

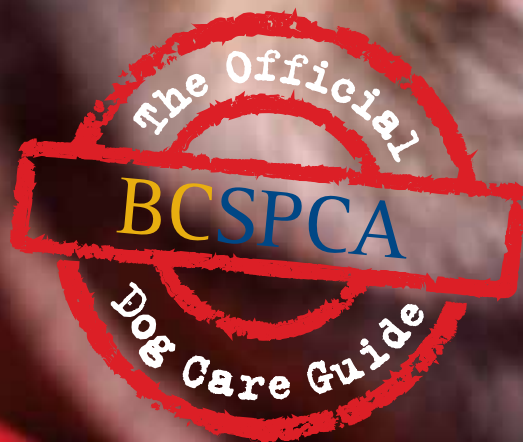
# Bark!

BCSPCA

kids speaking for animals

[spca.bc.ca/youth](http://spca.bc.ca/youth)

Vol. 11 • No. 3



# A Dog's Domain

Be a great dog guardian inside and out! Here are some essential things to keep at home - and take with you when heading outdoors with your pup.



## POOP BAGS

Picking up poop? It's a smelly but necessary responsibility of having a dog. Make sure you always have bags (bring more than one just in case) when taking your dog for a walk. Tie a new bag to your dog's leash each day so you're never caught without one!

Tip: Biodegradable bags are best!



## TOYS, TOYS, TOYS!

Go to a pet supply store and you'll find hundreds of different dog toys. It's possible to get carried away, so start with a few basics, like a Kong™ (to make feeding fun), a chew toy (so your shoes don't get eaten) and a Chuckit!™ (for hours of outdoor play). Other good choices for playing fetch? A Frisbee or a rubber ball.



Tip: Avoid tennis balls as they cause tooth problems.

CAUTION CAUTION CAUTION CAUTION CAUTION

CAUTION

## Daggie Dangers

Hanging out at home or living it up outside, dogs can get into all sorts of trouble! Stay safe with these tips.

### Tattered toys

In the paws (or the jaws) of a playful pup, toys can quickly fall apart. If swallowed, string, stuffing and squeakers can all cause major health problems - and big vet bills. Buy good quality toys, supervise play and, when something looks like it might fall apart, replace it.



### Sticks, stones and bones

You name it, there's a dog who has found it - and eaten it - while walking or playing outside. Watch out for items your dog may pick up off the ground. If he does get a hold of something, do not reach into his mouth to try to remove it. Instead, tell an adult and, if swallowed, visit a veterinarian.





## COLLAR AND LEASH ✓

Every dog needs a collar with an ID tag and a leash. Trotting around the house or yard isn't enough exercise for most dogs. Daily walks and, in most cases, playtime with other pooches are a must. Start with a standard flat collar and a six-foot leash. Learn about the best and worst dog collars [on page 13 of this guide](#).



Tip: Dogs need 30 to 45 minutes of exercise a day.

## PLACES TO REST ✓

Even the most playful, energetic dogs need some downtime at home. Your dog should have his own bed – a comfortable place big enough to curl up and sleep – and a kennel. A kennel is a dog's safe, private space, like a den was to his canine ancestors or your bedroom is to you. Your dog should be able to stand, sit, stretch and turn around in his kennel.



Tip: Make sure kennels are "no kid" zones!

## FOOD, WATER... AND A FEW TREATS ✓

All dogs need dishes of food and fresh water every day. Feed good quality kibble (follow the package label for portion sizes). Treats can be great to help train your dog, but feeding too many can make him overweight. Going for a walk? Make sure water is available during or soon after exercise.



Tip: Stainless steel or ceramic bowls are best.

### CAUTION CAUTION CAUTION

**To leash or not to leash?**  
Heading into public with your dog? Unless you're in a designated off-leash area, your dog is okay around other off-leash dogs and is good at



### CAUTION CAUTION CAUTION

**Tasty but toxic**

Some dogs will eat anything, but that doesn't mean they should! Certain foods, medications, garden products and indoor and outdoor plants can be poisonous for pets. Visit the Animal Poison Control website ([aspca.org/apcc](http://aspca.org/apcc)) for a complete list.

