

A FREE GIFT FROM THE NOBODY WARNED ME TEAM

HEALTHY DOG ESSENTIALS

*A comprehensive guide to training, care & happiness –
the everyday stuff, made simple*

BONUS EDITION

TRAINING · EXERCISE · GROOMING · HEALTH · TRUST

THE VETTED PETS PRESENTS

Healthy Dog Essentials

*Training, exercise, grooming, health and trust —
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Before we start

You got this guide free — with your book, with your discount, or for telling us what you thought. Here's how to use it.

This is a short, practical companion — not a sequel. Where *Nobody Warned Me* is about surviving the first fourteen days, this guide is about everything after: the training that fits in a coffee break, the exercise that actually tires a dog out, the grooming and health rhythms that keep small problems small.

Everything here follows the same rule as the main book: **reward-based methods only**. No dominance, no corrections, nothing that works by scaring or hurting. That's not a preference — it's where the veterinary behavior evidence landed years ago, and it's also the approach that works best with dogs whose histories you don't fully know.

Read it in any order. Each part stands alone. And keep the weekly rhythm card at the back somewhere visible — it's the whole guide on one page.

— *The Vetted Pets team*

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PART ONE

Training that fits in a coffee break

Five skills, three minutes at a time. Training is not a phase — it's how you talk to each other.

The only rule that matters

Reward what you want more of. That's the whole method. Every behavior that earns something good gets repeated; every behavior that earns nothing fades. You don't need to be strict, dominant, or scary. You need to be **quick** — the reward lands within a second or two of the behavior — and **consistent**.

Keep sessions tiny: two or three minutes, two or three times a day. End while the dog is still winning. A dog that finishes a session wanting more comes back to the next one eager; a dog drilled for twenty minutes learns that training is something to endure.

The five core skills

1. **Name = attention.** Say the name once; the instant they look at you, treat. Ten reps, twice a day. Never use the name as a reprimand — it must only ever predict good things, because one day you'll need it near a road.
2. **Sit.** Hold a treat at the nose, lift slowly back over the head; the bottom drops. Mark the moment ("yes!"), treat. Add the word once the motion is reliable — not before.

3. **Down.** From a sit, lower a treat slowly to the floor between the paws. Wait for the elbows. Mark, treat. This one takes patience with some dogs — it's a vulnerable position.
4. **Come.** The most important skill and the easiest to poison. Start indoors, a few steps away: crouch, happy voice, reward generously *every single time*. The unbreakable rule: never call your dog to something they won't like. If you must do something unpleasant, go and get them instead.
5. **Leave it.** Treat in a closed fist. The dog sniffs, licks, paws — nothing happens. The instant they back off, mark and reward from the *other* hand. The lesson: ignoring the thing makes a better thing appear.

A dog who comes when called, every time, is a dog with freedom. That skill is bought with a thousand cheerful repetitions.

When it isn't working

Almost always one of three causes. The dog is **over threshold** — too excited, too stressed, or too distracted, so move somewhere easier. The **reward isn't rewarding** — kibble loses to a squirrel; use boiled chicken for the hard stuff. Or the **step was too big** — break it smaller. "Stubborn" is almost never the answer.

THE SHORT VERSION

part one

- Reward what you want, within a second or two. Ignore or redirect the rest.
- Sessions of 2–3 minutes, ending on a win, beat marathons.
- Never call them to anything unpleasant. Go to them instead.
- Not working? Easier place, better treat, smaller step.

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PART TWO

Exercise, play, and the nose

A tired dog is a good dog — but "tired" comes in kinds, and the walk is only one of them.

Sniffing beats distance

Ten minutes of slow walking with the nose down, reading the neighborhood, tires a dog more than forty minutes of marching. Dogs experience the world primarily through smell; a walk where you let them investigate is information, exercise, and relaxation at once. If you change one habit from this guide, make it this: **slow down and let the nose lead.**

How much is enough?

It depends on the dog, not the internet. A young border collie and a senior bulldog are different animals with the same job title. Watch your own dog: a well-exercised dog settles at home, chews appropriate things, and sleeps deeply. Restlessness, demand barking, and redecorating your skirting boards usually mean the tank isn't empty.

