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Tips for Adopting and Caring for Your First Senior Dog

If you're ready to adopt a dog for the first time, don't limit yourself to puppies. Animal shelters are overflowing with senior dogs in need of a loving home. Senior dogs make fantastic first pets because they tend to be calmer and less destructive than untrained puppies. They are especially great companions for families with young children! Plus, most older dogs come housetrained and have an understanding of basic commands and human expectations.

While senior dogs may be more independent and well-behaved than puppies, becoming a pet owner is still a [serious responsibility](#). Make sure you and your home are properly prepared! Here are some tips to help you get your home ready and welcome a senior dog into your life.

Call in Some Help

As you get accustomed to the joys and responsibilities of pet ownership, it helps to know who to call for assistance. Take the time to research and pick out a good [veterinarian](#) and groomer to keep your pet healthy. Other professional services, such as pet sitting, can also be a significant help. You can hire pet sitters (sitters usually charge between [\\$14 and \\$19](#) per hour) to visit your home and care for your pup while you're away, so you won't have to rely on neighbors or family members who may not know how to meet the specific needs of your senior dog. Use sites like City Pet Sitters to find [reliable professionals](#) in your area.

Like dogs of any age, senior pups can make a mess of the home. If keeping up with the housecleaning is getting overwhelming, consider hiring a professional cleaning service. A maid service will help control hair, dander, and doggy drool to keep odors at bay and ensure your home always feels fresh. According to HomeAdvisor, it costs between [\\$116 to \\$235](#) to hire an interior maid cleaning service.

Think About Home Accessibility

Much like senior humans, senior dogs can benefit from some home accessibility features to make daily living safer and more comfortable. Purchase a few senior pet supplies to ensure your new dog will be able to sleep, eat, drink, and go to the bathroom as easily as possible. For example, the American Kennel Club recommends purchasing [pet stairs](#) or ramps to help your dog get up and down from couches, beds, or car seats. Since senior dogs can suffer from neck and spine stiffness, you may have to raise your pet's food and water bowls off the floor for comfortable [feeding](#).

Go Slowly

When acclimating your pet to his new home, go slow and give him plenty of space. This is not a good time to introduce all your friends to your new senior dog. From the very moment you pick up your dog from the shelter, remain calm and be patient. Cesar's Way recommends taking your dog on a walk through [your home](#), introducing him to each room slowly and ending the tour at his feeding area and sleeping spot.

Start Training

Your senior dog may need some [training](#) to break bad habits and establish desired behaviors. Older dogs have the ability to learn everything from basic obedience to fun tricks! If you're new to pet ownership, adopt a breed that's easy to train such as a golden or Labrador retriever. You might even have to do some [housetraining](#) to get your dog to go to the bathroom outside, especially if he is a rescue and has never been housebroken. Just remember to practice patience and positive reinforcement by rewarding your pet for good behaviors. Being predictable and calm will help your dog better understand what you want him to do.

While there's no denying that puppies are cute, there are numerous good reasons to adopt a senior dog instead. Senior dogs are eager to learn and please their owners, so you're bound to establish a strong bond with your big-hearted friend before you know it. Treat your older pup with patience and compassion, and he will reward you with unconditional love and companionship for years to come.