

# The Saga guide to getting a dog

- What breed is best for you?
- Buying a puppy
- Rehoming a rescue dog

And more...



 *Saga*

# Welcome

Owning a dog can be hugely rewarding and many people coming up to retirement will be looking forward to finally being able to own the dog they have always wanted but never had the time for.

Not only do retirees have the time needed to care for a dog properly, but dogs can also provide companionship, exercise and even be a great way to meet new people through the dogwalking community, training classes or fun dog shows. It's little wonder that research carried out by Saga found that one in five people plan on getting a pet in retirement!

We have put this guide together to help you in your first steps to choosing a dog. It includes information on points to consider, an overview of the different dog groups and tips for welcoming your new furry friend into your household.



For more information on caring for your dog, visit [saga.co.uk/pet-tips](http://saga.co.uk/pet-tips)

Saga's **How to choose a dog in retirement guide** offers practical tips for buying or rehoming a dog, including an overview of different breeds, what to look out for when buying a puppy and tips for welcoming your new dog into your home.



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## What to consider when getting a dog

A dog is a huge commitment, with many breeds living for up to 15 years or longer. Before you decide to get a dog, answer these questions...

### Do you have time?

Even the smallest dog will need exercising and time dedicated to training, socialising and caring for it.

### Do you have the space?

Some breeds need access to a large garden while others are suited to life in a flat, but all dogs need exercise. If you don't have a garden, is there a park or common nearby?

### Can you afford a dog?

As well as food, you'll need to budget for inoculations, worming and possibly medical treatment. Can you afford the vet's bills for any emergency operations your dog may need?

### Do you need insurance?

If you're nervous about unexpected vet's costs it may

be a good idea to insure your dog. If you do plan on getting insurance, it is best to do it early: a puppy is cheaper to insure than an older dog.

### Will you be able to manage a dog?

A small puppy can grow rapidly. When choosing a breed consider how large and strong it will be, and whether you will still be able to handle it 10 years down the line.

### What happens when you go on holiday?

Is there someone at home to look after your dog when you're away? If not, find out how much a local kennel or pet-sitter costs.

### How much upkeep can you cope with?

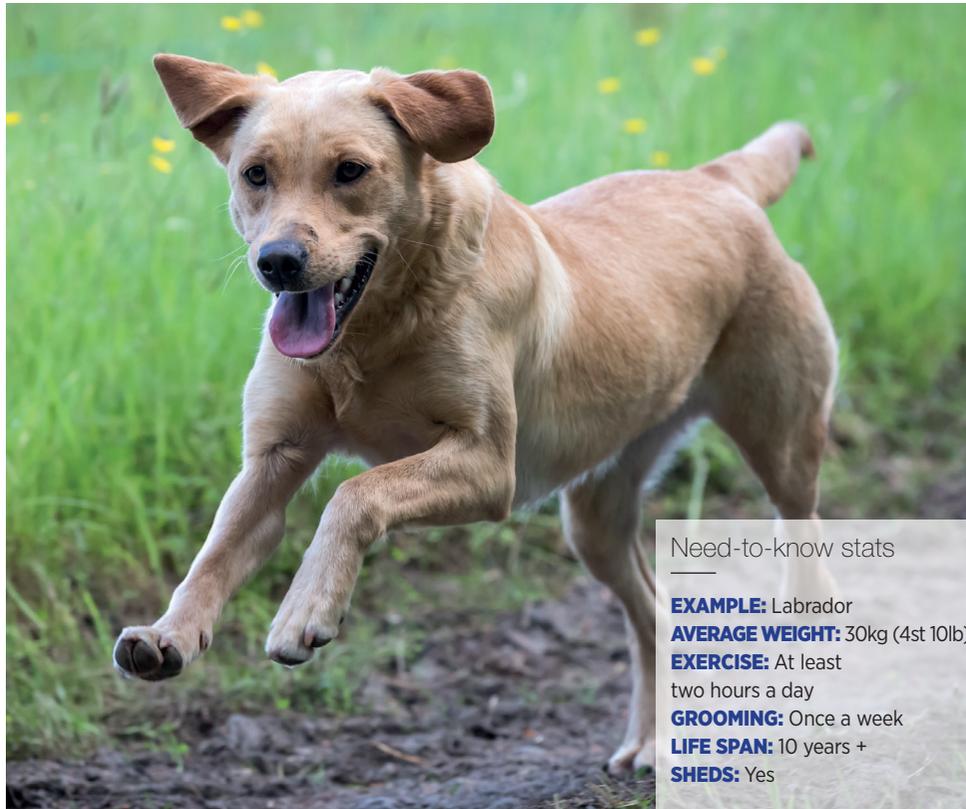
Some breeds require regular grooming, while others need hardly any. How much time do you want to spend brushing your dog? Are you willing to pay a dog groomer?

