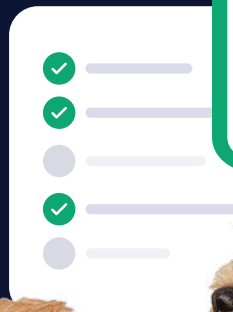


COMPLETE PUPPY GUIDE

Welcome to Puppy Parenthood

A comprehensive and easy-to-follow guide
to raising your newest addition to the family.

Includes interactive pages for vet notes,
trackers, checklists, and more.



pet insurance quotes



This Puppy Guide Belongs To

Puppy Name

Vet Details



Congratulations on Bringing Your New Puppy Home!

Whether you're a first-time puppy parent or have experience, this guide is designed to help you feel confident and prepared throughout your puppy's first year. Inside, you'll find helpful resources, interactive tools, and practical tips for supporting your puppy's health and well-being.

This guide is intended for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for regular veterinary care. It is designed to help you have more meaningful conversations with your veterinarian and their team about your puppy's needs.

Sincere thanks to Dr. Chan, DVM, for her thoughtful review and professional insight.

For professional advice, always consult a licensed veterinarian. All product names and trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

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You've Got a Puppy, Now What?

Bringing home a new puppy is an exciting time! A little preparation can go a long way to ensure you and your newest family member transition smoothly into your new life together. This chapter will help you set up your home, gather the right supplies, and plan for your puppy's first weeks of care.



1.1 Puppy-Proofing Your Home

Puppies explore the world with their mouths and paws. Before they arrive, look around your home from a puppy's point of view and identify any potential hazards (Madson, 2025).



Use the *Puppy-Proofing Checklist* on page 27 to make sure you've covered every room in your home.

1.2 Supplies Checklist

Having the essentials ready means you can focus on bonding with your puppy instead of running out to the store for last-minute supplies.



Use the *New Puppy Checklist* on page 27 to make sure you have everything you need and to keep track of your shopping.

1.3 Choosing a Veterinarian

You're already off to a great start by visiting a vet! Your veterinarian is in your corner to help keep your puppy healthy. Here's what to look for if you ever move or need to switch clinics:

- Clinics with convenient locations, emergency availability, and extended hours
- A welcoming, calm clinic space and a vet who listens, answers questions thoroughly, and explains options clearly
- Recommendations from trusted friends, family, or local pet owners

If you enroll in pet insurance, you shouldn't have to worry about gaps in care if you're traveling or need to change clinics. Most pet insurance plans in the U.S. allow you to visit any licensed veterinarian, so your puppy can get care wherever you are.

1.4 Your Puppy's First Year of Vet Visits

6–8 weeks	First exam, core vaccines (distemper, hepatitis, parainfluenza, parvovirus, adenovirus), flea/tick prevention, parasite screening/deworming, microchipping.
8–16 weeks	Booster core vaccines (leptospirosis after 12 weeks), weight check, continued parasite prevention, early vet check-ins. Discuss non-core vaccines important for your puppy's lifestyle.
3–6 months	Final puppy booster vaccines, rabies vaccine, weight check, teething/dental care, routine growth monitoring.
6–12 months	Spay/neuter (discuss with vet), weight check, dental check, transition to adult diet, ongoing parasite prevention.
12+ months	Annual wellness exam, weight check, dental cleaning, vaccine boosters as needed, lifelong weight/lifestyle monitoring.

Note: Sample chart summarized from Graham (n.d.) and Coleman (n.d.-a).



Use the *"Vet Notes"* section on page 28 to jot down notes during visits and stay on top of your puppy's shots and boosters with the *Treatment Tracker* on page 31.

1.5 Deciding on Puppy Insurance

Unexpected vet bills can be stressful, and puppies are prone to accidents and illnesses as they grow. Pet insurance can help you manage the costs associated with veterinarian care, giving you peace of mind.

When deciding on a pet insurance plan, take into account:

- What is and isn't covered (illness, accidents, routine care)
- Monthly premiums and deductibles
- Waiting periods before coverage starts

