

Top Ten Dog Safety Rules

1. Feed and water it safely. Avoid chocolate and xylitol, both poisonous to dogs. Use clean bowls and change the water daily to avoid bacterial growth. If you feed it premium **quality food** (wet or dry) rather than the cheaper brands sold in most stores, you could keep its body happier and extend its life by several years. Any other scraps you feed it should be no more than 10% of its total diet. **Don't overfeed** your dog to the point where it becomes overweight, because that could shorten its life by several years.



2. Know how and when to let a dog outside. Firstly, keep a **collar and ID tag** on your pet. A collar allows it to be leashed or easily held back with your hand. Make sure the collar is **loose** enough to let it breathe easily. An ID tag is wise in case it escapes home and/or gets lost. A healthy pet may need to **go outside 3-5 times** per day to relieve itself; watch carefully to get a read on that.



3. Guard where your dog can go and who it interacts with. A leash and/or a fence can keep your dog from fighting other dogs and biting people. Especially in non-rural areas, **no roaming around** should be allowed. If you don't have an escape-proof fence, keep your dog on a leash whenever you take it outside. Keep **screens** on all windows to prevent escapes. If you let a dog run around, there are too many ways for it to get hurt to list them all here. If you don't know where an animal is, there is no way to attend to its safety.

4. Dog-proof your home much like you would baby-proof it. Dogs, and especially puppies, explore by mouthing and chewing. Many different **household chemicals** are harmful to them. Dogs can mistake hanging **electrical cords** for chew toys. They can easily get tied up in **drapery pulls** and perhaps even be strangled. Visit <https://www.avma.org/public/PetCare/Pages/householdhazards.aspx> for pet-proofing guidance. Some plants can be poisonous to dogs, even the holly that is hung at Christmastime, so check your **household's plants** at <https://www.aspc.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/dogs-plant-list>.

5. Keep it watered, and its coat and paws at a moderate temperature. Don't ever leave a dog in a **hot car** because it can take just minutes for heat stroke to occur. Surfaces like **asphalt or truck-bed metal** can get very hot in direct sunlight, harming a dog's paws. Also take care that they have access to **fresh drinking water and shade**. They can get very thirsty because panting and drinking is how they cool themselves. Dogs can get sunburn, especially dogs with thin or lightly-colored coats of fur. It's best to take them outside when the sun hasn't risen too high, otherwise **have shade** available for them. Many people advocate a warm-weather **haircut and/or sunscreen** if a dog is kept outside for long, and certainly **don't over-exercise** it in the heat.



In winter, they can get **frostbite** so always consider the weather before taking your dog outside. Even a husky shouldn't be left outside in subzero weather unnecessarily. And make sure to let **no antifreeze** ever spill, because it's poisonous yet it tastes good.

6. Know where your dog can and can't swim. Don't assume it will have the common sense to never jump into dangerous waters. Most dogs can learn to swim, but they **aren't natural swimmers**. A **swimming pool** can be dangerous if your dog doesn't have an easy way to pull itself out. And if **still water** looks murky or scummy, it could be toxic when swallowed.



7. In a car, keep your dog safe and secure. Another problem with dogs in truck beds is that dogs can fall out or be badly injured in an accident. Over 100,000 dogs are estimated to die this way each year. A leash is no answer because it can lead to a severe neck injury. For truck beds, a **secured crate** with access to air and water is the way to go. Some crates and harnesses are dangerous, so visit CenterForPetSafety.org to see how to do it right. The distraction of letting a dog ride in a car can lead to an accident, so use a **car harness, a crate, or a barrier** that keeps it in the back seat. If you like to let your dog poke its head out the window, protect its eyes with doggy **goggles**. If you get a **window pad** that slides over the top of the window, that will prevent it from jumping out and also protect its throat from sudden bumps.

8. Try to take your dog in for annual checkups. **Vaccines** are important, and sometimes multiple shots are needed. Your vet also will examine your dog for signs of oncoming health problems. *Diseases are more easily prevented than cured.* **Don't medicate a pet yourself** because they can be harmed by many pills including aspirin, which is sometimes fatal.

9. Protect your dog from parasites. Some of the most common are **fleas, ticks and heartworm**. There are many more less common ones. It really depends on what area you live in, so be sure to ask your vet how to protect against them. Use **only vet-approved products** because only they are qualified to judge which product is safe for your pet and how it should be applied. There are some cheap flea repellents out there that don't work well and can irritate your dog's skin.



10. Watch for any changes in your dog's behavior. Temporary odd behaviors are to be expected from dogs, but anytime there's an uncharacteristic **depression** or really **negative change** in behavior that persists for a significant time, something may have gone wrong with your dog's health. The course of caution is to take it to **see the vet**.