### A walk in the dark

Be extra careful walking your dog when it's dark outside. Reflectors (for both you and your pet) make you more visible to cars, bikes and other walkers.



coming when called, keep the leash on for safety's sake – not to mention it's the law!

**Does everyone in your family want a dog?**  
Dogs become family members! Everyone should agree with the decision to get one.



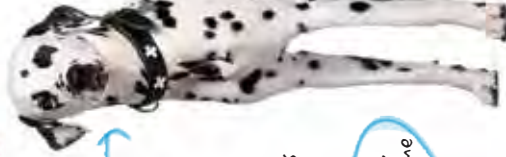
**Does your family know how to care for a dog?**  
Learn as much as you can before you bring a dog home. This guide provides some basic care information. You can find out more from care books, veterinarians, animal shelter staff and people you know who have dogs.



**What is your family's schedule like?**  
Dogs need a dependable routine. They have to be fed, walked and played with every day. Families that are gone all day and then out again in the evening would leave a dog home alone too long.

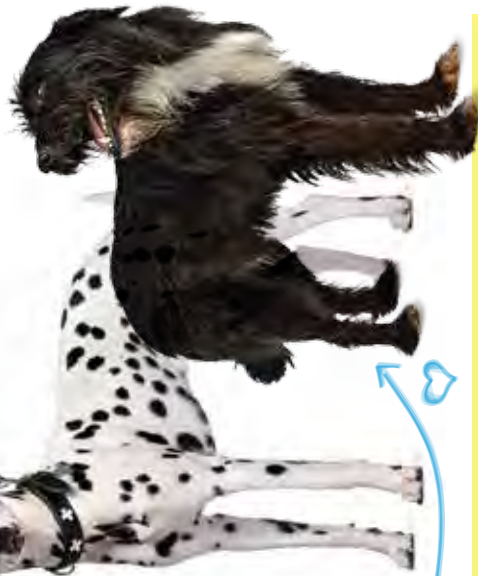


**Do you have a particular breed in mind?**  
Some people are drawn to a certain breed because they have seen one in a movie or on television, or read about one in a book. Do your research first! Talk to people who have the breed you are interested in. Find out what the dogs are really like to live with. See whether the breed has any health issues.



Above all, keep an open mind! Mixed-breed dogs make awesome pets, too.

**Are you allowed to have a dog where you live?**  
Unfortunately, not all buildings allow dogs. Some places are pet friendly but have restrictions on how big a dog you can keep.



# Companions for Life

## Questions to ask yourself before you get a dog

Bringing a dog into your family is a big decision. As his guardian, you will be responsible for taking good care of him for his whole life — 11 years on average. It means walking him in the pouring rain. Cleaning up his messes. Waking up early on the weekends to let him out.

It also means playing hide-and-go-seek together. Reading a book while he dozes beside you. Watching him wrestle with his favourite dog friends. Coming home from school each day to a wagging tail and wet tongue.

Being a dog guardian is both work AND fun. Is your family ready to make the commitment?



- woof!

**Do you have any other pets?** Not all dogs get along with animals such as cats and vice versa. Your home should be a safe and comfortable place for all your pets.



**Where should you get your dog?** Make the **BC SPCA** your first adoption option! BC SPCA shelters have dogs of all different ages, colours, sizes and shapes to choose from — even purebreds. Check out our adoptable listings at [bcpetsearch.com](http://bcpetsearch.com).

You can also find your new companion through a breed rescue or responsible breeder. Visit [findingfido.ca](http://findingfido.ca) to learn how to spot a good breeder — and avoid puppy mills. Puppy mills are places where dogs are bred in large numbers and sold through pet stores or on the internet just to make money. The dogs are often kept in very poor conditions. Most do not receive the medical care or socialization they need to be good companions.