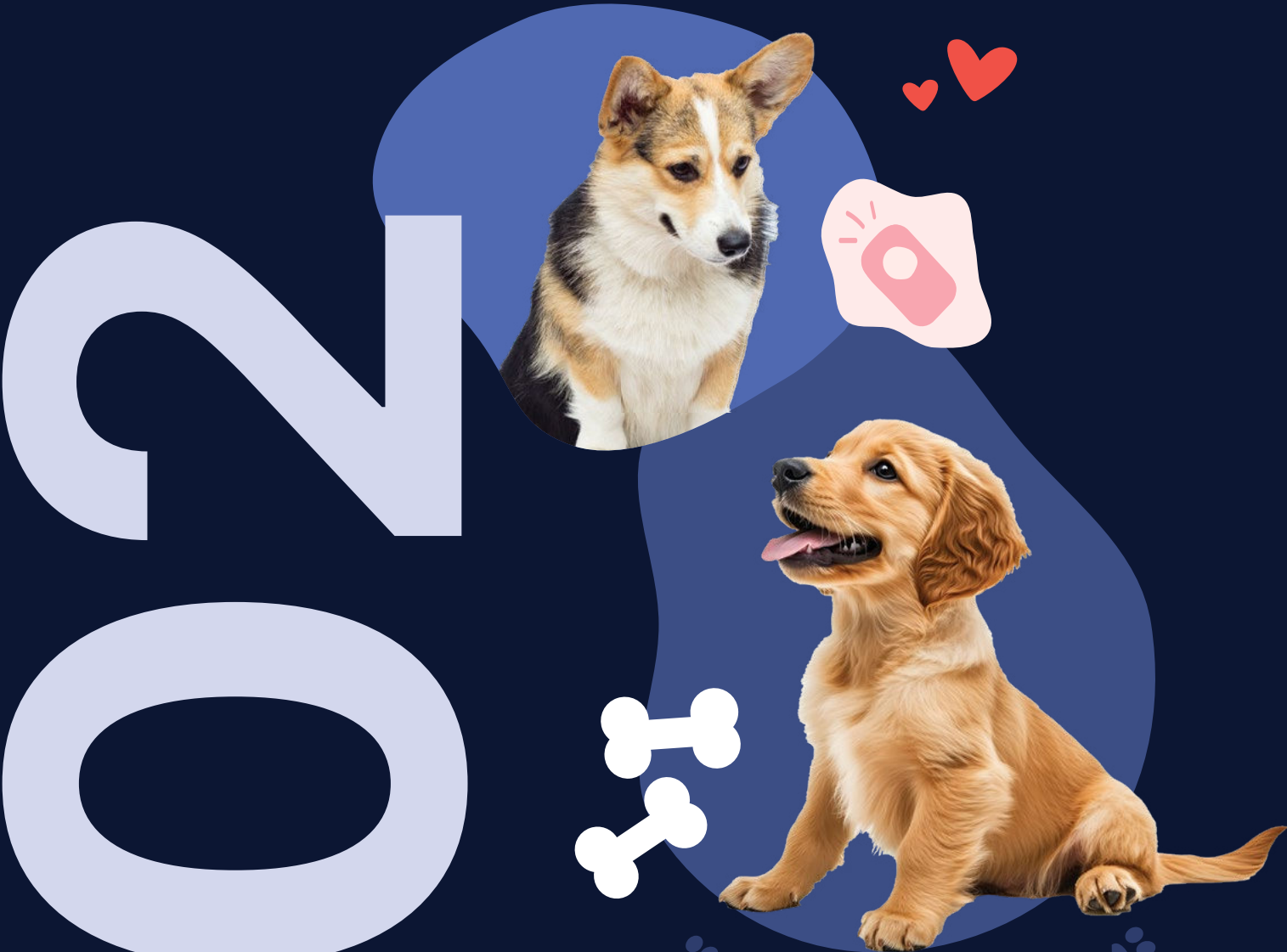


Not sure where to start? Scan the QR code with your phone to compare multiple insurers at [PetInsuranceQuotes.com](https://www.petinsurancequotes.com).



Getting to Know Your Puppy

Your new puppy is more than just cute. They're learning, growing, and figuring out the big, exciting world they've just entered. This chapter will help you understand their needs, build trust, and set a strong foundation for a happy life together.

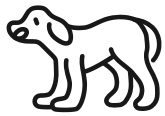


2.1 Settling in at Home

The first few days in a new home can be overwhelming for a puppy. Ease your new puppy's transition by allowing them to explore and offering gentle reassurance. Establish a consistent daily routine for feeding, potty breaks, play, training, and rest to help them feel secure — it'll make your puppy's life (and yours) easier (Bond Vet, 2023).

2.2 Understanding Puppy Body Language

Your puppy communicates more with their body than their bark. Learning to read these signals will help you respond to their needs and emotions.

Reading Dog Body Language		
		
Relaxed Loose body, wagging tail, soft eyes, natural ears, playful/comfortable.	Stressed Avoiding eye contact, panting/licking lips, ears back, low/tucked tail, lowered body.	Scared Trembling, cowering, hiding, growling, tightly tucked tail, pinned ears, whale eye.*
		
Alert Stiff body, ears forward, straight/slightly raised tail, fixed eyes, cautious approach/bark.	Appeasement Lowered head, avoiding direct eye contact/whale eye, licking lips/yawning.	Aggressive Growling, snarling, baring teeth, stiff-legged, raised hair, head raised, direct stare.

Note: Chart summarized from Bauhaus (2020), Gibeault (2025), and Schade (2024).



***What is whale eye?** "Whale eye" refers to when the whites of a dog's eyes are visible, often in a half-moon shape, as the dog slightly turns its head while maintaining eye contact (Racine, 2024).

2.3 Socialization Basics

Socialization is one of the most important parts of puppyhood. It means introducing your puppy to new people, animals, sounds, and environments in a safe, positive way.

The Best Time to Socialize a Puppy

Socialization is important for dogs of all ages. While you can start socializing a dog at any age, dogs older than 14 weeks will take more time to become socialized (Youngerman, 2019b).

According to the American Kennel Club (AKC), the ideal time to socialize your puppy is within their first 3 months of life. This is when puppies are most curious and open to new experiences that will shape their future as adults.

Why Socialization Matters

Positive exposure to different experiences early on in a dog's life has long-term benefits. Well-socialized puppies grow into confident, well-adjusted adult dogs. Without it, they may become fearful or reactive in unfamiliar situations (Youngerman, 2019b).

Introducing Socialization

Puppy socialization should be introduced carefully, taking into account both disease risk and opportunities for interaction. Puppies aren't fully vaccinated until about 16–18 weeks, so it's important to avoid high-traffic dog areas and consult a veterinarian about safe places and times for social outings.

Even after full vaccination, controlled one-on-one playdates with other vaccinated pets are recommended before allowing puppies to mingle freely with other dogs at busy parks (Rodgers & Cornett, 2025).



See the section on page 33 to track your puppy's new experiences and ensure they're getting a variety of safe introductions.

