Puppy Proofing Your Home

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Puppies have a tremendous amount of energy and natural curiosity, and they love to explore the world around them. This is part of what makes them so much fun, but it can also lead them into harmful situations. Before you bring your new puppy home, make sure you survey your home for potential dangers. In many ways, making your home safe for a puppy is similar to making your home safe for a toddler. The following tips are designed to help you keep your puppy safe. Many of the following warnings apply for adult dogs as well:

Indoor hazards

- Know which plants are toxic and place them out of reach, or replace them with nontoxic plants. Toxic plants commonly found indoors include dieffenbachia, azalea, Calla lily, and philodendron.
- Keep all medications, including any dog supplements, in a safe area the puppy cannot access. Do not leave vitamins or other pills out on the kitchen counter or table. A determined chewer can make short work of a plastic container. Puppies are surprisingly quick at pulling things off of end tables or other low surfaces.
- Put bathroom trash cans up high where your dog cannot get into them. Sanitary supplies and used razors are only two of the hazards here.
- Full sinks, bathtubs, or toilets with open lids can be a drowning hazard. Avoid automatic toilet bowl cleaners if you cannot keep your puppy from drinking out of the toilet.
- Keep cleaning supplies in high cupboards or use childproof latches to secure lower cupboards. Remove the puppy from the area when you are using liquid or spray cleaners. They can get into the eyes of a curious puppy, and the vapors can be harmful to lungs and eyes.
- Be careful of your puppy around furniture. A rocking chair can harm a puppy's tail or leg, and a curious puppy may crawl under an open recliner or sofa bed.
- Electrical cords are a big danger to puppies, who often chew on them while playing. This can cause burns in the mouth, electrical shock, or death by electrocution. Tie up loose electrical cords and keep them out of sight. Run cords through purchased spiral cable wrap, cord concealers, or even PVC

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pipe to keep them safe from your puppy.

- Any type of fire can be dangerous. Screen off fireplaces and wood stoves. Never leave your puppy unattended in a room with an open flame or space heater.

- Cords for drapery and blinds can cause strangulation. Either tie up the excess cords, or cut the loop in the cord.

- Swallowed clothing may cause a dangerous intestinal blockage. Keep socks, nylons, underwear, and other clothing put away. Keep laundry baskets off the floor.

- Keep small objects (coins, jewelry, needles and thread, straight pins, yarn, dental floss, rubber bands, paper clips, toys, etc.) out of your puppy's reach. Jewelry and coins are easily swallowed and can contain metals that are toxic. Keep costly items and those of sentimental value put away until your puppy is older and less likely to chew. Provide an assortment of chew toys that are appropriate for your puppy's chewing instinct.

- Keep fishing line, hooks, and lures stored out of reach.

- Be careful about closing doors as you walk through – your puppy may be right behind you and get caught.

- Keep doors and windows closed. Keep screens on windows and sliding glass doors securely fastened and in good repair, to keep your puppy from falling through or escaping.

- Close off stairwells with a pet gate.

- Many dogs will eat cat feces from the litter box if given the chance. In addition to being a disgusting (at least to us!) habit, this can be a dangerous health hazard. Cat litter can cause an intestinal obstruction, and in addition, any intestinal worms the cat has may be passed on to the dog. One solution may be to put the litter box behind a pet gate, either in a separate room or in a closet with the gate across the doorway. The gate can be raised up from the floor to allow the cat to go under it, unless the dog is able to go under it also. If the cat cannot jump over the gate easily, a stepstool beside the gate can help.

- Many human foods can cause problems for pets. Chocolate, onions, alcohol, and foods high in fat, sugar, or salt can be very harmful. Chocolate, coffee, and tea all contain dangerous components called "xanthines," which cause nervous system or urinary system damage and heart muscle stimulation. Problems from ingestion of chocolate range from diarrhea to seizures and death. All chocolate, fudge, and other candy should be placed out of your dog's reach. Grapes and raisins contain an unknown toxin, which can damage the kidneys.

- Tobacco products, including nicotine gum and patches, contain substances that can be toxic or fatal to dogs.

- Chicken bones, plastic food wrap, coffee grounds, meat trimmings, the string from a roast – all pose a potential hazard. Scraps from ham or other foods high in fat can cause vomiting and diarrhea, or pancreatitis. To be safe, put food away immediately, dog-proof your garbage, and do not feed table scraps to your dog. Uncooked meat, fish, and poultry can contain disease-causing bacteria, such as *E. coli*, and parasites, such as *Toxoplasma gondii*. These uncooked foods should not be given to your dog. For your own health, as well as your pet's, wash utensils that have been in contact with raw meat, and cook meat thoroughly.

- The holidays can bring extra hazards for dogs. For a review of holiday precautions, see " Keeping the Holidays Happy and Safe."

Outdoor hazards

- Do not leave your puppy outside unsupervised. To prevent your puppy from wandering, you will need to either build an outdoor kennel or provide secure fencing that your puppy cannot jump over or dig under.

- Provide your puppy a separate area of your yard to use as his bathroom area. Use fencing, or other means, to keep him out of areas where children may play, especially sand boxes.

- Some outdoor plants and trees can be toxic to dogs. Common ones include potato (all green parts), morning glory, foxglove, lily of the valley, and oak (buds and acorns). Many bulb plants, such as daffodils, are also poisonous. Cocoa bean mulch can be toxic to dogs. Some dogs chew and swallow

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landscaping stone, which can cause dangerous intestinal blockage.

- Make sure all gasoline, oil, paint, lawn fertilizers, insecticides, and auto supplies are placed into secure containers, out of reach. Be especially careful with antifreeze and rat poison, both of which taste good to dogs and both of which can be deadly if ingested.
- Pools, ponds, and hot tubs should be covered or fenced off. Drainpipes can also pose problems.
- Fire rings, barbecues, and other heat or fire sources pose the potential of causing burns.
- Keep all food and other garbage in securely closed containers. Used coffee grounds can contain harmful amounts of caffeine, and decomposing food may contain toxic molds. Keep compost in a secure bin.
- Walk around your property and look for other areas or items that could be a hazard to your puppy, such as broken glass, exposed nails, or other sharp objects. Plan how you will restrict your puppy's access to these areas.

Bringing home a new puppy is a time of fun and excitement. Following these tips will help you keep your new friend safe, so that the two of you can enjoy each other's company for years to come.

Suggested Puppy Supplies:

Gates

Collars & Leashes

Exercise Pens

Cages & Crates

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