



# What You Need to Be a Responsible Dog Owner

Here are five things you need to do to be a responsible dog owner.

## Commit

When you adopt a dog, it is for **life**. Depending on the breed, that commitment is anywhere from seven to sixteen or more years, so you need to adapt as life circumstances change — for example, if you have to move, you'll need to take the time to find a new home that allows dogs.

And, if for reasons beyond your control you find that you absolutely have to give your dog up, don't just surrender them to a shelter.

Make arrangement with a friend or family member who can adopt, or work with a **no-kill rescue organisation** that will find your dog a new home.

## Cost

Pets do cost money and, according to the **RSPCA**, average costs for regular dog care are between around \$600 to \$910 per year, not including any extras like emergency treatment, special medication or diets, or other unforeseen expenses.

Pet health insurance can be an excellent investment that will help keep those costs manageable, and it's also a good idea to set aside an **emergency fund** in a separate savings account to cover anything unexpected that does come up.

## Care

Besides food, water, and the walk, you need to take your dog to the vet at least once a year for a wellness exam, and twice a year once they become a senior — your vet can let you know when that's the case.



Care includes making sure that your dog has all of her vaccinations and preventive treatment (against fleas, ticks, parasites, and so on), as well as any temporary treatment recommended by the vet.

Another aspect of care you might not think of is **emergency preparedness**, so in addition to your own **evacuation kit**, you will need one for your dog, whether your area is prone to fires, floods, Cyclones, earthquakes, or other natural disasters.

Finally, the hardest but still necessary part of a dog's care comes at the end of their life, especially when they reach old age. Be emotionally prepared to make the right decision and for the right reasons when your dog's health declines. That decision is about their quality of life or lack of it, not prolonging it for your sake.

## Control

It can be tempting to want to rescue every dog you see, but there are limits to how many you can take care of. Only adopt the number of pets that you can reasonably afford and care for. Also make sure that all of your dogs have ID tags and micro-chips, and that their license and registration information is always up to date.

Control also means having your dogs spayed and neutered, which will help reduce the number of unwanted strays and shelter animals, as well as keep them healthier and calmer in the long run.

## Consideration

Our dogs can have an impact on people outside of our household, so we should always do our best to make sure they don't become "that dog" that everyone in the neighborhood dreads. This means training your dog to not bark or whine incessantly when left alone, and making sure that your home and yard are secure to keep him from escaping.



This also means that your dogs should be properly socialized and trained, and always on a leash when you're out in public with them — and you need to always pick up their poop.

Next to our children, dogs (and cats) are probably the biggest investment we make in terms of time, money, and emotional attachment — and the biggest for people without children. We owe it to them, and to ourselves, to take full responsibility in order to make our too-brief time together happy, safe, and secure for everyone involved, humans and dogs alike.

*Be Calm Be Responsible!*