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Guides, comparisons & trusted resources — always independent.

First 30 Days Calendar

Your day-by-day guide to the first month with your new dog.

Week 1: Arrival & Settling In (Days 1–7)

DAY	TASK
Day 1	Bring dog home. Keep it calm — no visitors. Show water, food bowl, sleeping area.
Day 2	Short 10-min leash walk. Let dog sniff and explore at their pace.
Day 3	Introduce crate with door open. Toss treats inside. Never force.
Day 4	Begin name recognition — say name, reward with treat when they look at you.
Day 5	First 'sit' session — 3 minutes, 5 repetitions. End on success.
Day 6	Establish feeding schedule: same time, same place, same amount.
Day 7	Week 1 check: Is dog eating, drinking, eliminating normally? Any signs of stress?

Week 2: Routine & Basic Commands (Days 8–14)

DAY	TASK
Day 8	Schedule vet appointment if not already done (aim for Day 14–21).
Day 9	Practice 'sit' and 'stay' — 5 min sessions, twice daily.
Day 10	Introduce 'down' command. Lure with treat from sit position.
Day 11	Puppy-proof one room. Check for chew hazards, toxic plants, loose wires.
Day 12	Socialization walk — new street, new smells. Keep it positive.
Day 13	Practice recall ('come') in a small enclosed space. High-value treat reward.
Day 14	Week 2 check: Commands improving? Crate acceptance? Potty accidents decreasing?

Week 3: Socialization & Confidence (Days 15–21)

DAY	TASK
Day 15	Introduce car rides — short 5-min trip. Treat before and after.
Day 16	Meet one new friendly dog. Keep leashes loose. Watch body language.
Day 17	Grooming session: brush, check ears, handle paws. Reward throughout.
Day 18	Vet visit (if scheduled). Bring treats. Ask about vaccines, heartworm, flea prevention.

Day 19	Practice 'leave it' — place treat on floor, cover with hand, reward for ignoring.
Day 20	Longer walk (20–30 min). Practice loose-leash walking.
Day 21	Week 3 check: Socialization going well? Any resource guarding or fear signs?

Week 4: Building Independence (Days 22–30)

DAY	TASK
Day 22	Practice alone time — leave for 15 min. No big goodbye or hello.
Day 23	Introduce puzzle toy or Kong stuffed with kibble/peanut butter.
Day 24	Practice all 4 commands: sit, stay, down, come. 10-min session.
Day 25	Nail trim practice — touch paws daily. Reward. Trim 1–2 nails if calm.
Day 26	Visit a new environment: pet store, park, friend's yard.
Day 27	Extend alone time to 30–45 min. Calm departure and return.
Day 28–30	Month 1 complete! Schedule 6-week vet follow-up. Review: What's working? What needs work?

New Dog Shopping List

Must-haves before Day 1 and nice-to-haves for Week 2+

MUST-HAVES — Get Before Day 1

Food & Water

- Stainless steel food bowl
- Stainless steel water bowl
- Puppy/adult dog food (same brand as shelter/breeder)
- Treats for training (small, soft, high-value)

Sleeping & Crating

- Crate (wire or plastic) — sized for adult dog
- Crate pad or blanket
- Dog bed (washable cover)

Safety & ID

- Collar with ID tag (name + phone number)
- 6-foot leash
- Microchip (ask vet at first visit)

Hygiene

- Poop bags + dispenser
- Dog shampoo (puppy formula if under 1 year)
- Brush/comb (breed-appropriate)

NICE-TO-HAVES — Add in Week 2+

Training & Enrichment

- Clicker for training
- Puzzle toy (Kong, snuffle mat)
- Long-line leash (20–30 ft) for recall practice
- Treat pouch for training walks

Comfort & Play

- 2–3 chew toys (rotate to keep interest)
- Rope toy or tug toy
- Calming spray or pheromone diffuser (if anxious)

Health

- Flea/tick prevention (ask vet for recommendation)
- Dental chews or toothbrush kit
- First aid kit for dogs

Dog Ownership Expense Planner

Annual cost estimates for a typical dog owner in the US.

EXPENSE	FREQUENCY	LOW EST.	HIGH EST.	NOTES
Food	Monthly	\$30	\$120	Varies by size & brand
Vet — Annual Wellness	Yearly	\$150	\$400	Exam + core vaccines
Vet — Unexpected	Yearly avg	\$200	\$1,500	Budget \$500+ emergency fund
Dental Cleaning (Vet)	Every 1–3 yrs	\$0	\$400/yr	Under anesthesia; amortized
Flea/Tick Prevention	Monthly	\$10	\$30	Year-round in most climates
Heartworm Prevention	Monthly	\$8	\$20	Required in most US regions
Grooming	Monthly	\$0	\$80	\$0 if DIY; \$80 for full groom
Boarding/Pet Sitting	Per trip	\$25/night	\$85/night	Varies by city
Training Classes	One-time	\$100	\$300	Group class; private costs more
Toys & Treats	Monthly	\$15	\$50	
Pet Insurance	Monthly	\$30	\$80	Highly recommended
Licensing	Yearly	\$10	\$30	Required in most cities
ANNUAL TOTAL (est.)		\$1,400	\$5,500+	

■ Pro tip: Pet insurance is most affordable when purchased before your dog develops any conditions. The earlier you enroll, the lower the premium.

First Vet Visit Prep Guide

What to bring, what to expect, and what to ask.

What to Bring

- Vaccination records from breeder, shelter, or previous vet
- Stool sample (fresh, in a sealed bag — within 24 hours)
- List of current medications or supplements
- List of questions (use the section below)
- Treats your dog loves (for positive association with the vet)
- Your dog on a leash or in a carrier

What to Expect

Physical exam: Vet checks eyes, ears, teeth, heart, lungs, abdomen, skin, and joints.

Weight & vitals: Baseline weight recorded — important for medication dosing.

Vaccine review: Vet will confirm which vaccines are due or overdue.

Parasite screening: Fecal test checks for intestinal parasites.

Microchip check: Vet will scan for existing chip or recommend one.

Spay/neuter discussion: If not already done, vet will discuss timing.

Questions to Ask Your Vet

- What vaccines does my dog need now, and what's the schedule going forward?
- What flea, tick, and heartworm prevention do you recommend for our area?
- What should I feed my dog, and how much?
- When should I spay or neuter (if not already done)?
- Are there any breed-specific health concerns I should watch for?
- What are signs of illness I should watch for in the first few months?
- How often should I bring them in for wellness visits?
- Do you recommend pet insurance? Any brands you prefer?
- What's the best way to reach you for urgent questions between visits?

Vet Cost Ranges (US Average)

SERVICE	TYPICAL COST	NOTES
Annual wellness exam	\$50–\$150	Varies by location
Core vaccines (DHPP, Rabies)	\$75–\$200	First year higher (series)
Fecal test	\$25–\$55	
Heartworm test	\$35–\$75	
Microchip	\$25–\$50	One-time
Dental cleaning	\$300–\$800	Under anesthesia
Spay (female)	\$200–\$500	
Neuter (male)	\$150–\$400	

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This guide is for general educational purposes. Always consult your veterinarian for advice specific to your pet.