



# Labrador Retriever

Size: **Large**  
 Breed type: **Gundog**  
 Life Expectancy: **≈10–12 years**  
 Coat Type: **Double**  
 Coat Length: **Short**

**Good Match**

## Brief information

The Labrador Retriever is a versatile gundog of Canadian origin, developed from the St. John's water dogs of Newfoundland and later refined in Britain for retrieving game on land and from water. Strong, athletic, and famously biddable, the Labrador combines a soft mouth, keen nose, and great love of work with an unusually friendly, steady temperament. Their cheerful character, intelligence and willingness to please have made Labradors one of the world's most popular family dogs, assistance dogs and working retrievers.

## Why is this a good match?

1. Labrador Retrievers are energetic, people-oriented dogs that usually do best with regular walks, outdoor time, play, and mental engagement. A family that already enjoys daily activity is much more likely to meet the breed's exercise needs without feeling overwhelmed.
2. Labs are intelligent and eager to please, but they still need structure. With 1–2 hours a day for walks, play, and simple training, this family can give the dog enough physical outlet and guidance to prevent boredom, jumping, chewing, food stealing, or other common young Labrador behaviors.
3. Labradors are often excellent family dogs and usually enjoy children, but their size, enthusiasm, and strength mean adult supervision is still important. School-age children who can learn dog rules are a good fit, especially with adults ready to teach respectful handling, calm play, and boundaries.

## Cost expectations

1. Puppy purchase price — depends on pedigree and breeder reputation	£800–£2,000+
2. Initial vaccinations	£70 – £120
3. Microchipping	£20 – £30
4. Spaying/neutering	£150 – £450
5. Dog bed and crate	£60 – £200
6. Collar, leash, and harness	£30 – £100
7. Food and water bowls	£15 – £40
8. Initial supply of food	£20 – £60
9. Toys and treats	£30 – £100
10. Puppy pads	£10 – £50
<b>Total start-up costs</b>	<b>£1,205 – £3,150</b>

## Regular monthly expenses

1. Food	£40 – £70
2. Pet insurance	£25 – £90
3. Flea, tick, and worm prevention	£15 – £30
4. Grooming	£30 – £80
5. Dog training/sessions with a trainer	£50 – £70
6. Toys and treats	£20 – £50
7. Dog waste bags	£20 – £50
<b>Estimated monthly total</b>	<b>£200 – £440</b>

## Planned annual expenses

1. Boarding/pet sitting	£450 – £600
2. Health check + blood profile	£120 – £250
3. Professional ultrasonic dental cleaning	£175 – £400
4. Vaccinations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Booster - every 3 years,</li> <li>• Leptospirosis - every year</li> <li>• Kennel Cough- every year</li> <li>• Rabies- every 3 years</li> </ul>	£120 – £180
<b>Average annual cost</b>	<b>£3,200 – £6,700</b>

## Preparation checklist

1. Some Labradors are prone to overeating, so we recommend using standard food and water bowls of about 1–1.8 L, plus a slow-feeder bowl to help slow down meals and support better portion control. Avoid free-feeding; Labradors usually do better with measured meals given at set times.
2. Labradors need a balanced large-breed dog food with controlled calories and good-quality protein. Labrador puppies should be fed a large-breed puppy formula to support healthy growth, joint development, and weight control. Count training treats as part of the daily food allowance, because Labradors can gain weight easily.
3. Choose extra-durable rubber chew toys, such as KONG-style toys, and strong rope toys, as Labradors have powerful jaws and can quickly destroy softer or poorly made toys. Food-stuffable toys and puzzle feeders are especially useful for Labradors because they combine chewing, problem-solving, and controlled feeding.
4. Choose a large dog bed in size L or XL that will comfortably fit an adult Labrador. Place it in a quiet, draft-free area where the dog can rest without being disturbed. A washable, supportive bed is a good choice, especially for a large breed with potential joint sensitivity.
5. Choose a well-ventilated crate or carrier that is large enough for an adult Labrador to stand up, turn around, and lie down comfortably. It can be used as a safe resting place at home and for secure travel. Introduce the crate gradually and positively, so it feels like a safe den rather than punishment.
6. Start your Labrador puppy with a well-fitted harness to reduce strain on the neck. Use a strong leash around 1.5–2 meters long, and make sure the dog always wears an ID tag with your current contact details. Because Labradors are strong and enthusiastic, early loose-leash training is very important.
7. Use large puppy pads in a fixed indoor toilet area while house-training your Labrador puppy. At the same time, begin building an outdoor toilet routine as early as possible, so the puppy does not become dependent on pads for too long.
8. Labradors shed throughout the year, with heavier shedding often in spring and autumn. Basic grooming tools should include a slicker brush, a de-shedding tool, and dog nail clippers.
9. Add a basic dental care kit: dog toothbrush, dog-safe toothpaste, and dental chews. While dental issues are especially common in small breeds, Labradors still benefit from regular tooth care from a young age.
10. Plan transportation in advance: make sure you have a safe way to bring your Labrador home and travel with them later, whether by car crate, seat-belt harness, or suitable carrier setup.

