

THE HAPPY PET HANDBOOK

The **Better Cities For Pets**[™] guide to keeping
pets happy, healthy and well-behaved, so you
can enjoy pet-friendly places together.



**Includes over 50
responsible pet
ownership tips!**



Did you know over 90 million households now have pets in the United States? We're a part of so many families! And we love the chance to be with our people at home and out in the world.

To keep us happy and healthy, and make sure we all have a great time together, check out these tips:

Page 3: How to be a responsible pet owner

Page 7: How to be a good pet neighbor

Page 12: How to speak dog

Want to learn more? **The Better Cities For Pets™** program is working to make cities more pet-friendly and help people make responsible choices for their pets and the people around them. Visit **[BetterCitiesForPets.com](https://www.bettercitiesforpets.com)**.

HOW TO BE A RESPONSIBLE PET OWNER

“We love being part of your family! But we need your help to live safe, happy lives. Before you bring home a pet, be sure you’re ready for the responsibility that comes with us.”



TAKE CARE OF US

We need daily care! Please be sure to think through how you'll provide the care that's needed.

- **Diet** – we need an appropriate, quality diet and plenty of water.
- **Grooming** – plan to dedicate time to regular grooming, including brushing, teeth-cleaning and nail-trimming.
- **Exercise** – give us plenty of exercise, such as daily walks for dogs and active play for cats.
- **Socialization** – this is especially important for dogs. We love time with other dogs, and need lots of positive experiences with other pets and people while we're young and learning.
- **Identification** – pets should wear collars with tags and be microchipped, so we can get home quickly if we're lost.



CHOOSE THE RIGHT PET

Pick a pet that fits your life.

- **Exercise needs** – if you want a furry friend but don't want to take a dog for regular walks, a cat might be a great choice.
- **Size** – if you live in a small space, consider a pet that will fit comfortably and still have plenty of room for the healthy play that all pets need.
- **Personality** – if you're gone at work all day, consider a more laid-back pet who will be happy without as much activity. But all pets need stimulation, so plan for that, such as hiring a dog walker or a pet sitter to visit for playtime.

KEEP US HEALTHY

With quality health care, you can potentially help us live a longer, healthier life.

- **Vet visits** – take us to the vet for regular checkups.
- **Preventive care** – get vaccinations and preventive care.
- **Dental care** – take care of our teeth, both in consultation with your vet and by brushing our teeth at home.
- **Grooming** – groom us to minimize shedding and make sure you catch issues like ticks, skin irritations or other problems.
- **Nutrition** – feed us the right amount of quality food and treats to keep us healthy while avoiding obesity.



GIVE US ATTENTION

Just like people, we need interaction to make us happy.

- **Love and praise** – give us positive reinforcement when we behave well.
- **Activity** – we get bored if we don't have activities for our minds and bodies. Toys and exercise help!
- **Encouragement** – don't overuse treats, but do reward us with something we love like a treat, toy or cuddle.
- **Space** – we need our own safe space. We might follow you around to be near you, but we also need our own place where we can go when we need a quiet rest.

HOW TO BE A GOOD PET NEIGHBOR

“Pets make communities better. We take you for healthy walks and give you an excuse to stop and chat, building social connections. To make sure everyone sees the benefits of pets, be sure we’re being good neighbors!”



CLEAN UP

Forgetting to clean up pet waste can mean unpleasant surprises for your neighbors. They'll like us (and you!) better if you do your duty when we do ours.

- **Do it every time** – always clean up pet waste!
- **Dispose properly** – put used waste bags in the appropriate garbage bins. Don't assume it's okay to put them in a neighbor's bin.
- **Be prepared** – carry extra waste bags when we go for a walk.
- **Pick the right place** – don't let us go into a neighbor's yard or garden.
- **Clean up inside, too** – you can avoid lasting issues by cleaning up stains when they happen and staying on top of regular chores like carpet cleaning.

FOLLOW THE RULES

Follow any requirements set by your local government, homeowners association or landlord. Breaking them could put us all at risk.

- **Licensing** – be sure we have all required vaccinations and licenses.
- **Restrictions** – don't have more than the allowed number of pets.
- **Supervision** – don't leave us home alone too long, which can lead to acting out.

ALWAYS USE A LEASH

Most communities require that dogs be on a leash. Even when it's not required, it's a good idea to protect us, our surroundings and those we meet along the way.