2.4 Sleep, Play, and Energy Levels

Puppies are full of energy one moment, then asleep the next. According to the American Kennel Club (AKC), most puppies need 18–20 hours of sleep per day to grow and stay healthy (Reisen, 2023). This number starts to decline to 12–16 hours when puppies hit the 3-month mark, then 10–14 hours around the 6-month mark, but it can vary by breed (Trupanion, 2024).

2.5 Teaching Your Puppy Their Name

Here’s a quick how-to on teaching your puppy their name (Purina US, 2025a).

What you’ll need:

- A quiet space with minimal distractions
- 5–10 small soft treats

How to do it:

- In a calm, distraction-free area, happily say your puppy’s name.
- Instantly praise and treat them the moment they look at you.
- Repeat 5–10 times in short sessions throughout the day, with at least a 30-minute break between sessions.



Avoid overusing your puppy’s name. Reserve it for positive experiences or when they are attentive/nearby to keep it a meaningful cue.



2.6 Early Training Commands

You can start basic training as soon as your puppy settles in — often within the first week. Keep sessions short, fun, and positive (Loos & Price, 2025).

Essential Commands	
	"Sit" Hold a treat above your puppy’s head; as their rear lowers, say "Sit," then reward.
	"Stay" Ask for a sit, show your palm, say "Stay." Step back, return, reward. Increase distance/duration.
	"Come" Crouch, open arms, say "Come" cheerfully. Reward immediately. Always positive.
	"Down" From sit, hold a treat to the floor and away. As they lie down, say "Down," then reward.
	"Leave It" Hold a treat, say "Leave it." When they stop trying, reward them with a different treat.

Note: Chart summarized from Gibeault (2024), Patterdale (2024), and Purina US (2025).

Positive Reinforcement

Immediately reward good behavior with treats, praise, or play. Ignore unwanted behavior; punishment damages trust. Consistency is key: everyone in the household must respond to behavior in the same way.

Common Mistakes

- Training for too long — puppies lose focus quickly
- Avoiding inconsistent cues or rules
- Expecting your puppy to respond after multiple commands instead of the first one

Caring for Your Puppy

Caring for a puppy can feel overwhelming at first, but breaking it down into manageable steps can make it easier. This chapter covers the essentials: from feeding and house training to grooming and emergency preparedness.





3.1 Feeding and Nutrition

Feeding Your Puppy: Getting Started

Start with 1–2 weeks’ worth of the food your puppy is already eating from their breeder, shelter, or rescue (Hooten, 2024). This helps prevent tummy troubles during the big move.

Choosing the Right Food

If you want to switch to a different diet, introduce it gradually over 7–10 days by mixing it with their current food. Discuss options with your vet and look for products that are approved by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO).

How Much to Feed by Age and Breed

Growing puppies need significantly more calories than adult dogs. As they mature into adulthood, they’ll need fewer calories. The exact amount of calories you’ll need to feed your pup will depend on your puppy’s breed, age, size, and activity level. Your veterinarian can give the most accurate feeding guidance for your pup.

How Long to Feed Your Dog Puppy Food

You can usually switch your dog from puppy food to adult food once they reach maturity — often around 80% of their adult weight (Ardente, 2025). Timing can vary by breed and individual growth, so check with your vet before starting the transition.

How to Transition Your Puppy to Adult Dog Food

When it’s time to switch your puppy to adult food, do so gradually to prevent stomach upset. Here’s an example transitional feeding plan:

- Days 1–2: 3/4 puppy food + 1/4 adult food
- Days 3–4: 1/2 puppy food + 1/2 adult food
- Days 5–7: 1/4 puppy food + 3/4 adult food
- Days 8–10: 100% adult food

If your puppy resists the new food or has a sensitive stomach, slow down the transition and consult your vet for guidance.

Note: Sample feeding guidelines summarized from Purina US (2025b).

Treats and Healthy Rewards

Treats should make up **no more than 10% of your puppy’s daily calories** (Chewy, 2025).

- Stick to soft, small treats that are easy to chew and quick to eat
- Avoid fatty, salty, or human snacks

Foods to Avoid Feeding Dogs and Alternatives

Here’s a list of foods to keep off your dog’s menu to avoid a trip to the vet, and safer alternatives if you want to share with your pup. If your puppy eats something toxic (like chocolate, grapes, or medication not prescribed by a vet), call your vet or the ASPCA Poison Control Hotline at (888) 426-4435 immediately.

Category	Foods to Avoid	Why	Safer Alternatives
Produce	Grapes, raisins	Kidney failure	Apples (no seeds), blueberries, peeled carrots
	Onions, garlic, leeks, chives	Red blood cell damage	Green beans, zucchini, pumpkin
	Raw potatoes, green skins on potatoes	Solanine toxicity	Cooked sweet potato, plain cooked potato
	Apple seeds, cherry, peach, plum, apricot pits	Cyanide compounds, choking hazard	Remove pits, feed flesh only
	Wild mushrooms	Can be deadly	Store-bought button mushrooms in tiny amounts
	Avocados	Contains persin (toxic in large amounts), pit is a choking hazard, can cause gastrointestinal upset	Blueberries, bananas, pumpkin (plain, cooked)
Pantry and Baking	Chocolate	Kidney failure	Carob treats specifically made for dogs
	Xylitol (in gum, candy, baked goods)	Liver failure, low blood sugar	Dog-safe peanut butter or ice cream without xylitol
	Nutmeg	Tremors, seizures	Powdered Ceylon cinnamon in tiny amounts
	Mustard seeds, raw yeast dough	Gastrointestinal irritation, alcohol poisoning	Bone broth, plain Greek yogurt (in moderation)
Dairy and Fatty Foods	Milk, cheese (large amounts), fat trimmings, greasy leftovers	Digestive upset, pancreatitis	Plain yogurt, small cheese bits, lean cooked meats
Nuts and Seeds	Macadamia nuts, other nuts in large quantities	Weakness, vomiting, choking	Unsalted pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds (without shell, in moderation)
Meat and Proteins	Cooked bones, seasoned or spicy meats, processed meats, and undercooked pork	Splintering, toxicity, bacterial risk	Plain, cook unsalted pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds (without shell, in moderation) ed chicken, turkey, beef, and lamb (lean)
Miscellaneous	Caffeine, alcohol	Toxic, even fatal, to the central nervous system	Water, bone broth, watermelon, and cucumber

