

# Year of the DOG

Expert tips on pooch-proofing an apartment for first-time dog parents

BY MELISSA KRAVITZ  
Special to amNewYork

**C**ongrats on becoming a dog parent! But what do you do with your previously only-human space to make your New York City apartment, no matter how small, dog friendly?

For first-time dog owners, we asked the experts for tips on dog-proofing your apartment to create a safe, fun space for your new best friend.

"Anytime you bring a new dog into your home, you want to create a dog-proof space," says Tracy Krulik, CTC, CSAT, certified dog trainer and behavior consultant and founding editor of iSpeak Dog.com. This could mean a gated off area in your kitchen or another room or a dog play pen that keeps them out of trouble.

In that special space, you'll want to make sure food and medicines are tucked away, not on countertops or easy-to-open drawers, and keep chewable items like curtains, decorative pillows and electrical cords out of site. Ideally, this space will be on hard flooring, rather than carpet or rugs which could be confused for grass or pee pads.

"Think about it like baby proofing," Krulik says. You may even want to install baby locks on cabinets, cover electrical sockets and tuck cords under a mat or secure them with tape to keep new pets safe. "Dogs explore with their mouths — they sniff around and nibble. To them, everything looks like a toy," Krulik says.

Make sure that all your clutter is off floors and any

reachable surfaces, recommends Nicole Ellis, a pet lifestyle expert with Rover.com, and make sure that your trash is covered and put away, as "tasty smelling things in there tempt your dog."

Ellis also recommends getting down to your dog's level (as low down to the ground as that may be) to make sure there's nothing to be chewed on or pawed.

In your dog's sequestered area (which should only last for a few weeks, until you expand their roamable space), Krulik recommends including a dog bed, water, food, toys and chew toys, "to learn what's good to chew so they have practice in your home chewing great things, and don't treat your couch like one giant chew toy."

House training may be a given of must-dos for new pets, but chew training is important too, to ensure your favorite pair of boots doesn't end up in a sad, dismantled pile near the dog bed.

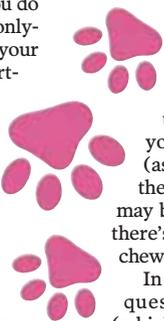
One more way to ensure your home doesn't become a masticated mess is to feed dogs out of toys and games, rather than out of bowls.

Krulik recommends a snuffle mat, inside of which kibble can be hidden. A kong should be on your shopping list, too. What Krulik calls a "food delivery device" can be used for kibble, peanut butter or other meals, and can even be frozen to make the meal last longer. Not only does this mentally stimulate and enrich pets, but it fulfills a curious instinct a dog in a new setting may

have.



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"In the wild, animals spend their day sniffing and stalking and chasing," Krulik says. "Food toys are the way to go, to use those instincts for meals instead of raiding cabinets." She recommends starting out easy and making the food challenges harder as your dog catches on.

Once your dog is chew trained and potty trained, you can give him more freedom in the house. Rehang your curtains, and while supervising, have a chew toy at the ready should you catch him lurking around something that shouldn't go in a dog mouth.

Pick a few nooks in the home, or stylish baskets or

storage ottomans, so you're never without a chew toy to toss fido's way.

Ellis recommends creating a special doggy space, with a crate, bed, blanket and toys. "Most dogs don't require a lot of space, and

having a small space all their own is great," she says. For tiny studios, dog Murphy beds that fold into the wall offer a compact solution.

"If you don't want toys overflowing your apart-

ment, I love hiding a few in the closet and swapping them out every few weeks," Ellis says.

"When an 'old' toy makes a reappearance our pups are as excited as when it was new."