



## Four Veterinarian-Approved Tips For New Pet Parents

by Whitney Miller, DVM, MBA,  
DACVPM

(NAPS)—Whether you've just decided to welcome a new pet to your family or you're in the throes of early pet parenthood, like all pet parents you may experience challenges along with the joy, cuteness and many other rewarding parts of having pets. Dog, cat, bird, fish, reptile or small pet, each animal that comes into your life has unique needs, from grooming and habitat to nutrition, exercise and enrichment. Here are a few veterinarian-approved tips to help navigate every step of the way—from preparation to “Gotcha Day,” early bonding, life stage transitions and beyond—and foster long-lasting pet health and wellness.

**Do Your Homework:** Help start your pets' journey off on the right paw by researching what it takes to prioritize their well-being and help them thrive.

- The process can be overwhelming at first, but a Petco pet care center and [petco.com](https://www.petco.com) are great places to start.
- Research the pet's breed or species to ensure that you thoroughly understand the nutrition, exercise, grooming and habitat requirements as well as any common behavioral or health issues.
- Identify a trusted veterinarian for initial exams and vaccinations, routine check-ups and in case of an emergency. In fact, enlisting a full team of pet experts, including a veterinarian, trainer and groomer you trust, such as those at Petco pet care centers, can help you feel confident throughout every milestone.
- No pet parent likes to think about a pet going missing, but it's important to note there are resources such as Petco Love Lost, which helps reunite lost pets with their families.

**Make Your Pet Feel at Home:** In this time of transition, focus on creating a safe space where your pet feels secure and relaxed.

- Dog and cat essential supplies include a suitable bed or crate, food and water bowls, litter box and even some toys to help them feel comfortable. As a new dog or cat parent, you'll also need to ensure all areas of your home are safe for your pet. For example, secure lids on trash cans, remove poisonous plants, elevate any possible toxins out of reach and wrap exposed wires with cord covers.
- Fish will need an aquarium with the right tank, filters and pumps, while reptiles require a heat lamp, UVB light, tank and accessories. Birds will also need a habitat, litter, perch and toys.
- Set up small animals such as guinea pigs, rabbits and hamsters to thrive with an escape-proof habitat filled with high quality bedding, toys and places to hide.

**Plan for Playtime:** Healthy activity,



### Getting a new pet is both a great joy and important responsibility.

interaction and enrichment are essential for the physical, social and mental health of every pet, but each animal type will have different needs based on species, breed and age.

- Work with a trusted veterinarian and Petco pet care center to understand what your new pet needs for productive playtime that is physically and mentally stimulating.
- Enroll in a dog training program that nurtures the bond between pet and pet parent through positive reinforcement methods.
- Safe socialization with other animals and humans is also key to maintaining all facets of your new pet's health, especially for dogs. Slowly introduce your pet to new people and social settings to minimize any stress and ensure the safety of everyone involved.
- Also make sure that you provide enrichment for your pets in their habitat. This is especially important for pets that are not safely socialized or are hesitant of being handled. Providing toys, food puzzles, nesting material and different hides can keep your small pet physically and mentally stimulated.

**Get into a Routine:** To fully integrate your new pet into the family, it's critical to establish a routine for both everyday and long-term care for a full, rewarding life.

- Create a schedule for meals, play and exercise according to your new pet's needs. Also maintain a regular grooming schedule for your cat, dog or bird to keep the coat or feathers clean, nails trimmed and dental care in top shape.
- Schedule routine vet exams to keep your pet up to date on preventive care and other medical needs.
- Enroll your dog or cat into Petco's Vital Care annual plan to help them look and feel their best. For just \$19.99 a month, you'll get savings on pet food, litter, products and services such as grooming and [vet exams](#).

For more tips and resources on a new pet's Whole Health journey, visit [petco.com/newpet](https://www.petco.com/newpet).

• *Dr. Miller is the chief veterinarian at Petco, The Health + Wellness Co. and member of the Petco Pet Wellness Council. She received her DVM and MBA degrees from Colorado State University and has been board certified in Preventive Medicine since 2018.*