

ALL ABOUT
Dogs! 



The Right Leash

Especially in populated areas, having the right leash is paramount. In fact, it's the law. Leash laws help protect community members from being approached by dogs.

Different from city to city, they also aid in keeping dogs safe from sprinting into traffic or ending up away from home. The right leash can also be a critical tool in training your dog and improving his behavior.

Meeting with your veterinarian may be the first step in determining which option will work best for your dog. Leashes are available in many lengths and materials, and are available for varying sizes of dogs as well as for whatever function you're hoping to get out of your leash.

RETRACTABLE LEASHES

These spring-loaded leashes allow your dog a bit more freedom on his walk. If used correctly, you can effectively control your dog on a retractable leash by deciding exactly how much of the leash is extended. There is usually a button on the handle that lets you determine cord length.

But with more freedom for your dog comes more responsibility for you. Try not to walk next to streets or other potentially dangerous areas. By the time you realize your dog could be in the way of an oncoming car or another territorial animal, it could take you too much time to retract the leash to a safe length.



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EMERGENCIES ONLY: SLIP LEAD

A slip lead, which looks like a regular flat leash with a metal ring on one end, is another popular form of

leashing. After passing the handle end of the leash through the metal ring, you put the loop over your dog's head. This allows you to walk your dog on a leash when he's not wearing his collar.

The American Humane Society warns dog owners to never use a slip lead if a regular collar and leash are available. Over-pulling on the handle of a slip lead can actually damage

your dog's windpipe or neck.

The society recommends using slip leads in emergency situations only, including when your dog's regular collar malfunctions or breaks.

The American Cocker Spaniel

Small in stature but big in personality, the American Cocker Spaniel has evolved into one of the most recognizable dogs in the United States.

The breed ranks among the top 25 most popular breeds and has a long history of dominance in American Kennel Club rankings. The spaniel was ranked No. 1 from 1936 to 1952, when Beagles took over the top spot, according to the AKC.

As far back as the 14th century, there is mention of the Spanyell, which would later be divided into water and land spaniels, states the AKC. Cockers are the smallest of the spaniels, and the American Cocker is much different-looking than its original rendering as the English Cocker Spaniel.

Here are other tidbits from the AKC on the American version:

- Known as the smallest member of the sporting-dog family.
- Has been exhibited in the United States since the early 1880s.
- The acceptable color varieties within the Cocker breed are black, black with tan points and parti-color.

FINDING AND OWNING A COCKER SPANIEL

The American Spaniel Club recommends using a reputable breeder to find your Cocker Spaniel. Working with a quality breeder affords you the opportunity work with an expert on grooming, veterinary care, health issues and diet – all specific to the Cocker breed.

Once you find the perfect Cocker Spaniel, be sure you're ready to devote plenty of energy to grooming and exercising your new addition. The breed requires bathing, brushing and trimming about every two weeks, according to the American Spaniel Club.

And that is for short-haired varieties. Long-hair Cocker Spaniels require weekly brushing bathing and trimming for optimal coat health and appearance. It is important to keep up on this regular care to keep shedding to a minimum, as well.



Feeding Your Dog

Size, energy level and pet breed. All of these factors and more play vital roles in determining the appropriate way to feed your dog.

With so many breeds, shapes and types of dogs, there isn't a one-size fits all feeding strategy. It is important to consult with your veterinarian to determine the best times of day to feed your dog and the healthiest types of food to offer.

FREE-CHOICE FEEDING

This option for feeding your dog may be the easiest one for both owner and dog, but it can also lead to obesity issues if your dog isn't disciplined enough to eat appropriate portions.

Your dog may be overeating if you choose to simply fill up the food bowl every time you notice it's empty. This can lead not only to an unhealthy eating habit, but also a money-draining method that sends you back to the pet store more often than necessary.

Remember, you are in charge of your dog's eating schedule. Many dogs can function just fine off two meals a day spread out across eight to 12 hours. This will not fit the needs of every dog, however, so again make sure to consult your vet for expert guidance.

EARNING DINNER

One of the best ways to keep the weight off your dog is to make him earn his dinner. Set up a regular walk either before or after the final meal of the day. This can help offset his food intake while also getting him the workout needed to maintain the best health possible.

Putting the exercise before his meal can make a fun payoff for the end of his workout. No matter when you decide to offer the food, be sure to monitor your pet's eating habits to properly adjust the amount you put in the bowl.

LIMIT THE TREATS

Treats should always be given in moderation and should represent 5 percent or less of a dog's daily food intake, according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The rest of your dog's diet is recommended to come from a nutritionally complete dog food.

Treats can be a highly effective method of training your dog to learn new behaviors or tricks. But instead of giving Fido an entire treat, break it into smaller pieces. This will help make the treat last longer and get a little extra training out of your dog.



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Training Your Dog

Millions of dog owners every year decide to have their pets professionally trained. The benefits to having a well-trained dog are endless. Better behavior, attention and overall health just to name a few.

But with so many trainers claiming to be the best, how do you know you're choosing the right one?

Doing your homework is critical to finding the perfect dog-trainer situation. Start by asking friends and family members, and search online for certified trainers in your local areas. Many K-9 police officers spend their weekends training dogs and can be excellent sources for quickly improving an errant dog's behavior.

Knowing this information before you start the vetting process will tell you if trainers have the professional experience specific to your needs.

Be sure to understand the training fees and payment, as well as any documentation or proof of vaccinations you may have to provide prior to the classes.

What you wear to a training class is also important to consider. Go with tennis shoes and comfortable clothing instead of sandals or high heels.