Note: Chart summarized from ASPCA Poison Control (2025), Garden State Veterinary Specialists (2025), and Barrington (2025).

3.2 House Training

Establishing a Potty Routine

Potty training is crucial for your puppy’s confidence. A consistent schedule, including trips outside after waking, meals, naps, and before bed, reduces accidents and speeds up learning. Here’s a quick step-by-step guide (Bloom, 2025).

What you’ll need:

- Leash
- Small treats (1–2)
- Poop bags
- Enzymatic cleaner (for accidents indoors)
- Pee pads (for accidents indoors)

How to do it:

1. Take your puppy out for a bathroom break every 30 minutes.
2. In a quiet spot, stand still for up to 5 minutes for your puppy to potty.
3. If successful, praise or offer a small treat.
4. If not, take them inside to an enclosed area for 15 minutes, then repeat Step 1.
5. Repeat daily until learned.

Handling Accidents

Accidents happen. When they do happen, stay patient and never scold your puppy. Instead, clean up the mess thoroughly with enzymatic cleaners to remove odor and redirect your puppy to the right spot next time.

3.3 Crate Training

Why Use a Crate

A crate is a puppy’s safe, cozy hangout, aiding house training, reducing anxiety, and preventing mischief. Crate-trained dogs also adapt better to future stressors like travel or vet visits (Sharpe, 2025).

Picking the Right Size

The crate should be large enough for your puppy to stand, turn, and lie down comfortably. Adjustable crates or dividers are ideal for growing puppies!

Introducing the Crate

1. Place the crate in a quiet, commonly used room.
2. Make it cozy with a soft blanket or bed.
3. Encourage exploration with treats or toys.
4. Begin with short stays, gradually increasing duration.
5. Always ensure the crate is a positive experience, never using it as punishment.

Note: Sizing and introductory steps summarized from Youngerman (2019a)

Debunking Crate Training Myths

MYTH	REALITY
Crates are cruel.	Crates can be a puppy’s safe space when used correctly.
Puppies should stay in crates all day.	Puppies can stay crated for their age in months plus one hour — so a 2-month-old pup maxes out at about 3 hours.
Crate training fixes everything.	While crate training is helpful, it’s not a solution for everything. Behavior training and socialization still matter.

Note: Chart summarized from Delmar Animal Hospital (2019), Coleman (n.d.), and The Humane Society of Western Montana (2023).

3.4 Grooming and Hygiene

How Often to Brush Your Puppy

Regular brushing keeps your puppy’s coat healthy, reduces shedding, and prevents mats. Short-haired dogs need weekly brushing, while long or curly coats require daily attention. Starting early makes it a positive habit.

What Type of Brush to Use

Short-haired breeds usually need a soft bristle brush or rubber brush, while long-haired breeds benefit from a slicker brush or pin brush to detangle and prevent mats (Nelson, 2025).

How to Bathe Your Puppy for the First Time

Here’s a quick walkthrough of how to give your puppy their first bath.



Not sure what your pup needs? Check breed-specific guides or ask a groomer; they’ll help you create a routine that works.

What you’ll need:

- Dog shampoo
- 1–2 towels or a hair dryer
- Brush
- Cup (for rinsing)
- 2–4 small treats

How to do it:

1. Fill a tub with shallow, lukewarm water (test temperature).
2. Brush your puppy’s coat before bathing to remove tangles and loose fur.
3. Gently place or guide your puppy into the tub.
4. Apply and rinse shampoo with lukewarm water, avoiding eyes and ears.
5. Towel or low-heat dry (cover ears if using a hair dryer).
6. Immediately praise and treat for a positive experience.

Tips:

- Keep baths brief (5–10 minutes)
- Pause if your puppy is stressed, then calmly try again
- Gentle, regular baths help your puppy get used to grooming

Note: Steps summarized from Purina US (2025c).

How to Trim Your Puppy’s Nails

Here’s a quick walkthrough of how to trim your puppy’s nails.

What you’ll need:

- Nail clippers or a grinder
- Styptic powder
- 4–20 small treats
- A friend or family member (optional, but helpful!)

How to do it:

1. Sit on the floor with your puppy in a natural position.
2. Touch nail clippers to their foot, offering treats for positive association.
3. Gently hold a paw, identify and avoid the quick (the innermost part of your dog’s nail, containing blood vessels/nerves).
4. Clip the nail tip at a 45-degree angle, avoiding the quick. If your puppy squirms, stop, reward, and try again later. It’s better to do a few nails calmly than rush all of them.
5. Praise and treat after each nail/paw to associate nail time with good things.

Tips:

- Short, frequent trims are better than long, rare sessions
- Some puppies prefer a grinder to clippers; try both safely

Note: Steps summarized from Eresman (2024).