## CHOOSE THE RIGHT BREED

In this guide we introduce you to the key characteristics of the seven dog groups that breeds fall into, including information on exercise and grooming requirements (including shedding) and life span. This is designed to help you narrow your search and find the right dog for you. Once you've decided on a breed that suits you, research it thoroughly and familiarise yourself with any health issues associated with it.

Remember that every dog is individual and, while you can use their breed as a guide, a dog will have its own personality and is not guaranteed to conform to what is considered 'normal' for that breed. **Which breed will be right for you...?**

# All about **Gundogs**



## Need-to-know stats

**EXAMPLE:** Labrador  
**AVERAGE WEIGHT:** 30kg (4st 10lb)  
**EXERCISE:** At least two hours a day  
**GROOMING:** Once a week  
**LIFE SPAN:** 10 years +  
**SHEDS:** Yes

**O**riginally bred to find and retrieve game, gundogs are intelligent and obedient. They are often used as assistance dogs because they are easy to train and make excellent companions.

Gundogs love the outdoors and are very active, so are best suited to large houses with big gardens and readily accessible open spaces. They are ideal family dogs.

When considering a gundog, it is important to

remember that they are working dogs, so require plenty of exercise and stimulation. Most breeds live for more than 10 years, so if you are buying a puppy you need to think carefully about how able and willing you will be to take your dog on long walks and play 'fetch' in a decade's time.

Popular gundogs include the English Springer Spaniel, Hungarian Vizsla, Golden Retriever, Weimaraner and English Setter.

## Other breeds

**SMALL BREED:** Cocker Spaniel  
**LARGE BREED:** Italian Spinone



**GOOD FOR NOT SHEDDING:**  
Irish Water Spaniel

# All about **Hounds**



## Need-to-know stats

**EXAMPLE:** Beagle  
**AVERAGE WEIGHT:** 11kg (1st 10lb)  
**EXERCISE:** More than two hours a day  
**GROOMING:** Once a week  
**LIFE SPAN:** 10 years +  
**SHEDS:** Yes

**H**ounds were bred to hunt. There are two types of hound within this group.

Sight hounds, such as the Whippet or Afghan, use their keen vision and speed to capture their prey.

Scent hounds, such as the Basset, Beagle or Foxhound, use their sensitive noses to follow their prey's scent over long distances.

Highly intelligent, hounds have a mind of their own and can be quite stubborn, so they

need a patient owner who is willing to put in time and effort to train them.

Hounds require a lot of exercise and are suited to big homes with plenty of space. They also need a securely fenced garden to stop them running off after anything that catches their interest – rabbits, squirrels or even nextdoor's cat.

Examples include the Bloodhound, Rhodesian Ridgeback, Greyhound, Saluki and Pharaoh Hound.

## Other breeds

**SMALL BREED:** Dachshund  
**LARGE BREED:** Irish Wolfhound



**GOOD FOR NOT SHEDDING:**  
Basenji

## All about Pastoral dogs



### Need-to-know stats

**EXAMPLE:** German Shepherd  
**AVERAGE WEIGHT:** 36kg (5st 9lb)  
**EXERCISE:** More than two hours a day  
**GROOMING:** More than once a week  
**LIFE SPAN:** 10 years +  
**SHEDS:** Yes

**T**he pastoral group includes herding dogs, which were traditionally bred to control groups of sheep or cattle. Accustomed to working in the fields and having space to run around in, pastoral dogs are best suited to houses with big gardens and plenty of open spaces nearby.

Pastoral breeds can be protective of people and property, making them good guard dogs. They are agile

and active, so need to be physically and mentally stimulated. Sporting activities, such as dog agility, competitive obedience or flyball are all ideal for these breeds.

Although pastoral dogs tend to have hardy weatherproof coats, they still require regular grooming.

Examples include the Border Collie, Old English Sheepdog, Rough Collie, Pembroke Corgi and Lancashire Heeler.

