

Costs of a Dog

by [Petfinder](#)

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Your new dog is counting on you to meet his needs all his needs. That's a pretty weighty responsibility and it comes with a cost. Just how high a cost will depend on where you live, where you shop and how big your new canine buddy is.



Some costs are **once-in-a-lifetime** costs and if you are lucky, your shelter may have already taken care of some of them. Spay/neuter surgery is frequently done before an animal goes up for adoption. If the dog you adopted is intact, the cost to alter the dog may be as low as \$25 at a low-cost spay/neuter clinic to over \$200 at a private veterinarian's office in a major city. Ask if there is a spay/neuter voucher program in your community to help defray the cost. Permanent identification is another area your shelter may have covered. Many organizations microchip animals before sending them off to their new homes, leaving the task of registering the dog to the new guardians – a cost ranging from free up to \$35. Discuss how to register the microchip with the shelter or your new veterinarian.

The shelter examined your pup and may have provided initial vaccinations and de-worming. However, it is still a smart idea to take your new pet to the vet for a **wellness exam** within the first few days following adoption. There, the veterinarian can answer questions on flea and tick treatments, nutrition and healthcare and start your dog on heartworm preventative. Expect the visit and treatments to be \$75-200, unless your shelter underwrites part of the cost for the first visit. If a **microchip** wasn't part of the adoption package, ask the veterinarian to implant one at this initial visit – cost: \$25-50.

Worried about the cost of future accidents or health catastrophes? **Pet health insurance** is becoming an increasingly popular way to share the burden of high health costs. The sooner you sign up, the sooner you are covered. Investigate your options with the veterinarian or search the internet using "Pet Insurance" for information on the variety of programs available.

If your new dog isn't house-trained yet or is still teething, a **training crate** is necessary to prevent house-soiling or household destruction. Some shelters rent out crates to new adopters for a nominal fee. Alternatively, expect to pay \$50-200 to purchase a new one, depending on the size of the dog and the type of retail outlet you frequent. While steep, it is much less expensive than replacing wall-to-wall carpeting or the living room sofa. As many dog guardians get rid of their crates once their pets are trained, reasonably-priced used crates are often available through many internet auction sites, local want ads, bulletin board notices or at yard sales.

Items such as **collars, leashes, toys and beds** run the price gamut. A nylon collar and leash set can be had for around \$10. Training head halters or harnesses average \$25. Fancy designer sets sell for \$50 or more. Chew toys are quite reasonable for toy-sized dogs (100 chew sticks for under \$10), but can be \$10 a piece for giant knotted rawhide bones. Heavy rubber food-dispensing toys generally cost \$8-20. Bedding can run from single to triple digits depending on size and materials. **Of course, letting the dog sleep on the furniture is free – if she or he has earned the privilege.** Research pet supplies online. Some suppliers will offer pet owners wholesale prices when they are purchasing more than \$50 worth of pet products.

Pet food will most likely be your biggest expense. Costs vary depending on the type (canned or kibble), quality (generic, basic or premium) and amount needed. When you choose to skimp on quality, you often make it up in quantity. You will be serving more of the cheap stuff – and scooping up more as well. Nothing beats premium quality kibble for producing comparatively small, easy-to-pick-up feces. If your community mandates cleaning up after your dog, you will appreciate the difference.

New dog/owner teams benefit from **training classes** and some shelters will provide them for free or at a reduced cost. Private trainers may also offer 10-25% discounts for rescued dogs. Most group classes run for six to eight weeks at a cost of \$50-350 for the series. The large pet supply superstores often provide group training classes at the low end of the price scale.

Whew, does it sound like you need to take out a home equity loan in order to care for your new best friend? Before leaving the shelter, inquire about which trainers, groomers, veterinarians and pet supply stores offer discounts to new adopters. Then, shop around and look for sales. Remember that you can't put a price on non-judgmental companionship. An unlimited amount of slurpy, wet kisses and joyous tail wags come at no extra charge!