Dental Care

Brush daily, or a few times a week, to prevent plaque, gum disease, and bad breath (Grenus, 2023). Consider pet insurance with comprehensive dental coverage and a wellness add-on for preventative care and accident costs.



3.5 Veterinary Care

Common Puppy Health Costs

Responsible pet ownership includes veterinary expenses. Budget for regular check-ups, vaccinations, parasite prevention (fleas, ticks, heartworm), spaying/neutering, and unexpected visits.

Initial Vaccines and Boosters

Puppies require a series of core vaccines, starting around 6–8 weeks, followed by boosters every few weeks until approximately 16 weeks. Ask your veterinarian for a schedule and follow it.

Spay/Neuter

Spaying or neutering your puppy—often around 6 months, depending on breed—offers lifelong benefits. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), it helps prevent certain health issues like cancer and infections, can reduce aggression, marking, roaming, and heat-related behaviors, and lowers the risk of pet overpopulation, helping prevent overcrowding in shelters and reducing the amount of strays in communities. Always consult your veterinarian (and/or breeder, if applicable) about medical procedures, including spaying and neutering, to help make the best decision for your dog.

3.6 Microchipping and Identification

What is Microchipping?

A microchip is a tiny, permanent ID placed under your puppy’s skin, usually between the shoulder blades. If your puppy is ever lost, a veterinarian or shelter can scan the chip to retrieve your contact information. According to the AVMA, dogs with microchips are significantly more likely to be reunited with their owners.

When to Microchip Your Puppy

Most puppies can be microchipped as early as 8 weeks old, although this may depend on the puppy’s breed and size (Bergen, 2023).

Don’t forget to:

- Register your puppy’s microchip
- Keep it updated anytime you move or change your phone number
- Have your puppy wear a collar and ID tag for identification

3.7 Emergency Preparedness for Pet Parents

First Aid Kit

Having a first kit handy can help you bridge the gap between an incident and the trip to the vet. Here’s what to put in it.

Basic Supplies

- ☐ Cotton balls and swabs
- ☐ Digital thermometer
- ☐ Disposable gloves
- ☐ Rolled medical gauze
- ☐ Self-adhering flexible bandages

Medications and Treatments

- ☐ Dog-specific antiseptic wipes, spray, or ointment
- ☐ Dog-specific styptic powder or pencil

Extras

- ☐ Cold compress
- ☐ Copies of your puppy’s medical records
- ☐ Extra leash and collar
- ☐ Mid-size or large towel
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Small flashlight
- ☐ Soft muzzle
- ☐ Tweezers

Note: List summarized from Arford (2024).

Emergency Visits

Accidents happen—puppies chew, swallow, or get into things they shouldn’t. Emergency visits are expensive. An average trip to the emergency vet could cost anywhere from \$150–\$1,000, depending on the severity of the issue (Violet Crown Veterinary Specialists, 2024). Here’s a table of common emergency vet services and cost estimates:

Service	Cost
Exams	\$100–\$150
General blood work	\$80–\$200
X-ray	\$150–\$250
Ultrasound	\$300–\$600
Hospitalization (1–5 days)	\$600–\$3,500
Wound treatment	\$800–\$2,500
Emergency surgery	\$1,800–\$5,000

Note: Service cost estimates sourced from Brooks (2025). Costs depend on your dog’s size/breed, where you live, and the severity of their case.



To ensure your pet can get the urgent care they need, consider buying pet insurance, starting an emergency fund, or a combination of both.

Emergency Contacts

Keep your vet’s number, a 24-hour emergency clinic, and the ASPCA’s poison control hotline handy.



ASPCA Poison Control Hotline:
(888) 426-4435

Pet Disaster Kit

If you ever need to leave home quickly, here’s a list of essentials to have ready.

- ☐ Photocopied veterinary records
- ☐ Photocopied registration information (i.e, adoption records)
- ☐ Recent photographs of each of your pets
- ☐ Waterproof container for documents
- ☐ Microchip information
- ☐ Your contact information (phone numbers and addresses)
- ☐ 2-week supply of food (stored in waterproof containers)
- ☐ 2-week supply of water
- ☐ Non-spill food and water dishes
- ☐ Manual can opener
- ☐ Feeding instructions for each animal
- ☐ 2-week supply of any medications with instructions (if applicable)
- ☐ 1-month supply of flea, tick, and heartworm preventative
- ☐ Carrier or crate with blanket and/or bedding
- ☐ Leash, collar with ID, and harness
- ☐ First aid kit
- ☐ Cleaning supplies for accidents

Note: List summarized from the CDC (2024).



Puppies need 1/2–1 ounce of water per pound of body weight daily (Gunter, 2025). For example, a 10-pound puppy needs 5–10 ounces daily.



Getting Puppy Health Insurance

Vet bills can add up fast, and pet insurance helps take the financial stress out of caring for your dog. This chapter breaks down what insurance is, how it works, what it covers, and when the best time to get it is.



4.1 What Is Pet Insurance?

Pet insurance is health insurance for your dog. If your pup needs emergency care from an unexpected accident or illness, it can help cover the expensive vet bill.

4.2 How Does Pet Insurance Work?

Sign up for pet insurance before your first vet visit, and wait until your insurer's waiting period is over before filing any claims. Once the waiting period and your deductible have been met, your vet visits are eligible for reimbursement.

Pet insurance usually works on a reimbursement model.

Here's how it typically goes:

1. You take your pet to the vet.
2. You pay the bill at checkout.
3. You submit a claim to your insurer.
4. You get reimbursed for covered costs (after your deductible and according to your plan's reimbursement rate).