### Other breeds

**SMALL BREED:** Cardigan Corgi  
**LARGE BREED:** Pyrenean Mountain Dog  
**GOOD FOR NOT SHEDDING:** Hungarian Puli (right)



## All about Terriers



### Need-to-know stats

**EXAMPLE:** Border Terrier  
**AVERAGE WEIGHT:** 7kg (1st 1lb)  
**EXERCISE:** Up to an hour a day  
**GROOMING:** More than once a week  
**LIFE SPAN:** 12 years +  
**SHEDS:** Yes

**T**erriers are known for their feisty and energetic personalities. They were originally bred to hunt vermin, so they may not get along well with other smaller pets.

They love digging for their prey, so are probably best kept away from your vegetable patch – unless you want it dug, of course!

Terriers are also good at squeezing through small spaces, making them great

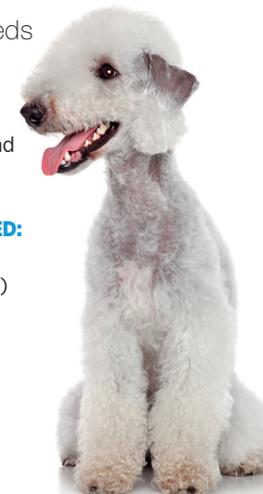
escape artists – they will need a securely fenced garden.

Terriers tend to be smaller than other breeds, making them suitable for smaller homes. Don't be fooled by their size, however, as they will still require plenty of exercise.

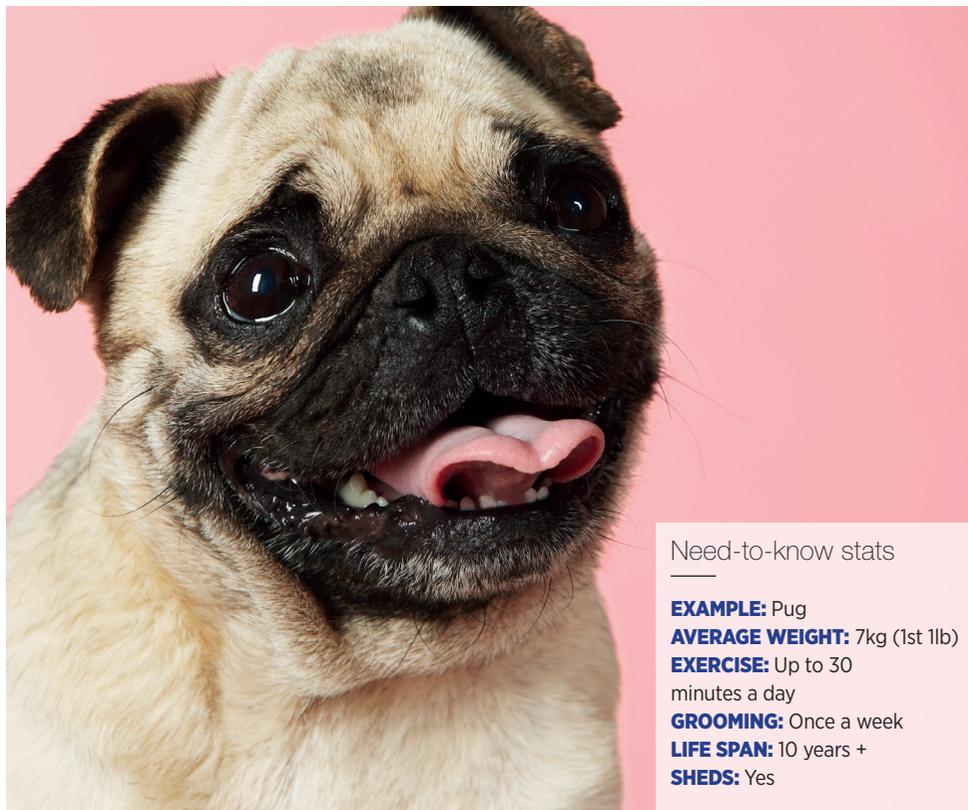
Examples of terrier breeds include the Scottish Terrier, Staffordshire Bull Terrier, Norfolk Terrier, Fox Terrier, Airedale Terrier, Parson Russell Terrier and the Dandie Dinmont.

