, stiffening, or snapping over food, toys, or beds is a warning, and an honest one. Never punish a growl. Give the dog space, trade up for something better, and never take items by force. Ask a professional for help early.

Fear of storms and fireworks. Set up a safe den, play steady background sound, stay calm, and ask your vet about options well before the next storm or holiday. Do not wait until the fireworks begin.

When to hire help

Look for a certified professional trainer who uses reward-based methods and ask about their credentials and approach. If your dog has aggression, severe anxiety, or behavior that came on suddenly, start with your vet to rule out pain or illness. Your vet can discuss a referral to a veterinary behaviorist when needed. Not every dog problem is training, and not every problem needs a behaviorist, but nobody should have to face aggression or severe anxiety alone.

SECTION 8

Grooming, Dental & Preventive Care

Brushing by coat type

Coat type	Examples	Brushing	Notes
Short and smooth	Many hounds, terriers, and pointers	Weekly	A rubber brush or mitt removes loose hair
Double coat	Many shepherds, retrievers, and northern breeds	Several times a week, daily during shedding	Do not shave a double coat unless a vet or groomer advises it
Long and silky	Setters and many toy breeds	Daily or every other day	Work out tangles gently, starting at the ends
Curly or wool	Poodle types and doodle mixes	Every day or two	Matting happens fast; regular professional grooming is usually needed
Wire	Many terriers	A few times a week	Often needs hand-stripping or professional upkeep

Bathing

Most dogs need a bath only every one to three months, or when they get dirty. Use a shampoo made for dogs, rinse thoroughly, and dry well, particularly in skin folds and ears. Frequent bathing can dry out the skin; ask your vet if your dog has a skin problem.

Nails

Trim every 3 to 4 weeks, or when you hear nails clicking on the floor. Cut small amounts at a time. Dark nails have a blood vessel (the quick) that is hard to see, so trim little by little. Keep styptic powder handy. A grinder is a good option for nervous dogs. Dewclaws, if present, need trimming too.

Ears

Check ears weekly. Healthy ears are pale pink, mostly clean, and not smelly. Wipe the visible part with a dog-safe ear cleaner and cotton, never a cotton swab inside the canal. Floppy-eared, swimming, and allergic dogs get ear infections more often.

Teeth

Dental disease is one of the most common health issues in adult dogs, and bad breath is not normal. Aim to **brush your dog's teeth daily**, or at least several times a week, using a dog toothbrush and dog toothpaste. Start slowly (see the FAQ). Dental chew and product categories include:

- **Dental chews** designed to scrape the teeth as the dog chews.
- **Dental diets** formulated to reduce plaque.
- **Water additives** and **dental wipes**, which can help but are not a substitute for brushing.
- **Durable chew toys**, where hard chews can fracture teeth. Avoid anything too hard to dent with a thumbnail, such as hard bones, antlers, and hard nylon.

Professional dental cleanings under anesthesia, with a thorough exam, are the gold standard. Your vet will recommend how often.

Parasite prevention

- **Fleas and ticks.** Year-round prevention is commonly advised in many regions. In Pennsylvania, **tick pressure is real, including ticks that carry Lyme disease.** Check your dog after walks in woods, fields, and tall grass, especially around the ears, armpits, groin, and between the toes. Ask your vet about prevention and the Lyme vaccine.
- **Heartworm.** Spread by mosquitoes, heartworm disease is serious and preventable. Most vets recommend year-round monthly prevention and annual testing.
- **Intestinal parasites.** Annual stool tests are standard.

Wellness exams and vaccines

Healthy adult dogs generally see the vet **at least once a year** for a physical exam, parasite screening, and a talk about weight, teeth, and behavior. Your vet will advise on core vaccines (such as rabies and distemper-parvovirus combinations) and lifestyle vaccines (such as Lyme, leptospirosis, kennel cough) based on your dog's risk. Follow your vet's schedule rather than a generic one.

Microchip and license

Make sure your dog's microchip is registered and your information is current. Pennsylvania generally requires dogs three months of age or older to be licensed each year, with a deadline of January 1. **Local rules, fees, and exceptions vary, so check with your county and municipality.** Rabies vaccination rules also vary by state and locality.

SECTION 9

Common Challenges & Solutions

Obesity

What you see: no visible waist, hard-to-feel ribs, slow walks, heavy panting. **Why:** more calories in than out, often from generous portions, treats, and table scraps. **What to do:** measure meals, cut treats, add walks, and ask your vet for a target weight and calorie plan. **When to call a vet:** if weight rises despite careful feeding, or before starting any weight-loss plan.