But more running isn't always the answer. Many behavior problems come from too much arousal, not too little exercise — a dog that's wound tighter every day by hours of ball-chasing. Mix the kinds:

- **Slow sniff walks** — the daily staple

- **Play** — tug with rules (you start it, you can pause it), fetch in doses, flirt pole for the athletes
- **Brain work** — scatter feeding in the grass, snuffle mats, cardboard boxes to shred, three-minute training sessions
- **Rest** — yes, scheduled. Dogs need 12–16 hours of sleep a day, and many don't get it because the household is always "on"

Weather sense

Heat: dogs cool themselves almost entirely by panting, and heatstroke kills fast. Walk early and late in summer, carry water, and never — not for five minutes — leave a dog in a parked car. If the pavement is too hot for the back of your hand after five seconds, it's too hot for paws. **Cold:** short-coated, small, and senior dogs feel it first; a coat isn't a costume, it's equipment.

THE SHORT VERSION

part two

- Slow sniff walks beat distance marching.
- Mix the kinds: sniffing, play, brain work, scheduled rest.
- Restlessness at home = tank not empty. Frayed nerves = too much arousal, not too little exercise.
- Hot car, never. Hot pavement, test with your hand.

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PART THREE

Grooming without the wrestling match

Five calm minutes a week beats one traumatic hour a month — for coat, nails, ears and teeth.

The secret to grooming isn't technique, it's **history**. A dog that has learned handling predicts treats is easy for life. So the first rule: pair everything with food, go slower than you think you need to, and stop before the dog wants to stop. One calm minute with a treat beats ten minutes of restraint — restraint teaches a dog that grooming is something to survive.

Coat

Short coats: a weekly rubber-brush once-over removes dead hair and spreads skin oils — and doubles as your weekly hands-on health check. Double coats (retrievers, shepherds, huskies): brush weekly, daily during the spring and autumn sheds; never shave a double coat — it insulates against heat as well as cold. Long and curly coats: line-brush down to the skin several times a week; mats pull the skin and hide problems, and once they form near the skin, a groomer with clippers is kinder than you with scissors.

Nails

If you hear clicking on hard floors, they're due. Little and often is the rule: trim the curved tip every week or two rather than big cuts rarely — the quick (the blood vessel inside) recedes when nails stay short, and grows long when they don't. Dark nails hide the quick, so take small slices and watch the cut surface; a chalky white or black dot in the center means stop. Keep styptic powder in the house. And if the dog panics, pay a groomer or vet nurse — a ten-dollar nail trim is cheaper than a dog that fears hands.

Ears and teeth

Ears: look and sniff weekly. Healthy ears are pale pink and smell of nothing. Redness, brown discharge, head-shaking, or a yeasty smell mean the vet, not a cotton bud — never put anything down the ear canal. Floppy-eared and swimming dogs need the most watching.

Teeth: brushing is the single highest-value health habit most owners skip. Dog toothpaste only (human toothpaste is not dog-safe), a soft brush or finger brush, thirty seconds, a few times a week. Start by letting them lick the paste, then lift a lip for two seconds, and build up over weeks. Dental disease is one of the most common problems vets see in adult dogs — and it's largely preventable from your sofa.

Baths

Less often than you think. Every month or two is plenty for most dogs, or when they've found something dead to wear. Dog shampoo, lukewarm water, non-slip mat, towels staged

beforehand. Too-frequent bathing strips the coat's oils and can cause the very smell problems people bathe against.

THE SHORT VERSION

part three

- Pair every handling moment with food. Stop before the dog wants to.
- Nails: click on floors = due. Small slices, watch for the dot, styptic powder ready.
- Ears: look and sniff weekly. Smell or redness = vet, not cotton buds.
- Teeth: dog toothpaste, 30 seconds, a few times a week — start tonight.

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PART FOUR

Everyday health, kept simple

You are your dog's first vet visit. Five habits catch almost everything early.

1 • The weekly hands-on check

Once a week, during a cuddle: run your hands over the whole body. You're learning what normal feels like — so that a new lump, a sore spot, a hot ear, or a flinch stands out immediately. Check inside the ears, along the gums, between the toes, under the collar. Owners find most problems first, weeks before anyone else could.

2 • The rib test

Stand over your dog and look down: you should see a waist behind the ribs. Run your hands along the sides: you should feel ribs under a thin layer of fat, like the back of your hand — not knuckles (too thin), not your palm (too heavy). Weight creeps, and it shortens dogs' lives. Treats count as food — if training used a handful of chicken, dinner shrinks accordingly.

