

# Older Dog Home Setup Quick Start Checklist

A free quick-start guide for safer footing, easier access, cleaner nights, and lower-friction daily routines.

## What this is

Use this checklist to spot practical home changes that may help an older dog move more comfortably through the day. It is a home-setup tool, not medical advice.

## How to use it

Start with the areas your dog uses most: bed, couch, food and water, door to outside, and car access. Fix the biggest friction points first, then watch whether daily movement gets easier over the next few days.

## Start today - the fastest high-impact fixes

- Put non-slip runners or mats on the main path your dog uses most.
- Measure bed, couch, and car-entry height before buying or building anything.
- Set up one easy-to-reach resting spot with low entry, stable footing, and clear turn-around space.
- Remove loose rugs, unstable mats, and small obstacles from favorite walking lanes.
- Check nighttime lighting and make the path to the door or potty area easier to see.
- Write down where your dog hesitates, slips, refuses, or asks for help.

## Floors and traction

- Cover the slipperiest path first, not the whole house at once.
- Check corners, thresholds, and turns where slipping often starts.
- Improve lighting where footing seems worse at night or early morning.
- Use runners or mats that stay flat and do not slide underneath your dog.
- Add traction near bowls, beds, the door, and the place your dog stands to be leashed.
- If paws slide even on covered areas, re-check the surface and the fit of the setup.

## Access and daily comfort

- Measure the height of the bed, couch, or car before choosing a ramp or stairs.
- If jumping causes hesitation, missed landings, or awkward launches, reduce the jump instead of waiting.
- Keep the sleeping area low-entry, stable, and easy to approach from more than one side.
- Place food, water, and favorite rest spots where your dog does not need sharp turns or tight pivots.
- Keep frequently used items nearby so your dog does not need extra trips.
- If you try a ramp or stairs, check that the approach path is wide, stable, and not slippery.

## Nighttime and cleanup setup

- Make one simple nighttime route to the door, yard, pad, or cleanup station.
- Use washable layers where accidents, leaks, or wet paws are already a pattern.
- Keep towels, wipes, bags, and cleaner in one easy-to-reach location.
- If mornings are harder, reduce the distance between sleep area and first bathroom stop.
- Watch whether a setup change reduces pacing, hesitation, or nighttime restlessness.
- If accidents suddenly increase or other habits change quickly, make a note for your veterinarian.

## Room-by-room quick scan

Area	Check	Priority
Bedroom	Bed access, nighttime path, water, easy turn-around space	High / Med / Low
Living room	Couch access, slippery spots, favorite resting area, clutter	High / Med / Low
Entry / hall	Door threshold, stairs, narrow turns, leash and harness setup	High / Med / Low
Feeding area	Bowl height, spill traction, lighting, standing comfort	High / Med / Low
Car / travel	Jump point, ramp or lift plan, blanket or traction layer	High / Med / Low

## Key measurements before you buy or build anything

Measure	Write it down	Goal / note
Bed height	_____	Top of sleeping surface
Couch height	_____	Top of cushion, not frame
Car entry height	_____	Bumper or cargo lip height
Available floor length	_____	Straight line available for a ramp
Available width	_____	Enough room for safe approach and exit

### Top 3 changes to make this week

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### What improved after the change?

Movement / confidence: \_\_\_\_\_

Night routine / accidents: \_\_\_\_\_

Resting / settling: \_\_\_\_\_

## Contact your veterinarian sooner if you notice

- A sudden change in ability to stand, walk, or climb onto familiar surfaces.
- Repeated slipping, falling, crying out, or obvious distress during normal movement.
- A sharp change in eating, drinking, bathroom habits, or nighttime behavior.
- Marked hesitation, confusion, or refusal in places your dog handled easily before.
- Any change that feels fast, unusual, or clearly worse than last week.

## Bring these notes to the appointment

- Where your dog hesitates most: bed, couch, doorway, floors, stairs, car, outside path.
- What time of day looks hardest: morning, night, after rest, after activity, or all day.
- What changed after you adjusted the home setup, if anything.
- A short phone video of the movement issue if it is safe to capture.
- Your height measurements and the setup you are considering.

### Quick reminder

The goal is not to make the whole house perfect in one day. The goal is to remove the biggest daily friction points first, then see whether your dog moves, rests, and settles more comfortably.

### Notes

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