### Other breeds

**SMALL BREED:** West Highland White Terrier  
**LARGE BREED:** Bedlington Terrier (right)  
**GOOD FOR NOT SHEDDING:** Sealyham Terrier



## All about **Toy dogs**



### Need-to-know stats

**EXAMPLE:** Pug  
**AVERAGE WEIGHT:** 7kg (1st 1lb)  
**EXERCISE:** Up to 30 minutes a day  
**GROOMING:** Once a week  
**LIFE SPAN:** 10 years +  
**SHEDS:** Yes

**T**oy dogs were bred as companion or lap dogs, meaning they are usually very friendly and make good family pets. Their small size makes them suitable pets for people who live in flats and smaller houses.

Although toy dogs tend to need far less exercise than larger breeds, they will still need a daily walk.

Toy breeds crave companionship and love attention, so are not suitable

for homes where they will be left alone for long periods of time.

Highly intelligent, toy breeds are great at learning tricks and can make very obedient pets. Examples include the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Australian Silky Terrier, Yorkshire Terrier, Pekingese and Pomeranian.



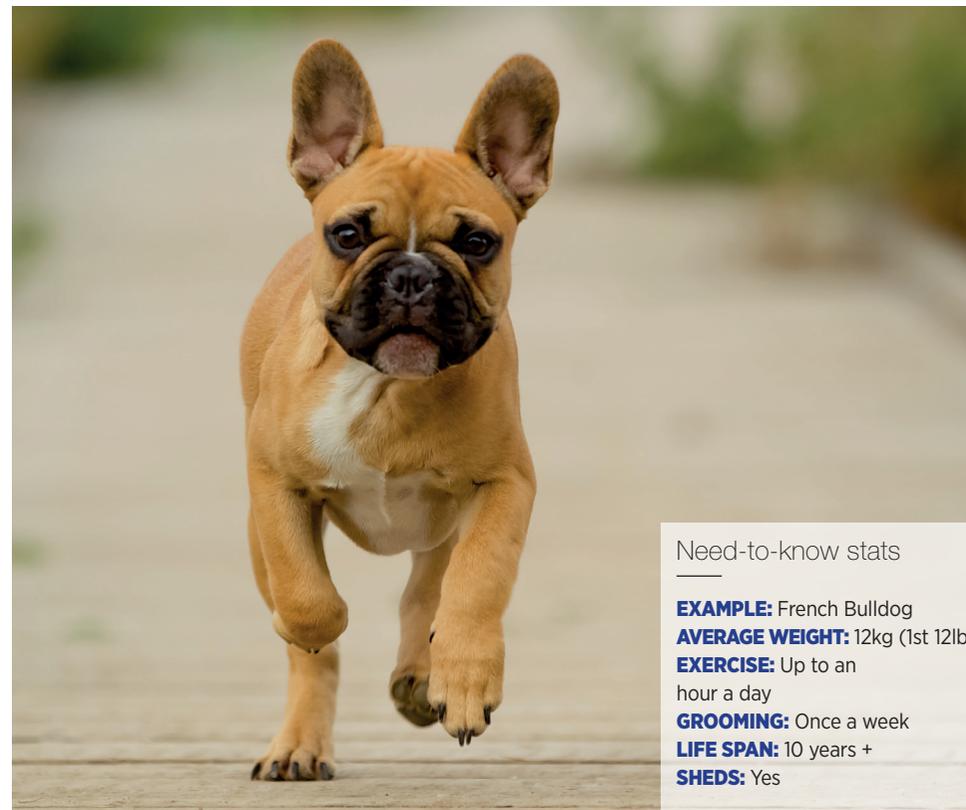
Other breeds

**GOOD FOR NOT SHEDDING:** Chinese Crested

**SMALL BREED:** Chihuahua (left)

**LARGE BREED:** Löwchen

## All about **Utility dogs**



### Need-to-know stats

**EXAMPLE:** French Bulldog  
**AVERAGE WEIGHT:** 12kg (1st 12lb)  
**EXERCISE:** Up to an hour a day  
**GROOMING:** Once a week  
**LIFE SPAN:** 10 years +  
**SHEDS:** Yes

**T**he utility group is composed of breeds that do not fit easily into other categories.

Utility means 'fitness for purpose' and the group contains a variety of breeds originally bred to do a specific job rarely needed today.

For example, Dalmatians were once trained as fire dogs. They would run in front of the horse-drawn fire engines to clear the path and guide the horses to the fires.