Ear infections

What you see: head shaking, scratching, odor, redness, dark or yellow discharge. **Why:** moisture, allergies, and floppy ears trap yeast and bacteria. **What to do:** dry ears after swimming and baths and clean gently on schedule. **When to call a vet:** at the first signs. Infections need a diagnosis and the right medication.

Skin allergies

What you see: itching, licking paws, rubbing the face, recurring ear problems, red skin. **Why:** fleas, environmental triggers, or food sensitivities. **What to do:** keep up flea prevention, wipe paws after walks, and keep notes. **When to call a vet:** if itching persists. Do not try elimination diets without guidance.

Hot spots

What you see: a red, moist, painful patch that appears suddenly and spreads. **Why:** constant licking or scratching, often after swimming or from allergies or fleas. **What to do:** keep the area from being licked and call your vet. **When to call a vet:** the same day, because hot spots grow quickly and often need clipping and treatment.

GI upset

What you see: vomiting, loose stool, gas, reduced appetite. **Why:** dietary changes, scavenging, stress, or illness. **What to do:** keep water available and ask your vet before withholding food or using home remedies. **When to call a vet:** for repeated vomiting, blood, black stool, lethargy, a swollen belly, or symptoms beyond a day.

Anxiety

What you see: pacing, panting, trembling, clinginess, hiding, destructive behavior. **Why:** genetics, history, change, or lack of exercise. **What to do:** keep routines steady, increase exercise and enrichment, and use calm, gradual training. **When to call a vet:** if anxiety is severe or sudden. Ask about a behavior referral.

Destructive chewing

What you see: chewed furniture, shoes, or trim. **Why:** boredom, excess energy, or stress. **What to do:** exercise first, provide safe chews and puzzle toys, and manage the environment. **When to call help:** if chewing happens only when you leave, it may be separation distress. Chewing non-food items can also mean a medical problem.

Pulling on leash

What you see: a dog towing you down the street. **Why:** the world is exciting and pulling works. **What to do:** stop when the leash tightens, reward the loose leash, and practice in easy places. **When to call help:** a trainer can fix stubborn pulling quickly.

Barking

What you see: barking at the window, at the doorbell, or for attention. **Why:** alerting, boredom, excitement, or fear. **What to do:** teach a "quiet" cue, block the view, and meet exercise needs. **When to call help:** if barking is constant or anxious, seek a trainer

or your vet.

Counter surfing

What you see: your dog helping themselves to dinner. **Why:** it is rewarding. **What to do:** keep counters clear, teach "settle" in the kitchen, and reward four paws on the floor. **When to call a vet:** if your dog ate something toxic, call poison control and your vet immediately.

Dental disease

What you see: bad breath, yellow tartar, red gums, dropping food, pawing the mouth. **Why:** plaque turns to tartar and infects gums. **What to do:** brush daily and schedule exams. **When to call a vet:** at the first signs. Loose teeth, swelling, or refusal to eat need prompt care.

Limping

What you see: favoring a leg, stiffness, reluctance to jump. **Why:** sprains, torn ligaments, arthritis, or a splinter. **What to do:** rest the dog and check the paw. **When to call a vet:** if limping lasts more than a day or two, or right away for severe pain, swelling, or inability to bear weight.

Heat stress

What you see: heavy panting, drooling, bright red gums, weakness, vomiting, collapse. **Why:** dogs cannot cool well, and heat and humidity combine. **What to do:** move to shade, offer small sips of cool water, and cool with room-temperature water. **When to call a vet:** immediately. Heatstroke is an emergency, so call on the way to the clinic.

SECTION 10

Routine Care Calendar

How often	What to do
Daily	Measured meals, fresh water, exercise, a short training session, brushing teeth if you can
Daily	Quick check of eyes, ears, paws, and the body for lumps or injuries
Weekly	Brush coat, check ears, wash bowls and bedding, check body condition by touch
Monthly	Heartworm and flea and tick prevention as your vet directs; weigh your dog; take a photo from above
Every 3 to 4 weeks	Trim nails
Every 1 to 3 months	Bath, or as needed
Spring and fall	Check the microchip registration and ID tags; review tick season and travel plans
Yearly	Wellness exam, heartworm test, stool test, vaccines as advised, dog license (Pennsylvania deadline January 1)
As your vet recommends	Professional dental cleaning, bloodwork, and any size-based senior screening

SECTION 11

When to See a Vet

When you are unsure, call. A phone call costs little.

