Golden Retriever Puppy Checklist

Your first 12 weeks, in one printable booklet

Shopping list | First-night plan | Daily routine
Puppy-proofing walkthrough | Vaccine tracker | Vet questions
Toxic foods and plants | Emergency numbers
Socialization tracker | Weight log | Potty log | Budget worksheet

Free from Golden Retriever Daily. General education only; it does not replace advice from your veterinarian.
Some guides on our site contain affiliate links; this checklist has none.

1. Shopping list

Get the must-haves before pickup. The "nice to have" list can wait.

Must-have before pickup

- [ ] Crate sized for adult golden, with divider (see our crate size guide)
- [ ] Bed or crate pad that is chew-resistant and washable
- [ ] Puppy food: ask the breeder or rescue what they feed, and keep it the same at first
- [ ] Food and water bowls (stainless steel or ceramic)
- [ ] Collar or harness that fits, plus ID tag with your phone number
- [ ] Standard 4 to 6 foot leash
- [ ] Poop bags
- [ ] Enzymatic cleaner for accidents
- [ ] Chew toys and teething toys, a few different textures
- [ ] Stuffable toy for the crate (e.g. rubber, hollow)
- [ ] Soft brush or slicker brush and a comb
- [ ] Puppy-safe nail clippers or grinder
- [ ] Baby gates or an exercise pen
- [ ] Training treats: small, soft, pea-sized
- [ ] Dog-safe shampoo (not human shampoo)
- [ ] Dog toothbrush and dog-safe toothpaste (never human toothpaste)

Nice to have, can wait

- [ ] Car restraint (crash-tested harness or secured crate)
- [ ] Slow-feeder or puzzle bowl
- [ ] Water bottle for walks
- [ ] Cooling mat for warm weather
- [ ] Sturdy long line for recall practice
- [ ] Puppy class or training course (sign up early)

Tip: Spend more on things that affect safety (crate, harness, car restraint) and less on things your puppy will outgrow in a few months.

2. First-night plan

The first days set the routine. Aim for calm and predictable.

Before bedtime

- [ ] Last meal at least a couple of hours before bed (follow your vet's feeding plan)
- [ ] Last potty break right before bed, quietly, with a treat
- [ ] Crate or pen set up near your bed so your puppy can hear you
- [ ] Soft bedding and a safe chew toy; no loose items that can be swallowed
- [ ] Room is quiet, dim and a comfortable temperature
- [ ] Water available as your vet advises

During the night

- [ ] Plan to take your puppy out once or twice overnight at first
- [ ] Keep night potty trips boring: no play, no talking, straight back to bed
- [ ] Whining is normal. Check whether it is a potty need, then settle
- [ ] Do not let a puppy cry for long periods if they are truly distressed; go calmly and reassure
- [ ] Write down times in the potty log (page 11)

Morning

- [ ] Straight outside for a potty break, with a treat
- [ ] Breakfast, then another potty break
- [ ] Short play and training, then nap

Reminder: Puppies sleep a lot, often many hours a day. Make nap time a quiet time in the crate or pen. Call your vet if your puppy seems lethargic, refuses food or has vomiting or diarrhea.

3. A sample daily routine

Adjust times to your household and your vet's feeding advice.

Time of day	What happens
Wake	Straight outside to potty, treat
Breakfast	Meal, then potty break
Play + training	5 minutes of short sessions
Nap	Crate or pen
Wake + potty	Out immediately after waking
Midday meal	If your vet advises 3 or more meals
Play + nap	Repeat cycle
Dinner	Last meal a couple of hours before bed
Evening play	Calm social time, chewing
Last potty	Right before bed
Bedtime	Crate near you

Rule of thumb: Take your puppy out after waking, after eating, after play, and about every hour or two when awake and young. Reward right away in the potty spot. Every puppy is different. See the full guides on goldenretrieverdaily for details on potty training and sleep.

Write your own schedule here:

4. Puppy-proofing walkthrough

Get down to puppy height and look around.

Living areas

- [ ] Electrical cords tucked away or covered
- [ ] Houseplants moved or checked for toxicity
- [ ] Small objects, remote controls, socks and shoes out of reach
- [ ] Trash cans secured
- [ ] Breakable items moved
- [ ] Gates up for stairs and off-limit rooms

Kitchen and bathroom

- [ ] Cabinets with cleaners or medicine secured
- [ ] Food, chocolate, grapes and sugar-free gum stored out of reach
- [ ] Medications kept in closed cabinets
- [ ] Toilet lids closed
- [ ] Laundry and trash secured

Yard and garage

- [ ] Fence has no gaps or low spots
- [ ] Pool, pond or hot tub secured
- [ ] Gardening products, fertilizer and antifreeze locked away
- [ ] Toxic plants removed (see page 7)
- [ ] Rodent poison and snail bait removed

5. Vet visit worksheet

Book a first visit within the first few days, or as your breeder's health guarantee requires.