And Poodles were originally bred as water retrievers and were commonly used in duck hunting.

The breeds in this group vary widely in size and characteristics, but they will all require daily exercise and regular grooming. For more information about the individual breeds, visit the Kennel Club website: [thekennelclub.org.uk](http://thekennelclub.org.uk).

Other examples of utility dogs include the Shih Tzu, Bulldog and Keeshond.

Other breeds

**GOOD FOR NOT SHEDDING:** Miniature Schnauzer

**SMALL BREED:** German Spitz

**LARGE BREED:** Akita (right)



## All about **Working dogs**



### Need-to-know stats

**EXAMPLE:** Boxer  
**AVERAGE WEIGHT:** 25kg (3st 13lb)  
**EXERCISE:** At least two hours a day  
**GROOMING:** Once a week  
**LIFE SPAN:** 10 years +  
**SHEDS:** Yes

**D**ogs in the working group were traditionally used as guard and rescue dogs. Working dogs tend to be large, so are better suited to big houses with equally big gardens. They also require a lot of exercise, so owners need to be active.

Although working dogs can be incredibly obedient, their size and strength can sometimes make them unsuitable for homes with smaller children.

With a long life span (usually more than ten years), it is important to consider how you will be able to manage a large, powerful dog in the years to come.

Popular working dogs include the Dobermann, Rottweiler, Great Dane, Siberian Husky and Bernese Mountain Dog.

Other breeds

**GOOD FOR NOT SHEDDING:**

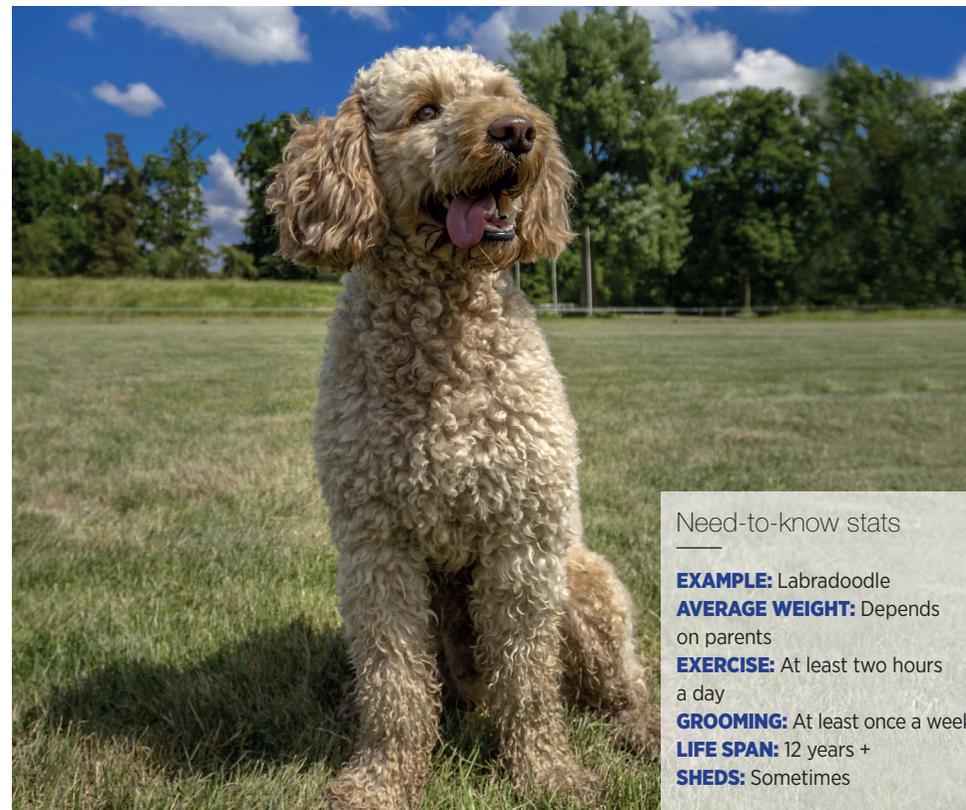
Giant Schnauzer

**SMALL BREED:** Bullmastiff



**LARGE BREED:**  
St Bernard

## All about **Mixed breeds**



### Need-to-know stats

**EXAMPLE:** Labradoodle  
**AVERAGE WEIGHT:** Depends on parents  
**EXERCISE:** At least two hours a day  
**GROOMING:** At least once a week  
**LIFE SPAN:** 12 years +  
**SHEDS:** Sometimes

**M**ixed or crossbreeds are just that – dogs that have been bred from parents of two different breeds or parents that are a mixture of several breeds.