The window for filing a claim depends on your insurer, but most make it easy with apps or online portals. Some insurers also offer direct vet pay, which means the clinic gets paid directly, and you skip the upfront costs.

4.3 What Does Pet Insurance Cover?

Pet insurance helps cover the costs of diagnosing and treating unexpected accidents or illnesses — like the ones listed below.

Standard pet insurance plan for dogs typically includes the following:

Accidents	Illnesses
✓ Cuts ✓ Poisoning ✓ Swallowed Objects ✓ Broken Bones ✓ Dental Accidents ✓ Emergency Care ✓ Hospitalization ✓ Surgery ✓ Prescription Medication ✓ Alternative Therapy	✓ Vomiting ✓ Diarrhea ✓ Allergies ✓ Skin Conditions ✓ Diagnostics ✓ Prescription Medication ✓ Breed-Specific Conditions ✓ Chronic Conditions ✓ Diabetes ✓ Cancer

4.4 What Does Pet Insurance Not Cover?

Pet insurance covers a lot, but there are limits. While exact coverage varies by insurer, most pet insurance plans do not cover cosmetic and elective procedures, pre-existing conditions, or conditions that occur during the waiting period before the policy start date.



Use the Pet Insurance Decision Grid on page 30 to explore your options and see what's most important to you in a plan.

4.5 When Is the Best Time to Get Pet Insurance?

The earlier you sign up your puppy, the better. Most insurers require your pet to be at least 6–8 weeks old for enrollment. Keep in mind that regardless of your dog's age when they were originally insured, the price of coverage will rise as they're more likely to need medical care. It's not fun to see costs go up, but having coverage in place means you won't be facing big vet bills alone later in life.

4.6 Recommended Plan Setup

All insurers allow you to configure their plans to an extent. Below you can find a recommended configuration from PetInsuranceQuotes.com for a pet insurance plan that covers accidents and illnesses.

Annual Limit: \$10,000+

This is the maximum amount your insurance policy will pay for covered expenses within a single year. A limit of \$10,000+ provides substantial coverage without being overly costly for you or the insurer.

Deductible: \$300–\$500

This is the amount you will pay out of pocket for veterinary expenses before your insurance coverage kicks in. A deductible of \$300–\$500 is balanced and still ensures accessibility to care for most pet parents.

Reimbursement Rate: 80%

This is the portion of your eligible veterinary expenses that your insurer pays you back after you've met your deductible. This rate is balanced and fosters financial responsibility on your end.

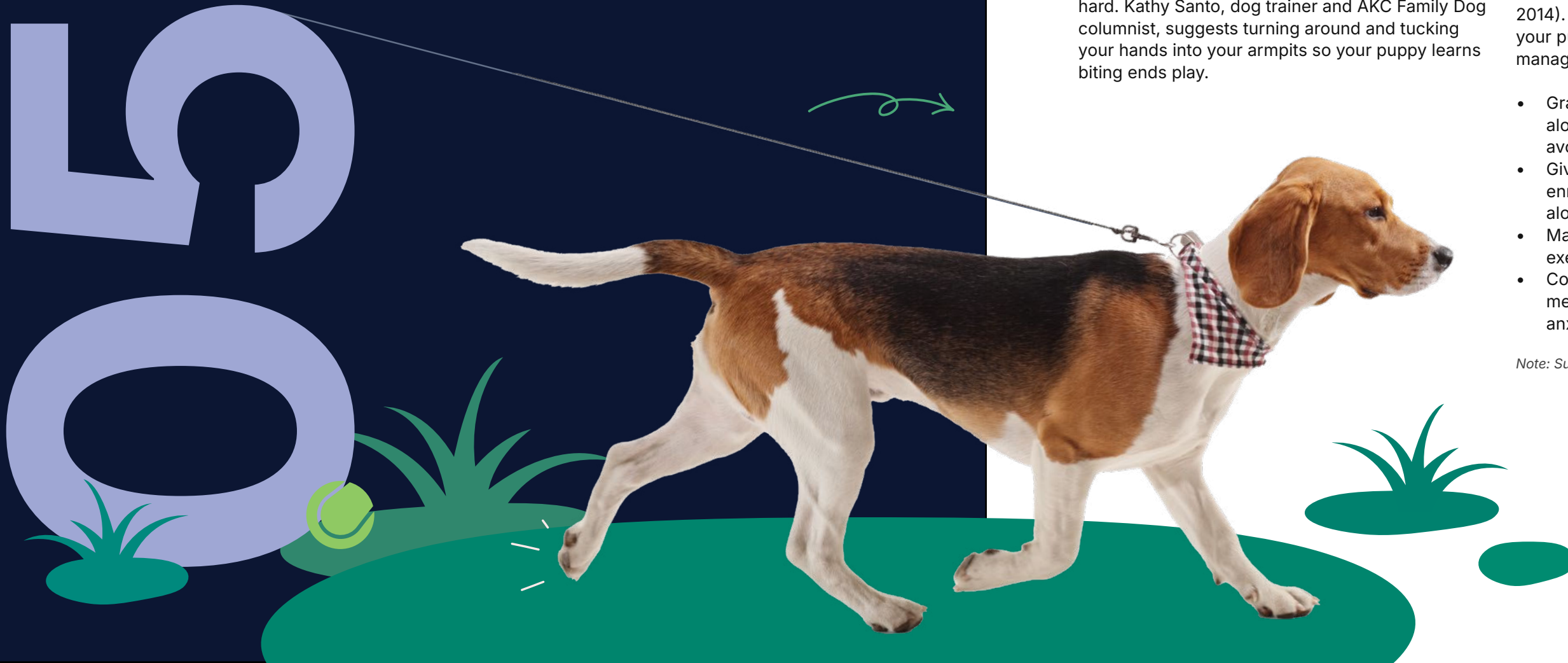


Not sure where to start? Scan the QR code with your phone to compare multiple insurers at PetInsuranceQuotes.com.