**How old a dog should you get?** Puppies are a blast! They are also a **TON** of work to socialize and train. As a dog grows up, his personality develops. So you know a little more about what you are getting into with an older dog compared to a puppy.



**\*Can your family afford a dog?** Think beyond the adoption fee! Supplies to prepare your home for a dog will cost at least \$200. Then there are ongoing expenses such as food, license fees, pet insurance and veterinary care. These will cost around **\$1,400 a year**. Letting some money aside for unexpected expenses is a good idea too.

**What dog personality will suit your family?** Dogs have different personalities. Some are shy and anxious, while others are excitable and outgoing. Some are very people focused. Others are more independent. Choosing a dog based on his personality rather than his looks tends to lead to a better relationship.



# Healthy hounds, happy hounds

Being a great guardian means doing what you can to help your dog live a long, healthy life. How? Spend time with him! Get to know the way he normally looks and behaves. Then, when you notice something unusual, like a sore paw or an upset stomach, take him to the vet right away. Here are some other important health care tips to follow.

## Mouth matters

Your dog's teeth should be white and shiny. His gums should be bright pink and moist to the touch. Bad breath, bleeding gums and brownish teeth could all be signs of painful gum disease.

Brush your dog's teeth every day or every other day. Vet clinics and pet supply stores sell toothbrushes and special pet toothpaste. (Human toothpaste contains ingredients not meant for dogs.) The vet can show your family the best brushing method.

Chew toys can also help keep your dog's teeth clean. Look for nylon or rubber toys recommended by vets. Hard plastic toys could actually break his teeth!

Even with regular brushing, your dog may still develop gum disease. Take him to the vet at least once a year to have his mouth checked as part of an overall health exam. Your vet may recommend he have his teeth cleaned under general anaesthetic (while asleep). Your vet may also suggest feeding him a special teeth-cleaning diet.

## Tick talk

Your dog could pick up ticks – small, eight-legged parasites that feed on blood – when he goes for walks in tall grass. Removing ticks can be tricky, so have an adult or your vet pull them out. Vet clinics also carry tick medication.

## Yuck, worms!

Dogs can carry worms that live, feed and reproduce inside them. Yikes! Common types include hookworms, roundworms, whipworms and tapeworms.

Worms can cause a variety of symptoms, including diarrhea, vomiting and weight loss.

Luckily, medication for worms is easy to get from your vet.

## Disease-proofing

Vaccines help protect dogs against diseases that can make them very sick. Dogs are usually vaccinated three times as puppies, then once every one to three years as adults. Your vet can recommend what vaccines your dog needs.





### Sound advice

Your dog's ears should be pale pink, clean and odourless. Beware ears that are red and swollen, smelly or filled with dark, waxy buildup! Take your dog to the vet to have them checked for infection.



### Nailed it!

Have your dog's nails trimmed by an adult or your vet. Cutting them too short can be painful and cause them to bleed. Letting them grow too long causes discomfort.

### Pampered pooch

Brush your dog to help remove tangles and loose hair. Short-haired dogs can be brushed a few times a week. Brush long-haired dogs daily to help prevent mats. Regular haircuts can make long hair easier to manage. You can bathe your dog every few months using a pet-safe shampoo. Your family may also choose to have a professional groomer care for your dog's coat.



Itchy ears could mean your dog has ear mites. Ear mites are tiny, eight-legged parasites that feed on the wax and oils in a dog's ear canal. Visit your vet for medication to treat the mite problem.

Dogs have sensitive ears. Ask the vet to show your family the best way to keep your dog's ears clean. Done improperly, cleaning can actually make ear problems worse.



### Eye spy

Normally, dogs have bright, clear eyes. Watch for redness, swelling or goopy discharge. Your dog could have an eye infection. Eye infections require treatment with medication from the vet. Keep your dog's eyes clean by gently wiping them with a damp, soft cloth.

### Flee, flea!

Is your dog scratching and chewing at his fur? He could have fleas! Fleas are small, wingless insects that feed on blood. The best flea control medications are available at your vet clinic.