3 • Food, kept boring

A complete food appropriate for their age and size, measured — not eyeballed — at regular times, with treats capped around 10% of the day. Change foods gradually over a week or more (a quarter new,

then half, then three-quarters) or you'll meet the consequences at both ends. Fresh water always. The dangerous-foods list is short and worth memorizing: **chocolate, grapes and raisins, onions and garlic, xylitol (in sugar-free products), alcohol, cooked bones**. Macadamia nuts too. When in doubt, call before it digests.

4 • Prevention rhythm

With your vet, set the rhythm once and put it in your calendar: annual health check and vaccinations as advised, and year-round flea, tick, and worming cover appropriate to where you live. Skipping prevention is the most expensive money you'll ever save.

5 • Know your emergency signs

Call the vet today for: repeated vomiting, diarrhea with blood or lasting past a day, refusing food past 24–48 hours, lethargy that doesn't lift, pale gums, straining to urinate, persistent coughing, or a new pain response when touched. Go *now* for: collapse or seizure, labored breathing, a hard distended abdomen, or a known toxin. And find your out-of-hours emergency clinic on a calm Tuesday — not at 2am.

THE SHORT VERSION

part four

- Weekly hands-on check — you find problems first.
- Waist visible from above, ribs feelable. Treats count as food.
- Chocolate, grapes/raisins, onion/garlic, xylitol: never. Call early if it happens.
- Prevention on a calendar. Emergency clinic found in daylight.

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PART FIVE

Trust — the part that makes the rest easy

Every training session, walk and nail trim either deposits into the relationship or withdraws from it.

Trust with a dog isn't mystical. It's a bank account, and the currency is predictability. Dogs relax when the world is legible: food arrives, walks happen, the hand that reaches toward them has never hurt them, and the human's mood doesn't change the rules.

Let them say no (when it doesn't matter)

Offer your hand and let the dog close the distance — a dog that approaches is consenting; a dog that turns away is answering a question you should be glad you asked. Dogs allowed to decline a cuddle are *more* affectionate over time, not less, because affection was never forced. When it does matter — the vet, the nail trim — go slow, pair it with food, and don't trick them twice.

Predictable humans, predictable days

Roughly the same times for food, walks and sleep. The same words for the same things. Rules that don't change with your mood — the sofa is allowed or it isn't, decided once, by everyone in the house. This isn't rigidity; it's the thing anxious dogs heal on.

Read the body, not the story

A wagging tail means arousal, not happiness — the loose, wiggly, whole-body wag is the friendly one. Whale eye (whites showing), lip licking, yawning out of context, a stiffening body, turning away: these are a dog saying "I'm not comfortable" long before a growl. Answer the whisper and you'll rarely hear the shout.

You don't need to be the pack leader. You need to be the most predictable, safest thing in your dog's life.

THE SHORT VERSION

part five

- Trust = predictability, deposited daily.
- Let them decline affection; the vet still happens, but slowly and with food.
- Same times, same words, same rules — from everyone in the house.
- Whale eye, lip licks, stiffening: answer the whisper, avoid the shout.

KEEP THIS PAGE VISIBLE

The weekly rhythm card

The whole guide on one page. Print it, or photograph it.

RHYTHM	WHAT	HOW LONG
Daily	Training reps (name, sit, down, come, leave it)	2–3 min, 2–3 times
Daily	Sniff walk — let the nose lead	Slow beats far
Daily	Play or brain work (scatter feed, tug with rules)	10–15 min
Daily	Protected rest — a sleeping dog is not bored	12–16 h total
Weekly	Hands-on body check + brush	5 min, with treats
Weekly	Ears: look and sniff	1 min
Weekly or two	Nails: listening for the click	5 min
Few times a week	Teeth: dog toothpaste, lip lift	30 sec
Monthly	Rib test + weight glance; prevention due?	2 min
Once, today	Emergency clinic number saved in your phone	2 min

None of this replaces your veterinarian, trainer, or groomer — it makes you a better client of all three.

From the same kitchen table

Nobody Warned Me

This bonus guide came from the same people as **Nobody Warned Me** — the honest survival guide for the first 14 days with a new puppy or rescue dog, with the 3AM boxes, the twelve fights, and a chapter about you.

If this guide helped, the book goes deeper on everything hard about the first two weeks — the nights, the toilet training, the biting, and the moment you wonder what you've done.

And if you have two minutes: we read every word of feedback. Reply to any of our emails and tell us what's working, what's missing, and how your dog is doing. It shapes what we write next.

— *The Vetted Pets team · thevettedpets.com*