When buying or rehoming a crossbreed, it is important to remember that you cannot predict which characteristics the dog will inherit from each parent. If you know the mix of breeds present in the dog, it is advisable to research them all, so that you are

aware of the traits it could potentially inherit.

In recent years, so-called ‘designer dogs’ have become popular. These are the result of crossing two different pure-bred dogs to create a hybrid with the aim of giving it the desirable traits from each breed.

When Labradoodles first became popular, it was commonly thought that they would be ideal pets for people who wanted a dog with the temperament of a Labrador

but that didn’t moul. However, genetics can be unpredictable and many people were disappointed because their Labradoodle didn’t inherit the Poodle’s coarse coat.

Popular crossbreeds so far include Labradoodle (Labrador + Poodle), Puggle (Pug + Beagle), Cockerpoo (Cocker + Poodle) and Schnoodle (Miniature Schnauzer + Poodle).



## Buying a puppy

Dedicated breeders are keen to see their puppies go to good homes. Here's how to spot the less reputable...

**C**are must be taken when buying a puppy. Look for a reputable breeder with the welfare of the dogs their primary concern, and avoid backyard breeders and puppy farms that are driven only by profit. Puppy farms tend to sell through online listings, local newspapers and ads in shop windows.

### Puppy farm warning signs

**The seller has a large number of dogs for sale.** If you notice a seller keeps advertising new litters of dogs, often of different breeds, it's a clear sign of a large-scale breeding programme.

**Unwillingness to meet at the puppy's home.** Many less reputable sellers will suggest meeting at a halfway point in a public space. You should

always insist on seeing the puppy in its home.

**Other dogs are not present when you meet the puppy.** You should meet the puppy with its mother and litter mates.

**Lack of knowledge.** Many puppy farms raise lots of different breeds and are not knowledgeable about the dogs they are selling.

**The seller does not take an interest in your circumstances.** A responsible breeder will want to know that their dog is going to a good home.

**The mother dog is not affectionate towards her owner.** If you notice that the puppy's mother is not particularly friendly towards her owner it can be an indication that she is not a well-cared-for family pet.

### Kennel Club Assured Breeders

For pedigree dogs, the Kennel Club has a list of accredited breeders under the Assured Breeder Scheme. This is in place to ensure puppies have the best chance of leading a healthy, happy life and that parent dogs are treated well.

If pedigree is less important to you, contact the breed club for that dog – there's a list on the Kennel Club website. Or contact your local shelter.

### A REPUTABLE BREEDER WILL...

- ◆ Ask questions about you and your home
- ◆ Allow you to see the puppy's mother and litter mates
- ◆ Be knowledgeable about the specific breed
- ◆ Always be willing to take a dog back if things don't work out

 [See thekennelclub.org.uk/breeding for more](http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/breeding-for-more)

**Don't get tricked by paperwork.** The Kennel Club website has details of what to expect – including contract of sale, vaccination certificates etc.

**Money is the main focus.** If the dealer stresses the importance of a large deposit, insists on cash only or their main concern seems to be whether you can pay for the dog – this should ring alarm bells.

## Rehoming a rescue dog

It's hugely rewarding giving a new home to a rescue dog. Don't be put off by stories that all these dogs have behavioural issues – many are looking for love and company too. These dogs deserve another chance: why not give them one?

### Why choose a rescue dog?

Puppies are cute, but they also demand a lot of attention and commitment, and that's not for everyone. Rehoming an older dog may be much more appealing to someone who's not quite so energetic and doesn't want their furniture – or their shoes! – chewed.

Most rescue dogs will already be house-trained and many of them will know some basic commands.

### Where to find your rescue dog

If you're planning to adopt a rescue dog there are many shelters all around the country. **You can contact your local council, your local branch of Dogs Trust or the RSPCA.** They will often have listings online with photographs and information about dogs in their care.

If you are looking for a specific breed, you can go to [thekennelclub.org.uk/breeding](http://thekennelclub.org.uk/breeding), click on Breed Information Centre, select a breed and use the 'find a rescue dog' tool. Or

you can get in touch with the club for that specific breed.