### Can I see some ID?

In case he gets lost, your dog needs at least two forms of identification: a tag on his collar and an ear tattoo or a microchip. The law requires that you license your dog, too. His license number traces back to your family.



### Fix before six!

Have your dog spayed or neutered before six months of age. Spaying and neutering are surgical operations performed by a vet to prevent animals from reproducing (having babies). That way, you can help prevent unwanted litters.

**Bonus!** Spaying and neutering also help keep dogs from roaming, prevent certain cancers and make dogs less aggressive.

# What is My Dog Trying to Tell Me?

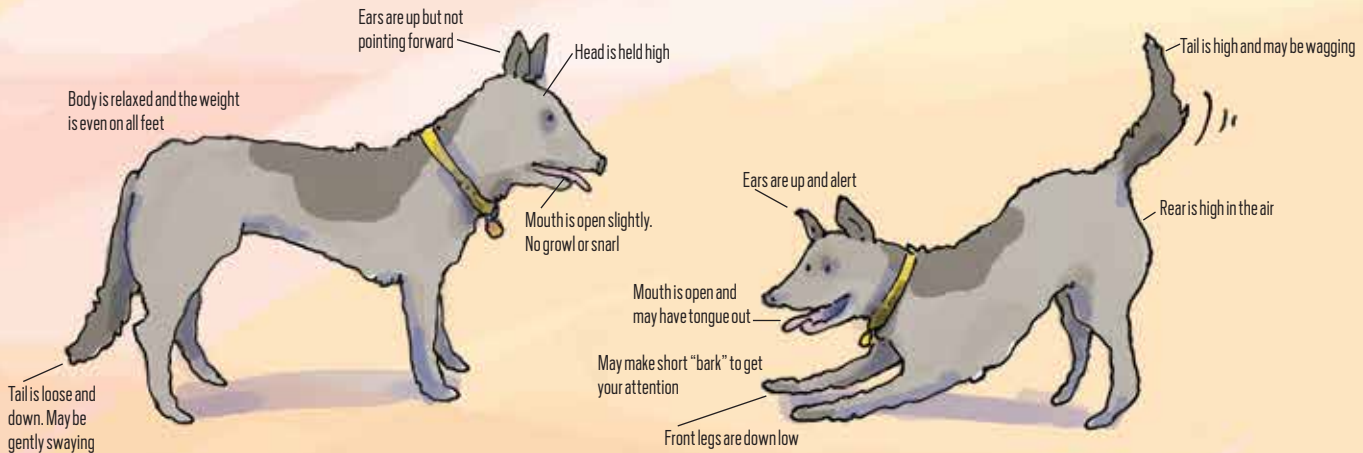
Hey Kat, Rex is yawning at me. He must be bored.



Actually, Fin, Rex is telling you he doesn't like you staring directly at him. It makes him uneasy.



Dogs may not talk, but they say a lot. Dogs use the position of their bodies and their eyes, ears, tails, even the hair on their necks and backs to communicate. Reading a dog's body language helps to know what they are thinking and feeling. See if you recognize what these dogs are saying:



## I'm chill

A happy, relaxed dog will have her head up, ears and body loose, and may have her mouth open slightly, almost in a smile. Relaxed dogs' tails are usually down or swaying loosely from side-to-side.

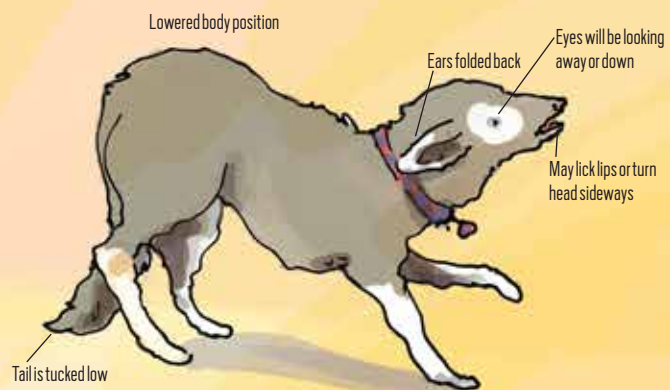
## Let's play!