PREPARING YOUR DOG

Before you even walk into the doors at your local dog-training facility, there are a few things that Fido should do:

- Eat only a light meal before training to ensure maximum energy and mobility.
- Make sure he is wearing the type of collar and leash specified by the trainer.
- Take care of any potty breaks so he doesn't need one during his course.

If you choose a group class instead of a private one, take the time to prepare your dog for interaction with peers and people. One of the most valuable aspects of working in groups is that doing so will help strengthen your dog's focus and ability to overcome distractions.

PREPARE YOURSELF

Be ready to answer basic questions about your dog and what you hope to accomplish during the training sessions. Are you simply seeking a better-behaved dog or do you have more advanced goals such as competitive obedience or therapy work?



Boarding Your Dog

Have a big family vacation coming up? If can't to bring Fido, you may consider boarding your dog while you're away. Your veterinarian's office or a quality kennel can provide your dog with the necessary grooming, exercise and overall care for an extended period of time.

Leaving your dog at a kennel can be challenging, especially if this is your first time doing so. You may have concerns about your dog's emotional well-being within a new environment. Maybe you're worried about his ability to get along with other dogs or kennel staff.

Bring up these and other concerns when inquiring about local kennel pricing and policies to ensure your dog is left in the best care possible during your trip.

DON'T JUST CALL ... VISIT

There is only so much you can find out about a local kennel through a phone call. Visiting the kennel can be a much more effective way of helping guide your decision. Here are some things to look for during your visit:

- **Cleanliness:** Check both the indoor and outdoor areas for a sneak peek into how well the kennel staff keeps up on messes.

- **Odors:** Are there any overwhelming odors? Is there proper ventilation?

- **Security:** This especially pertains to the outdoor areas. Are all fences secure and tall enough to keep your dog safely within the designated area?



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- **Temperature:** Is the inside climate-controlled? Conditions that are too hot or too cold can make for an uncomfortable experience for your dog.

MAKE THINGS COMFORTABLE

You can help make give your dog a little touch of home while you're away by leaving behind

a few of his favorite toys or snacks. Also try to make the drop-off a positive experience for both you and your dog.

If you're having emotional issues leaving your dog in

someone else's care, try not to pass off any of your upset feelings to your pooch. Try not to linger around and make sure to use a positive, upbeat tone to say your goodbyes.

Finding a Good Vet

Every quality dog-owner relationship also includes the guidance and advice from an expert veterinarian. You will rely on your vet for regular checkups, as well as any questions or concerns that arise during your time as a dog owner.

It is important to find a practice you can feel comfortable bringing your pets to for years to come.

Your first step in ensuring this is visiting the various vet offices within your area. Come prepared with specific

questions and any critical information regarding your pet's health history.

STAFF COURTESY

You should be able to tell just minutes into your visit if

you can expect quality, personalized service from your prospective vets. Do the front-desk receptionists greet you with a smile and friendly dispositions? Do they make eye contact with you and seem to genuinely care about your pet?

While visiting, try to meet as many vets, technicians and other staff members as possible. The more you know about who makes up the team of employees, the more comfortable you can feel in bringing your dog in for care.

PRICING

Ask your potential vets about costs for specific services, such as well-checks, flea treatments or basic surgery. Having a list of pricing information can help you determine if your budgetary requirements will be met, or if you need to do a bit more shopping around.

Some practices offer discounts for senior citizens or military veterans, so be sure to ask about any breaks you may receive. Families with multiple pets may also receive discounted pricing because of the extra business they bring in.

24/7 CARE

Many vet offices feature 24/7 care for their clients, which can help give dog owners peace of mind in the face of an emergency. Ask your prospective vet the practice's policy on after-hour care, as well as extra charges that may come along with it.

Also be sure to ask their processes for an emergency call. Do you call the regular office's phone number or an emergency one? Will your vet make emergency house calls or do you bring your dog into the office in an emergency?

Be clear on all processes to weigh their 24/7 services while making your decision.



Lost Your Dog?

There are few things worse to dog owners than losing their beloved pet. Many pet owners rely on a collar with tags that contain contact information in the case of a dog wandering off a bit too far.

But what if your dog's collar breaks? What if he somehow chews it off? This can be a common occurrence that makes a separation between owner and dog challenging.

Whether your dog runs away or is picked up by a well-meaning stranger trying to take care of what looks to be a stray, you can do certain things to improve the chances of bringing home man's best friend.

MAKE A SIGN

Making a sign for your front yard, nearby trees or electric poles will help announce your missing-dog situation to your neighbors. Be sure to check in with city hall to make sure you're not breaking any local ordinances on where to hang signs.

Be sure to include this key information on your sign:

- The words, 'LOST DOG' in big, bold letters.
- The words, 'Family Pet' somewhere on the sign will.
- Your dog's breed, age and color.
- Your phone number.

CALL LOCAL SHELTERS

Picture your dog dirty, limping along the road and without a collar. A passer-by may become concerned with your dog's health and decide to take matters into their own hands. This usually means picking up the dog and taking it to a local animal shelter.

Once you realize your dog is missing, call local shelters to check on recent drop-offs. Be ready with a detailed description of your dog and the day he went missing. Shelter staff will be able to match the two together and tell you if any of their dogs match what you're describing.

PUBLICIZE A REWARD

If you're willing and able, a financial reward can be a big incentive for prompting your neighbors to keep their eyes open for your dog. Put this information on your sign or publicize it with an advertisement in the local newspaper.

Be specific on what will actually earn a reward, whether it is for information leading to the return of your dog or an actual drop-off. Neighbors, family or friends may end up turning down your reward, but your effort in making one available can end up making a big difference.

