



## Ten Things all Pet Owners Should Know

Following these ten tips will guarantee you a happy, healthy relationship with any kind of pet!



1. ***Your pet needs to go to the vet.*** Start saving now. Every pet needs to be examined by a vet occasionally. Illnesses that are caught early are often treatable, and regular vet exams are your best weapon. Even the healthiest pet may have an accident, calling for immediate emergency care. Older pets may be in pain from age-related deterioration. Face it; you're going to have to take your pet to the vet sooner or later. Be prepared to pay for it!

2. ***You're the human, you set the rules.*** Don't let your pet boss you around. Decide on the rules, and enforce them consistently. Don't let your pet get his way if it goes against the rules -- he'll just try that much harder the next time. Animals may not seem to have long memories, but they sure remember how they got their own way the last time!

3. ***Animals love a boring routine.*** Pets want to know what to expect -- it makes them feel secure. Yours will be happiest if they are fed at the same time every day, sleep in the same spot at night, and can count on you to always come home at a certain time. They'll get by if the routine occasionally changes, but keeping their day predictable keeps them predictable, and happy.

4. ***Good food and lots of exercise equals a long life.*** We all know we should eat healthy foods in moderation and get plenty of exercise. The same goes for our pets. Healthy living prevents illness, and you won't have to see the vet as often! If a small pet is confined to a cage, give it lots of space and things to climb on or explore, to encourage exercise. Reserve treats like dog biscuits or table scraps for very special occasions.

5. ***Everything ends up in their mouths.*** To you it's an electrical cord, but to your dog, it's a chew toy. Keep in mind that your pets will chew on anything, and keep dangerous items out of reach! Encourage them to chew on toys instead by providing lots of them, especially new ones once the old ones have lost their appeal.

6. ***Bacteria do not make good pets.*** A clean environment keeps everyone happy and healthy. Pets are dirty, and need lots of cleaning. On a weekly basis, brush your dog's teeth, wash out the gerbil's water bottle, and scoop out the cat's litter box! If you don't, you're in for bacterial and parasitic infections, painful tooth decay, and the smell...!



7. ***Tight security saves lives.*** Keep your pet confined safely. Escape-proof all cages and fences, walk your dog on a leash, and keep your cat indoors. The outside world is full of speeding cars, unfamiliar animals, pesticides, and even pet thieves. Just in case, make certain all dogs and cats have sturdy collars with tags, or have been tattooed or micro-chipped.

8. ***There are too many homeless animals already.*** Lost pets without tags usually end up being put to sleep at the shelter when they lose their way home. Even worse off are the pets that never had homes to begin with. There aren't enough good homes for all the animals out there, so have your pets spayed or neutered, and do not allow them to breed! In America alone, four million cats and dogs are put down every year. That's far too many! If you want another pet, consider adoption instead.

9. ***When in doubt, look to nature.*** When confronted with a pet problem, find out how your pet would have lived in the wild. Need to know how warm your frog's tank should be? Research his natural habitat and try to copy it. Want to keep your dogs from fighting? Read up on pack behavior in the wild. Our pets evolved to live in the wild, and by understanding their natural environment, needs, and social behavior, we can help them live with us more comfortably.

10. ***It all depends on you.*** Ultimately, when you accepted this animal as a pet, you agreed to take care of him. This means feeding, habitat, health, safety... you are responsible for it all. It takes a lot of time and money to care for a pet properly. However, it is certainly worth it! There are over 100 million households worldwide with at least one pet, and they can't all be wrong! Take care of your pets, so you can have a long, enjoyable life together.

