

Shih Tzu

Everything your companion needs, in one place



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PART I • FUNDAMENTALS FOR ANY DOG

Preparing for the Homecoming

Most dog guides start on the day the puppy is already in your arms. That's a sequencing mistake with a real cost: the first 48 hours in a new home are, statistically and in the experience of any veterinarian or trainer with years of practice, one of the highest-risk moments for preventable accidents and decisions made in the rush of excitement — buying what you don't need, failing to buy what you do, and discovering the first household hazard only after the puppy already has it in his mouth. This chapter exists so that the first time you open the door with your new companion in your arms, the house is already ready to welcome him — not a place where you're making it up as you go.

Pet-proofing: cables, plants, cleaning products, small objects

It's tempting to think of home safety as common sense applied calmly — and largely, it is. But it's worth understanding the real scale of the problem before treating it as a minor formality: a large-scale epidemiological study conducted in Japan, which analyzed the health insurance records of more than 250,000 insured dogs over the course of one year, found that foreign body ingestion — objects a dog swallows that cannot be digested or pass normally through the digestive tract — affected 4.4% of puppies under one year of age, a significantly higher rate than the 1.7% observed in the general canine population.

Understanding why the risk is so high at this particular stage helps you take it seriously without falling into paranoia: puppies explore the world primarily with their mouths, much the same way a human baby mouths objects in early infancy. Combine that exploratory tendency with a digestive system still in development — narrower in diameter than an adult's — and the result is a real window of vulnerability that lasts, roughly, until the most intense phase of oral exploration and teething-related chewing comes to an end.

The objects that end up in emergency surgeries are striking for how ordinary they are: socks and underwear, fruit pits, bottle caps, garden stones, rubber toys chewed down to small fragments, string or cord, and food scraps or wrappers pulled from the trash. The most common location for the resulting obstruction is the small intestine — precisely the narrowest segment of the entire digestive tract.

Translated into concrete action: electrical cables should be gathered up or covered with cable conduits; cleaning products, medications, and cosmetics need a high cabinet or one with a real childproof lock; small objects on the floor require the habit of keeping the ground clear during the first few months;