- **For us** – it gives you a way to control us if we get over-excited.
- **For others** – keeping us leashed makes your neighbors more comfortable until they get to know us.
- **For control** – it helps you keep hold of us if we see something we want to chase, like a squirrel or bike.
- **For protection** – it means you can guide us away to help us avoid getting close to something dangerous.



AVOID DAMAGE

Being a good neighbor also means minimizing the damage left behind. No matter where we live, but especially in a rental property, train us to manage these behaviors.

- **Scratching** – this is a normal, instinctive behavior for cats. We need it to feel healthy and safe. So, get us a scratching post and teach us to use it.
- **Digging** – dogs may instinctively “dig” to bury toys or burrow down for a cozy sleep. We do it outside in the yard and sometimes on furniture in the house. Train us where it’s okay to scratch and where it’s not.
- **Chewing** – don’t let us chew on plants, cords or other items that could be harmful. Give us chew toys instead!



TRAIN US FOR GOOD BEHAVIOR

All pets need guidance. Help make sure we don't disturb others.

- **Learn cues** – make sure dogs follow cues like “sit,” “stay,” “come” and “drop it.”
- **Get help** – explore a professional training course if needed to be sure you can control us when necessary.
- **Socialize us** – help us learn how to act around other pets, and people too.
- **Establish rules** – be sure we know how to behave, and obey cues to stop when we're behaving badly. Also, remember to reward us when we have been good!
- **Be kind** – let us know when we've done something wrong, but never lose your temper or punish us when you're mad. Training should be fun and consistent to help us learn.
- **Keep the noise down** – train us to minimize barking, whining, scratching and other noisy activity.
- **Allow play** – let us blow off steam. Give us safe opportunities to get rid of excess energy — like running around at the dog park — to help us behave well the rest of the day.
- **Keep watch** – never leave us unattended outside the home, even in our yard or a common area at an apartment complex. Always keep an eye on us to keep us and others safe.

HOW TO SPEAK DOG

“Dogs use our whole bodies to communicate. When we go out to play together, knowing what we’re saying will help you keep us and others safe. Here’s how to interpret what we’re trying to tell you about how we feel.”

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CALM

Look for these signs, but still be careful not to stand over me, which might make me anxious. And, don't put your face too close to any dog you don't know.

- Wagging or still tail
- Open, relaxed mouth
- Ears up or natural
- Weight evenly distributed



PLAYFUL

Dogs play-bow to each other as a sign that we want to play. It looks a little like the downward-dog yoga pose. When I'm in this happy, playful mood, I might get excited and knock down smaller kids.

- Front legs down
- Back end in the air
- Tail up or wagging
- Mouth open



SCARED

When I'm nervous or scared, these are signs I might show that signal you should give me space.

- Tail low or between legs
- Fidgeting or shifting weight back and forth
- Ears pulled back or flat
- Head down or crouching
- Mouth closed, panting or licking lips
- Blinking rapidly, avoiding eye contact or showing whites of eyes



RELAXED

No matter how I look, it's better not to greet a dog without asking their owner first. Still, these are signs I'm probably relaxed.

- Sitting or lying in a comfortable-looking position
- Eyes open but not wide or blinking frequently
- Relaxed body
- Mouth open and relaxed



AGGRESSIVE

Watch for these signs that I'm feeling threatened or thinking about picking a fight. Back away slowly and avoid eye contact with me. Don't turn your back or run.

- Standing still or rigid
- Barking, growling or showing my teeth
- Lunging at people or other dogs
- Hair raised on my back



HELP ME FEEL SAFE

These are things people might do that could make me feel threatened. Please try to avoid them!

- Making sudden movements or approaching me too quickly.
- Taking away my food or toys.
- Disturbing me when I'm sleeping.
- Lifting or trying to pick me up.
- Touching my ears, feet or belly.
- Leaning or looming over me.
- Putting your face near my face.
- Staring at me.
- Petting me on the head — always pet an unfamiliar dog on the neck or chest so we can see you coming.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT

With the tips in this booklet, you're on your way to a great life with your pet. Please help share these insights and advocate for pet-friendly cities so everyone can enjoy the benefits pets bring.

Visit **BetterCitiesForPets.com** to:

- Assess your city and share your thoughts
- Download the Playbook for Pet-Friendly Cities
- Get toolkits on topics like making pets welcome
- Join our mailing list to stay in touch

The **Better Cities For Pets™** program is speaking up to make cities more pet-friendly, so you can have a happier, healthier life with your pet. Join the movement: **BetterCitiesForPets.com**

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