Training Your Puppy

We've covered foundational training in previous sections, including teaching your puppy their name (2.5) and early training commands (2.6). This chapter builds on those skills, focusing on essential behaviors every new puppy parent needs to help their puppy develop into a confident, well-behaved adult.



5.1 Leash Training Basics

Loose Leash Walking

Train your puppy to walk on a loose leash, under your control, without pulling.

Here's how to do it:

1. Pick a quiet, enclosed space (indoors or out).
2. Collar/harness and leash on the puppy.
3. Loosely hold the leash, let the puppy explore.
4. Reward non-pulling with treats/praise.
5. If pulling, pause until the leash is slack.
6. Repeat 1–2 times daily, starting with 2–5 minute sessions and gradually increasing to 5–10 minutes.

Note: Steps sourced from Purina US (2025a).

5.2 Correcting Biting and Nipping

Puppies explore the world with their mouths, and nipping is a normal part of learning. Gently teaching limits early helps create a safe environment for your puppy, especially around children.

When your puppy nips or bites:

- Immediately redirect your puppy to a chew toy or teething ring.
- Pause the fun by standing up, turning away, or leaving the room for a few seconds if the bite is too hard. Kathy Santo, dog trainer and AKC Family Dog columnist, suggests turning around and tucking your hands into your armpits so your puppy learns biting ends play.



Remember: Consistency is key. Everyone in the household should respond in the same calm way. Supervise interactions with children and guide both puppy and child in safe, positive play.

5.3 Managing Destructive Behavior

According to the ASPCA, chewing, especially during teething, is normal behavior for puppies. Your job is to guide your puppy toward acceptable outlets. Here are some things you can do to manage chewing and other destructive behavior:

- Make sure your space is puppy-proofed
- Redirect your puppy to a chew toy
- Reward your puppy when they use chew toys



Puppies need both mental and physical stimulation. A bored puppy is a destructive puppy, so regular play and short training sessions help curb unwanted behaviors, such as chewing.

5.4 Soothing Separation Anxiety

Some puppies struggle with being alone. Separation anxiety can manifest as excessive vocalization, destructive behavior, and potty accidents (Sargisson, 2014). Here are some things you can do to ease your pup's anxiety and help make departures more manageable:

- Gradually increase the time you leave your puppy alone, keeping arrivals and departures calm to avoid reinforcing anxiety
- Give your puppy a special treat or direct them to an enrichment toy when you're about to leave them alone
- Make sure your puppy gets enough physical exercise before you leave to help them settle down
- Consult your veterinarian about prescription medication and/or supplements to ease your pup's anxiety

Note: Summarized from Gibeault (2025a).

Life With Your Puppy

In this chapter, we'll cover how to help your pup explore the world safely through socialization, play, and early adventures, while building the habits that set them up for a happy adult life.



6.1 Puppy Playdates and First Interactions

First meet-ups can be exciting — and a little nerve-wracking. Prep your pup by:

- Making sure your puppy and their pals are vaccinated
- Bringing treats and favorite toys
- Keeping initial meetings short and calm
- Watching their body language

Note: Summarized from Rodgers & Cornett (2025).

6.2 Socialization Beyond Dogs

A well-rounded pup meets more than just other dogs. Carefully, under supervision, introduce your puppy to:

- Cats and small pets
- People of different ages, sizes, and energy levels
- Everyday sounds and objects like cars, vacuums, and TVs

Note: Summarized from Rodgers & Cornett (2025).



Remember, puppies explore with their mouths — nipping isn't "bad." Supervise kids and teach gentle hands, respect for puppy space, and calm play to build safe, positive interactions.

6.3 Structured Play

Play isn't just fun — it's a way for your puppy to learn, burn energy, and strengthen your bond. Keep it structured by:

- Deciding when play starts and stops so your pup learns self-control
- Rotating between fetch, tug, and puzzle toys to challenge both mind and body
- Stopping if play gets too rough or unruly, and giving breaks to avoid overstimulation
- Incorporating basic commands like "sit," "down," or "leave it" during play to reinforce skills in a fun way

Structured play ensures your pup gets mental and physical exercise, builds confidence, and develops healthy social skills — all while having a great time.

Note: Summarized from Bevill Dog Behavior (2020).

6.4 Preparing for Car Trips

Short Car Rides

Assuming that your puppy's already had a short ride to your veterinary clinic, here are a few tips to continue making future quick car trips safe, comfortable, and positive.

- Secure your puppy in a crate or harness
- Bring a familiar comfort item
- Keep your car cool and ventilated
- Drive slowly and safely
- Allow a potty break before the ride
- Avoid large meals to prevent motion sickness

Note: Summarized from The Puppy Academy (2023).

Car Trip Don'ts

Avoid these unsafe practices when traveling with your puppy:

- Letting them roam freely or sit on your lap
- Allowing them to stick their head out the window
- Forcing long trips too soon
- Feeding them a heavy meal before driving
- Leaving them unattended in a hot car
- Punishing them for anxiety or accidents

Note: Summarized from The Puppy Academy (2023).