Dogs love to play. To start play time, dogs do a play bow. They bend down low with their front feet and wave their tails in the air. Dogs play bow with other dogs or with you when they want to have some fun!

## Looking small!

Dogs who feel uneasy or unsure will lower their heads and drop their tails. They will likely turn their heads and look away, and may lick their lips. Their ears will also pull back. Often they will turn their bodies sideways.

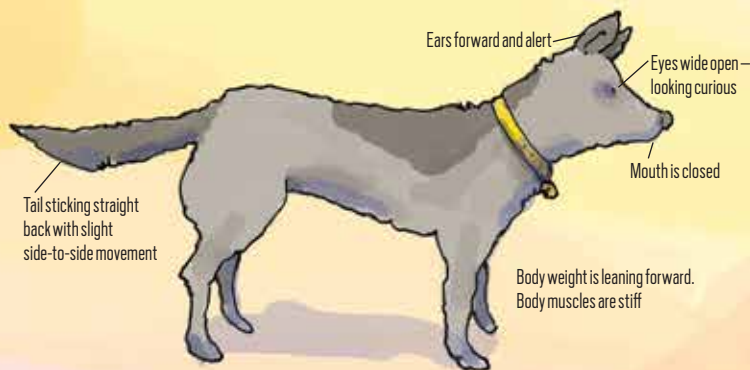
Really scared dogs will cower even lower, tremble and completely flatten their ears back against their heads. They also pull their tails tightly under their legs. They try to look small, hoping they won't be noticed.





## Confident and alert

Confident dogs are curious and want to check things out. They will walk directly toward you with ears forward and with their body weight on their front feet. Tails may be stiff and pointing straight back.

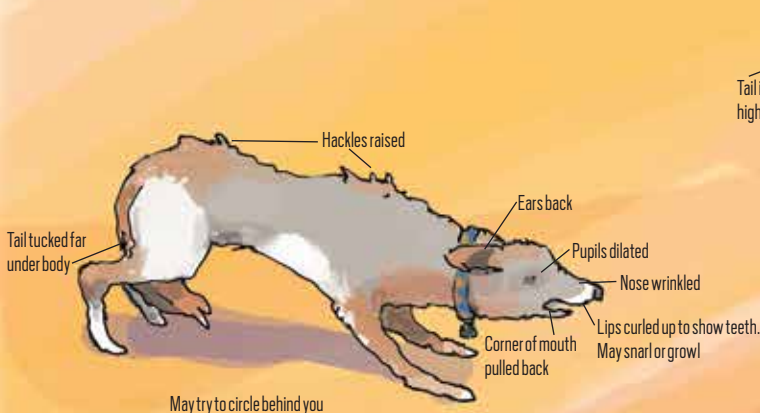


## Watch out! Don't mess with me

Beware of two types of body signaling that mean a dog may bite. One is the offensive aggressive dog, the other the fearful aggressive dog. Never approach dogs displaying these signals.

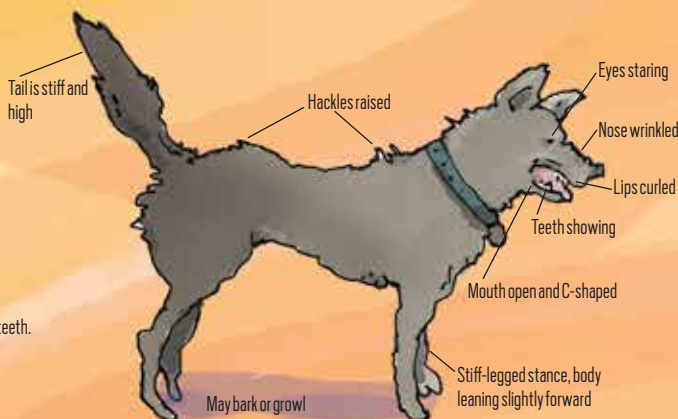
### 1. Fearful aggression

When feeling threatened, fearful aggressive dogs will get very low, put their tail between their legs and snarl. Ears will be pulled flat against their heads. These dogs often bite without a lot of warning. Because they are very scared, they will try to sneak up behind you to bite.