Go now (emergency):

- Difficulty breathing, blue or pale gums, collapse, or seizure
- A swollen, hard belly with unproductive retching
- Heatstroke signs, or any suspected poisoning
- Repeated vomiting or bloody vomit or stool
- Trouble urinating, or a male dog straining and producing nothing
- Major injury, a car strike, or a deep wound

Call within a day or two:

- Not eating for more than a day
- Limping, ear discomfort, or a red or itchy patch
- Diarrhea that lasts more than a day
- Sudden changes in thirst, urination, or weight
- New lumps, bad breath, or a dental problem
- Sudden behavior change such as aggression or hiding

SECTION 12

FAQ

How much exercise does an adult dog need?

Most healthy adult dogs need somewhere between 30 and 120 minutes of walking and active play each day, depending on size, breed type, and energy level. Low-energy and giant breeds sit at the lower end, while many herding, sporting, and working dogs need more, along with mental work. Watch your dog: restlessness and chewing suggest they need more, while soreness or heavy panting suggests less. Ask your vet if your dog has joint, heart, or breathing issues.

How often should I feed an adult dog?

Most adult dogs do well with two measured meals a day, about 8 to 12 hours apart. Some do fine with one, and some deep-chested dogs do better with smaller, more frequent meals, so ask your vet. Avoid leaving food out all day, since it makes it harder to notice appetite changes and tends to cause weight gain. Count treats as part of the daily calories.

How do I know if my dog is overweight?

Use the hands-on check: you should be able to feel the ribs easily under a thin layer of padding, see a waist from above, and see the belly tuck up from the side. If you have to press to find ribs, or the waist is gone, your dog is likely overweight. Ask your vet to score body condition on the 9-point scale (ideal is around 4 to 5) and set a target weight.

How often should adult dogs see the vet?

Most healthy adult dogs benefit from a wellness exam at least once a year, with parasite testing and vaccines as the vet advises. Your vet may suggest more frequent visits for dogs with health conditions, giant breeds approaching their senior years, or dogs on long-term medication. Go sooner whenever something seems off, because dogs hide discomfort well.

How do I brush my dog's teeth?

Use a dog toothbrush or a finger brush and dog toothpaste, never human toothpaste. Start by letting your dog lick a little toothpaste from your finger, then gently rub the gums, then the teeth. Over several days, work up to short brushing sessions, concentrating on the outer surfaces of the back teeth along the gumline. Keep it positive with calm praise, and aim for daily brushing. Ask your vet to show you the technique.

How long does it take for an adopted dog to settle in?

There is no fixed schedule, but many rescue groups use the rough guide of 3 days, 3 weeks, and 3 months: a few days of feeling overwhelmed, a few weeks to learn the routine, and about three months to feel truly at home. Some dogs settle in a weekend and others need longer, especially if their history is unknown. Predictable routines, quiet space, patience, and a vet check help most.

Why does my dog destroy things when I leave?

The usual causes are boredom, too little exercise, or separation distress. If the destruction is chewing on random items and your dog seems calm otherwise, more exercise, puzzle feeders, and safe chews often help. If your dog also drools, paces, howls, tries to escape, or has accidents shortly after you leave, it may be true separation distress, which needs a gradual training plan. Talk with your vet and ask about a certified trainer or behaviorist.

How can I mentally stimulate my dog?

Offer sniffing walks, puzzle feeders, snuffle mats, scent games, short training sessions, and play with other dogs they enjoy. Rotate toys so they stay interesting, and teach a new trick every few weeks. Even ten minutes of nose work or a food puzzle can tire a dog more than a longer, uneventful walk.

How do I switch my dog's food?

Switch gradually over 7 to 10 days, or longer for sensitive dogs. For example, feed about 25 percent new food and 75 percent old for the first couple of days, then 50/50, then 75 percent new, then all new. If you see loose stool or vomiting, slow down and go back a step. If problems continue, call your vet. Keep treats consistent while you switch.

When does an adult dog become a senior?

It depends mostly on size. Small dogs are often considered seniors around 10 to 12 years, medium dogs around 8 to 10, large dogs around 7 to 9, and giant breeds as early as 5 to 7. These are rough guides. Your vet will tell you when to shift to senior-style screening, based on your dog's own health.

Ready to shop? Start with *Dogs!*. 10% of every purchase supports no-kill animal shelters.

SECTION 13

Every Purchase Gives Back

Before we earn a dime, **10% of every purchase at Walnut Creek Supply goes to no-kill animal shelters across the country.** Not as an add-on, and not as an option at checkout. It comes off the top of every order, because we believe caring for our own animals and caring for the ones still waiting for homes are the same promise.

For an adult dog, that matters. Adult dogs are the ones most often waiting in shelter kennels, passed over for puppies while they sit patiently, already housebroken and ready to love someone. If you adopted your dog, thank you. If you are thinking about adding another, consider an adult.

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