6.5 What to Pack for Overnight Stays

- ☐ Crate or carrier
- ☐ Potty pads
- ☐ Bed and blanket
- ☐ Enough food and water for the trip, plus a little extra
- ☐ Grooming essentials (brush, wipes)
- ☐ Feeding bowls (collapsible bowls are great for travel!)
- ☐ Medications and supplements (if applicable)
- ☐ First aid kit (with copies of your puppy's medical records)
- ☐ Treats
- ☐ Variety of toys

Keep in mind that if you are boarding your pup for an overnight stay, some facilities may not allow you to bring everything on this list, such as a crate or carrier, beds, brushes, toys, and treats (Brown, 2025). Be sure to check ahead of time with a facility before boarding.

6.6 Overview of Puppy Stages

Your puppy won't stay a puppy for long. Within their first year, they will quickly grow into a young adult dog. Here's a quick overview of their stages during this time:

From **8–10 weeks**, you are your puppy's world. Build your bond and socialize them with new sights, sounds, animals, and people to develop confidence.

At **3–5 months**, your puppy will be teething. Ask your vet for a chew toy recommendation to satisfy their urge while protecting their teeth. Expect a growth spurt and bursts of energy; dedicate time to play.

The **"teen phase" (6–12 months)** brings hormones and independence, testing training. Stay calm, redirect unwanted behavior, and reward positive actions.

By **1–2 years**, most dogs reach adulthood, though some breeds mature faster.

Note: Chart summarized from Reisen (2024).



6.7 Setting Up for a Happy Adult Life

Puppyhood is full of fast changes, challenges, and surprises — but it's also full of joy. The time, patience, and love you invest now lay the foundation for a well-adjusted, happy adult dog. Make sure to:

- Maintain a regular feeding, exercise, and sleep schedule
- Celebrate small wins, stay consistent, and be positive
- Positively reinforce commands and manners
- Continuously expose your pup to new people, animals, and environments
- Schedule regular vet checkups, dental care, and preventative treatments
- Enroll in pet health insurance early



Welcome to Puppy Parenthood!

We hope this guide helps give you a better understanding of what to expect when raising a puppy. Please reach out to your veterinarian if you have any further questions.



Helpful Resources and Interactive Pages

Life with a puppy is fun — and a little chaotic. This chapter provides you with checklists, trackers, and interactive guides to keep things organized and make life with your pup easier.



7.1 New Puppy Checklist

Feeding

- ☐ Food and Water Bowls
- ☐ Food
- ☐ Treats

Comfort and Travel

- ☐ Bed
- ☐ Crate
- ☐ Collar
- ☐ Harness
- ☐ ID Tags
- ☐ Leash
- ☐ Poop Bags
- ☐ Portable Water Bowl

Grooming Supplies

- ☐ Shampoo
- ☐ Brush
- ☐ Nail Clippers
- ☐ Toothbrush and Toothpaste
- ☐ Pet Wipes
- ☐ Ear Cleaning Solution

Enrichment

- ☐ Teething Toys
- ☐ Treat-Dispensing Toys
- ☐ Puzzle Toys
- ☐ Fetch Toys

Peace of Mind

- ☐ First Aid Kit
- ☐ Insurance

Training and Cleaning

- ☐ Pee Pads
- ☐ Pet Stain and Odor Remover
- ☐ Puppy Gate

7.2 Puppy Proofing Your Home Checklist

Common Living Areas

- ☐ Secure electrical cords with cord covers or hide them behind furniture
- ☐ Remove small items that could be swallowed (coins, batteries, hair ties, etc.)
- ☐ Store remote controls, shoes, and children's toys out of reach
- ☐ Block off unsafe areas with baby gates
- ☐ Check for and secure loose rugs or items that can be easily dragged or chewed
- ☐ Move any plants that are toxic to dogs out of reach

Bedroom and Bathroom

- ☐ Keep laundry, shoes, and socks in closed hampers
- ☐ Store medications, cosmetics, and cleaning products in cabinets
- ☐ Close toilet lids to prevent drinking or falling in
- ☐ Hide trash cans or use pet-proof lids

Kitchen

- ☐ Secure cabinets with childproof latches if storing food or chemicals
- ☐ Keep countertops clear of food and sharp objects
- ☐ Use a covered trash can or keep it behind a closed door
- ☐ Check for dropped food (especially toxic items like chocolate, grapes, onions)

Yard and Outdoor Spaces

- ☐ Repair or block holes in fences
- ☐ Remove or secure toxic plants and garden chemicals
- ☐ Store tools and lawn equipment safely
- ☐ Pick up any small rocks, sticks, or debris that could be swallowed
- ☐ Ensure gates are locked and secure

7.3 Vet Notes

A space for you to jot down any notes from your vet appointments.

7.4 Pet Insurance Decision Grid Worksheet

Feature	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Affordable Monthly Cost	☐	☐	☐
Comprehensive Coverage (Accidents, Illnesses, Breed-Specific Conditions)	☐	☐	☐
Optional Wellness Coverage (Wellness visits, vaccines, some dental)	☐	☐	☐
Customizable Deductible (\$0–\$1,000)	☐	☐	☐
High Reimbursement Rate (Up to 90%)	☐	☐	☐
High Annual Limit (\$10,000–Unlimited)	☐	☐	☐
Fast Digital Claims Process (Mobile app or online portal)	☐	☐	☐
Direct Vet Pay Option (Some insurers can pay your vet directly at checkout)	☐	☐	☐
Short Waiting Periods (Coverage starts sooner)	☐	☐	☐

Top 3 Must-Haves:

1.
2.
3.

7.5 Treatment Tracker

A place to track vaccinations, preventatives, and anything else your puppy needs.

Date	Treatment Given	Next Due	Notes

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