### 2. Offensive aggression

Confident, aggressive dogs give warning signals that they might bite. Signals include barking, raising hackles, showing teeth and glaring eyes. Their muscles will be tense and their weight will shift forward. Ears will usually be alert and forward. They may also growl or snarl and their noses will be wrinkled. They're saying "back off" or risk attack.



Never run away or scream! This will excite the dog even more. Instead, back away slowly. Don't stare into the dog's eyes. Look down and away. The dog will calm down the further you get.

Wow, I had no idea dogs say so much with their bodies.

Yep, who would have thought you could read a dog?



SADEUSRA/ISTOCK.COM

# Schooling for your dog (and you)

Everyone wants to have a great relationship with their dog. Whether you have a small or large dog, a training class can help. Here are four reasons why:

- a. It's fun – both for your dog and for you!
- b. Training helps a dog know her boundaries (and yours!).
- c. A well-behaved dog is easier to live with and can go out places with you.
- d. A good trainer will help your family build a great friendship together.

The best dog trainers use positive reinforcement and force-free methods. Positive reinforcement is a training technique using praise and rewards for desired behaviour, not punishment. Dogs listen better when they expect something good to happen, not when they constantly fear being punished.

## What's your dog IQ?

Test your dog behaviour knowledge with these true or false questions:

1. **If my dog Buster does something bad, I should punish him by yelling at him.**

It is frustrating when Buster chews your slipper, for example. But



punishing, even by yelling, teaches fear. Buster doesn't know the slipper is special to you. To Buster, it's just another chew toy. Instead of shouting, offer Buster a dog toy in exchange for the slipper. Tip: Next time you see Buster grab one of his toys, praise him for making the right choice. Oh, and go put your slippers out of Buster's reach!

2. **Giving Sadie a big hug when I get home from school shows how much I love her.**

True for you, not so much for Sadie. People show love with hugs. Dogs

Ahhh, scratch behind my ears!



don't. Oh sure, your dog may allow a hug from you, but that's about it. Dogs feel uneasy when someone wraps their arms around them. They feel trapped. Tell your friends – no dog hugs! Instead, give your dog a rub behind the ears or a rump scratch. Fact: Many dog bites happen to kids hugging dogs.



3. When my dog Molly licks her lips and looks away, it means she is feeling uneasy or anxious.

This is true. Here are some common signals dogs give when they want to be left alone:

- Pulling their ears back.
- Yawning, narrowing their eyes, looking away and licking their lips.
- Turning their back on you and sitting.
- Body shaking (unless they just got out of the bath!).
- Growling, wrinkling their nose, snarling or showing teeth.

4. Old dogs can't be taught new dog tricks.

Just like people, all dogs learn new things all the time. In fact, every interaction shapes his behaviour with you and your family. Do short training sessions every day to practice "sits," "stays" and "comes" in new situations. Give a small treat to reward his behaviour.



5. It is okay to dress your dog up in clothing.

Humans need clothes, dogs have fur. Some dogs tolerate being dressed up but no dog likes it. Dogs usually show the same signals as when they are uneasy (see #3). Respect your dog (and cat) for who they are and don't dress them up in clothes and costumes!



## Picking the right collar

All dogs need a collar so you can fasten an ID tag, a dog license and, of course, your leash. But they need the correct collar.

### ✓ Pick me, pick me!

Good collars are comfortable and do not hurt dogs when they pull. Look for a flat collar, Martingale collar or, particularly if you have a small dog, a harness.



### ✗ Reject me, reject me!

Bad collars are designed to cause pain to get dogs to stop pulling. Don't use choke collars, prong collars or shock collars.



### Tip:

If your dog pulls, ask at your pet supply store for humane collars that prevent pulling without causing pain.