There are also specialist rehoming charities, such as Greyhound Rescue and Rehome a Guide Dog. See our useful links on page 16 for further details.



Most rescue dogs will already be housetrained and many of them will understand some basic commands

### Adopting a rescue dog

- ◆ Be prepared for a home check by the shelter or charity – this is to ensure the dog will be well looked after.
- ◆ Think carefully about the breed that will suit you and your lifestyle.
- ◆ Find out as much as possible about the dog's history.
- ◆ Ask the kennel staff or foster home about the dog's personality.
- ◆ Be aware that everyday items may provoke a reaction from a mistreated dog.
- ◆ Remember that it takes time to develop a bond: allow time for your new dog to settle in.
- ◆ Get your dog used to your routine and house rules and you will see a wagging tail in no time.

# Bringing your new dog home

Follow our tips for a successful introduction



## Set some house rules

Get everyone in the house to agree on rules. Don't give conflicting messages and confuse your new pet.

## Keep calm

Although you may be excited, don't fuss over the dog or raise your voice. Some dogs may be nervous or frightened. Gently stroke your pet to reassure it.

## Build trust

Don't force your new dog to interact with you; let the dog approach you. It can take a while to build a bond.

## Plan your dog's diet

Find out what your dog has been eating and how often. A sudden change in diet may upset its stomach,

Don't force your new dog to interact with you. It can take a while to build a bond

## Before your dog arrives

Plan where your new dog will sleep. The kitchen or utility room is a good choice. Have a bed ready and waiting, along with a bowl of water, a toy and a blanket or jumper with your scent on it.

If you're planning to use an indoor kennel or crate, have this in place, too.

## Start toilet training

Before bringing your new dog indoors, walk it around the garden and allow it to go to the toilet, and praise it when it does. Even house-trained dogs can be thrown off-track when surrounded by new smells, so don't get angry if there are accidents.



so wait for a few days before introducing your preferred food, a little at a time.

## Stick to your routine

Initially it's tempting to spend every minute with your dog, but get it used to your normal routine as soon as possible.

## Stay safe out walking

Keep your dog on a lead in parks and exercise spaces until you are sure it will come back when called.

## Visit your vet

It's always worth taking your new pet for a health check and advice about inoculations, flea and worm treatments, micro-chipping and neutering. ♦



Planning a long journey with a dog? Visit [drivingwithdogs.co.uk](http://drivingwithdogs.co.uk) for lots of useful tips

## 10 tips for dog-proofing your home...

- ◆ Tidy up and pick everything up off the floor.
- ◆ Tuck away power chords that could be chewed through.
- ◆ Make sure all your kitchen and bathroom cupboards are closed.
- ◆ Fix broken tiles, floorboards and skirting to prevent your new dog chewing.
- ◆ Make sure clean laundry and expensive items of clothing are out the way.
- ◆ If you don't want your dog going upstairs then put in a stair gate.
- ◆ Provide a safe, quiet space for your dog. Many shelters suggest an indoor kennel or crate.
- ◆ Check garden gates are closed and that there is no space for a dog to crawl under.
- ◆ Make sure your fence is tall enough to stop your dog jumping over.
- ◆ Remove hazards in the garden such as slug pellets, paint, insecticides and antifreeze.

## Useful links

It's important to do your research first: the websites below are good places to start

**THE KENNEL CLUB**  
[www.thekennelclub.org.uk](http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk)

**BLUE CROSS**  
[www.bluecross.org.uk](http://www.bluecross.org.uk)

**DOGS TRUST**  
[www.dogstrust.org.uk](http://www.dogstrust.org.uk)

**RSPCA**  
[www.rspca.org.uk](http://www.rspca.org.uk)

**BATTERSEA DOGS AND CATS HOME**  
[www.battersea.org.uk](http://www.battersea.org.uk)

**GREYHOUND RESCUE**  
[www.greyhoundrescue.co.uk](http://www.greyhoundrescue.co.uk)

**REHOME A GUIDE DOG**  
[www.guidedogs.org.uk](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk)

**OLDIES CLUB - OLDER DOGS NEEDING HOMES**  
[www.oldies.org.uk](http://www.oldies.org.uk)

**SAGA PET INSURANCE**  
[www.saga.co.uk/pet](http://www.saga.co.uk/pet)





[SAGA.CO.UK/MAGAZINE/PETS](http://SAGA.CO.UK/MAGAZINE/PETS)

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