Bring

- [ ] Breeder or shelter records, vaccine and deworming history
- [ ] A stool sample if asked
- [ ] Food name and feeding amounts
- [ ] Your list of questions

Questions to ask

- [ ] Which vaccines does my puppy need, and when?
- [ ] Which parasite preventives (fleas, ticks, heartworm) should we use?
- [ ] How much and how often should I feed?
- [ ] When should we microchip?
- [ ] What age do you recommend for spay or neuter, and why? (see our guide)
- [ ] What signs mean I should call you right away?
- [ ] What is your emergency policy? Which 24-hour clinic do you recommend?
- [ ] Should we discuss pet insurance or a savings plan?
- [ ] What socialization is safe before vaccines are finished?

Notes:

6. Vaccine and preventive tracker

Your vet sets the schedule. Fill in dates and write down what is due next.

Date	Vaccine / preventive	Vet initials	Next due

Typical items to track: core vaccines (your vet will list them), rabies as required locally, heartworm prevention, flea and tick prevention, deworming and microchip details.

7. Toxic foods and plants

Not a complete list. If your puppy eats something, call right away.

Foods and household items to keep away

- [ ] Chocolate and cocoa
- [ ] Grapes and raisins
- [ ] Xylitol (sugar-free gum, some peanut butters, candy, baked goods)
- [ ] Onions, garlic, chives
- [ ] Macadamia nuts
- [ ] Alcohol and raw yeast dough
- [ ] Caffeine (coffee, tea, energy drinks)
- [ ] Cooked bones and corn cobs (choking or blockage risk)
- [ ] Human medications (pain relievers, ADHD drugs, antidepressants)
- [ ] Cleaning products, antifreeze, rodent poison

Plants often listed as toxic to dogs

- [ ] Sago palm
- [ ] Azalea and rhododendron
- [ ] Oleander
- [ ] Tulip and daffodil bulbs
- [ ] Autumn crocus
- [ ] Castor bean
- [ ] Check the ASPCA toxic plant list for your garden

Source for these categories: ASPCA Animal Poison Control and veterinary sources. A plant being listed does not mean every exposure is serious, and absence from a list does not mean safe. Always call.

8. Emergency numbers

Fill this in today. Stick a copy on the fridge.

My vet _____

My vet's after-hours number _____

Nearest 24-hour emergency vet _____

Emergency vet address _____

Breeder or rescue _____

Pet insurance policy and claim number _____

Microchip number and registry _____

Trusted neighbor or sitter _____

Poison hotlines (a consultation fee may apply)

ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center: (888) 426-4435
Pet Poison Helpline: (855) 764-7661

Call your vet or emergency clinic right away for

- ☐ Trouble breathing, collapse or seizure
- ☐ Swollen, hard belly with retching and nothing coming up (possible bloat)
- ☐ Repeated vomiting or diarrhea, or blood
- ☐ Eating something toxic or a foreign object
- ☐ Heavy panting, drooling or weakness in the heat
- ☐ Pale gums, extreme lethargy or refusing food and water

9. Socialization and training tracker

Weeks 8 to 16 matter. Keep experiences positive and short. Ask your vet what is safe before vaccines are complete.

Experience	Date	Reaction (calm / unsure)
New people (different ages, hats, uniforms)		
Children (calm, supervised)		
Other vaccinated, friendly dogs		
Car rides		
Different floor surfaces		
Grooming: brush, paws, ears, nails		
Handling: mouth, paws, collar		
Vacuum, doorbell, other household sounds		
Crate and being alone briefly		
Wearing a collar and harness		
Leash walking at home		
Strange objects (umbrella, bike)		

Skills to teach

- [ ] Name
- [ ] Sit
- [ ] Down
- [ ] Come (recall)
- [ ] Leave it
- [ ] Drop it
- [ ] Crate settle
- [ ] Loose-leash walking

10. Weight log

Weigh at vet visits or on a home scale. Share the trend with your vet.

Date	Age (weeks)	Weight

Do not worry about hitting an exact number. Growth varies. Ask your vet whether your puppy's weight and body condition are on track.

11. Potty log

Track times to see the pattern. Mark O = outside, A = accident.

Date / time	Pee or poop	O or A	Notes

12. Budget worksheet

Fill in your own quotes. Prices vary a lot by area and by dog.

Item	One-time	Monthly
Puppy purchase or adoption fee		
First vet visit and vaccines		
Spay or neuter (if/when)		
Microchip		
Crate, bed, bowls, gear		
Food (per month)		
Treats and chews		
Flea, tick and heartworm prevention		
Training or puppy class		
Grooming supplies or groomer		
Pet insurance or savings fund		
Boarding, sitter or daycare		
Emergency fund target		

Tip: Compare insurance vs. a dedicated savings account, and keep an emergency fund. See the cost and insurance guides at goldenretrieverdaily.