## Help with dog training

For family help with dog training, check out these books:



*Good Dog! Kids Teach Kids About Dog Behavior and Training*

by Evelyn Pang and Hilary Louie

*Puppy Training for Kids* by Colleen Pelar

*Family Friendly Dog Training* by Patricia B. McConnell



Any books or videos from Sophia Yin, Jean Donaldson or Ian Dunbar are also great sources.

# Grow Up, Pup!



Caring for a puppy takes time, effort and patience. How he is raised shapes the dog he will grow up to be. Feed him, train him and socialize him. Play with him and keep him safe. In return, he will give you a lifetime of companionship. Talk about time and effort well spent!

Below are some tips to help you care for your growing puppy.

## Food for thought

Puppies should be fed **high quality puppy food** three to four times a day. Once they are about six months old, they can be fed twice daily.

At around one year of age, gradually switch to **high quality adult food**. Adult dogs should be fed two meals a day. Leaving food out all the time can make them **overweight**.

## Bathroom breaks

Housetraining means teaching puppies to go to the bathroom where you would like them to go – usually **outside**, on the grass. Puppies have very little bladder and bowel control. **They need to be taken out often**. Usually, a puppy can only hold his waste for the same number of hours as his age in months. So, as they get older, puppies can go longer between potty times.

Never hit or yell when puppies have an accident in the house. Instead, **praise them** for going in the right spot.

## Play on!

Puppies are super playful. Use **toys**, not hands and feet, to play with them. Otherwise, you might encourage play biting. Also, keep playtimes short. Puppies can easily get **overexcited** and accidentally nip. Ouch!



Adult dogs like to play, too. Take them to a **dog park** to romp with other dogs. Play **games** like fetch and hide-and-go-seek. Try out **agility classes** where they can practice obstacle courses made just for dogs. Playing keeps older dogs **active**.



## Social skills

Positive experiences early on in life teach dogs to face new situations with confidence. Introduce puppies to **new people, pets and experiences** like nail trims, teeth brushing, grooming, car trips and visits to the veterinarian. Going to “**puppy classes**” is also a great way for them to meet people and other dogs.

Always reward puppies with **praise and treats** to encourage friendly and outgoing behaviour.

## Puppy-proof

Puppies explore the world with their mouths and can easily get into **dangerous situations**. You name it – electrical cords, table legs, books, shoes – they will try it! **Keep anything that you do not want chewed out of reach**.

Chewing is a natural behaviour, though, so make sure dogs of any age have plenty of **safe toys** to gnaw on.

# The **5** Freedoms Pledge

Is your dog your best friend? You're not alone! Dogs play with us and nap with us. They join us on family trips. They help us meet new two-legged and four-legged friends. Dogs comfort us when we are feeling sad. They make us laugh. They calm us down when we are feeling nervous. Let's face it, dogs are awesome.

Want to show your dog how much you love him? Take the **Five Freedoms Pledge!** The **Five Freedoms** are a set of animal welfare guidelines used around the world. Each freedom describes a different part of the care required to meet an animal's needs. Taken together, the **Five Freedoms** show us how to be great dog guardians.

I pledge to provide my dog, to the best of my abilities, with the **Five Freedoms**:

- 1 **Freedom from hunger and thirst** by giving my dog the correct food and fresh water.
- 2 **Freedom from pain, injury and disease** by providing my dog with regular veterinary care and a safe environment.
- 3 **Freedom from distress** by making sure my dog is never neglected or abused, and does not feel scared, anxious, frustrated or depressed.
- 4 **Freedom from discomfort** by providing my dog with a comfortable home that is warm, dry, clean and quiet.
- 5 **Freedom to express behaviours that promote well-being** by giving my dog the chance to play, explore, groom, eat, drink and rest as he chooses.

Remember, as guardians, we are responsible for our dogs' health and well-being. And guess what? With all you have learned in this dog care guide, you are ready to begin providing the **Five Freedoms** to your dog today!

