

First-Time Dog Owner Checklist

- Food/bowls:** Feed a high-quality diet of the appropriate amount for optimum health and longevity. Select a food that lists a type of meat (i.e. chicken, beef, fish) as its primary ingredient and stay away from foods that include meat by-products/digest as a primary ingredient. Avoid artificial colors and dyes. If your new dog has special dietary needs, be sure to select the proper diet to avoid health complications. Don't forget food & water bowls as well! Stainless steel or ceramic are preferable to plastic as they are easier to clean and prevent bacteria growth.
- High-value treats:** Treats that are highly appealing to your dog make the best reward for training! Experiment with a variety of treats to find out what your dog likes best. Remember to keep treat pieces small in size - just enough to give your dog a taste so as to prevent your dog from gaining unwanted weight!
- Chews, food puzzles & other occupiers:** Chewing is a natural behavior for dogs as it alleviates stress and boredom. Nylabones® and elk antlers make great, long-lasting chews for dogs! Food puzzles or occupiers such as Kongs®, Tug-a-Jugs™ and Buster® Food Cubes, can keep dogs busy for hours. Monitor to ensure toys are not consumed.
- Leashes, collars & harnesses:** Exercise is an important part of life for every canine! Having the proper equipment will keep outings safe and enjoyable for everyone. A 6-foot leash and properly-fitted collar are essential. Harnesses that are designed to deter pulling, such as the Easy-Walk® harness, are highly recommended. Avoid retractable leashes (Flexi-leads) until your dog is trained & easily controlled on-leash.
- Crates & baby gates:** Crates & baby gates can be useful in some cases to keep your dog safely contained during times when you can't monitor. Just be sure to properly acclimate your new dog to his/her crate if s/he has never been exposed to one, and make sure to get the appropriate size.
- Dog beds:** Dogs like to be comfy, too! Select a size-appropriate bed with a removable, washable cover. Keep the bed in an area out of the way, so that it will be a safe spot for your new friend to rest without disturbances.
- Veterinarian:** Bring your dog to see the vet before there's an issue. Even healthy dogs require annual health check-ups for preventative care such as vaccinations & flea/tick/heartworm preventatives.
- Training resources:** There are tons of resources for training information out there! Be sure to find a trainer that uses positive, reward based training methods.

**The State of Vermont requires that all dogs are registered in the town of their residence. Check with your town clerk about specific licensing requirements.*