## Early training and care recommendations

1. **Connection and trust:** From day one, focus on the puppy's name, calm communication, and a clear daily routine. Labradors are highly people-oriented and usually bond strongly with their family. A predictable routine helps the puppy feel secure and makes it easier to teach early calmness, especially because Labs can become overexcited when they receive too much attention at once. Start gentle alone-time training early, so the puppy learns that short separations are normal and safe.
2. **Training format:** Choose short, clear, and varied training sessions. Labradors are intelligent and eager to please, but young Labs can be impulsive, easily distracted, and very food-motivated. Training should be brief, positive, and practical: name response, recall, "sit", "wait", "leave it", and "drop it". Impulse control is especially important for this breed: not jumping, not pulling, not stealing food, and not grabbing objects from the floor. Puppy school is ≈£100–£150 per course.
3. **Household skills:** Basic obedience, house rules, and handling should start early, before unwanted habits become established. Teach where the dog sleeps, where they eat, what they may chew, and how to behave around the kitchen, doors, guests, and children. Labradors grow into strong adult dogs, so polite everyday manners are essential. Begin handling exercises early: calmly touch the paws, ears, mouth, collar, and body so grooming, vet checks, nail trimming, and dental care become easier.
4. **Socialisation:** Socialisation should be gradual and controlled, without overwhelming the puppy with too many new impressions. Labradors are usually friendly and sociable, but that does not mean they should greet everyone or rush into every situation. Introduce people, children, dogs, traffic, household sounds, new surfaces, and new places calmly and in small doses. The goal is not just a "friendly" dog, but a Labrador who can stay calm around exciting people, food, dogs, and movement.
5. **Exercise and activity:** Labradors need regular physical activity and mental enrichment, but the load should be age-appropriate. The breed generally does well with daily walks, play, retrieving games, sniffing tasks, and simple training. Adult Labradors usually need a good amount of daily exercise, while puppies need shorter, controlled activity to protect developing joints. Avoid forced long walks, excessive jumping, and repeated stairs while the puppy is still growing. Swimming and retrieving can be excellent outlets when introduced safely.
6. **Care:** Labrador care should focus on coat maintenance, ears, weight control, and joint protection. Labradors shed year-round and need regular brushing, especially during seasonal shedding. Their ears should be checked regularly, particularly after swimming or bathing. Food portions must be measured carefully because many Labs gain weight easily. Keep your Labrador lean from puppyhood: healthy weight is one of the best ways to reduce pressure on the joints and lower long-term health risks.



### First 30-day plan

Labrador puppies are smart and usually eager to learn, but they often remain playful, impulsive, and “puppy-like” in their behaviour until around 2–3 years of age.



This 30-day plan helps you build the right foundation gently: a daily routine, first house rules, toilet training, and healthy ways to manage all that Labrador energy.

#### Week 1 — settling in and safety

1. Create one safe zone with a bed, water, puppy pads, and 2–3 safe toys. Remove food, trash, children’s toys, socks, shoes, and small objects from the puppy’s reach, because Labrador puppies are especially likely to pick things up and swallow them, not just sniff them.
2. Build a simple daily routine with feeding times, sleep, short walks or outdoor breaks, and 3–5 brief play or training sessions. This gives an energetic Labrador planned outlets for their energy instead of letting them invent their own “fun”.
3. From day one, reward the puppy for chewing only on safe chew toys. Labradors are strong chewers and need clear, consistent rules about what is allowed.
4. Limit the number of new experiences at first. Avoid too many visitors and keep new stimuli to 1–2 per day, such as a new sound, place, smell, or object. Even a very social Labrador can become overexcited if too many people and events happen at once.
5. Make sure your puppy also gets plenty of quiet rest between activities. Young Labradors need a lot of sleep not only to prevent overexcitement and destructive behaviour, but also to support healthy growth, emotional regulation, and better learning.
6. Book an initial vet visit during the first week to review vaccinations, parasite prevention, weight, diet, and any breed-specific health concerns.

#### Week 2 — first rules and toilet habits

1. Strengthen the toilet routine. Take the puppy out frequently at first, then gradually move toward a clearer schedule. Reward successful toileting immediately, before the habit becomes fully established.
2. Introduce a few simple household rules: where the puppy sleeps, where they eat, where they are allowed to go, and what is off-limits, such as jumping on the sofa. Use positive reinforcement for the behaviour you want, rather than punishment for mistakes.
3. Strictly avoid feeding from the table, and never leave food unattended. This helps prevent food stealing, begging, and early weight gain.
4. Continue working on name recognition and coming toward a person. Add a short cue such as “come” or “here”, followed by a treat or toy reward.
5. Start teaching “leave it” and “drop it” using food and toys. Retriever puppies need to learn early that they cannot grab everything, and that letting go is safe and rewarding.
6. Gently introduce the puppy to household sounds and objects, such as the vacuum cleaner, doorbell, clothing, and everyday items, in a calm and controlled way.
7. Keep exercise age-appropriate: avoid forced long walks, repeated jumping, or too many stairs while the puppy’s joints are still developing.

#### Week 3 — socialisation and environment management

1. Continue gentle socialisation without overload. Gradually expand walking areas: entrance hall, garden, quiet streets, and then slightly busier places. Add short, controlled fetch games and safe introductions to water, since many Labradors enjoy retrieving and swimming, and these can become healthy outlets.
2. Introduce simple rituals before walks and bedtime so the day feels predictable for your puppy. This also makes it easier for a busy family to manage energy peaks.
3. Watch closely to make sure the puppy does not eat or chew random objects. Labrador puppies are especially prone to picking things up, so manage access to shoes, clothes, socks, and household items. Offer chews, food puzzles, or sniffing games as a better alternative.
4. Start teaching calmness when you are briefly away. Leave for very short periods after your Labrador puppy has had a walk, a simple training game, and a safe chew.

#### Week 4 — consolidation and prevention

1. Reinforce the basic house rules: toilet routine, sleeping area, boundaries, kitchen rules, and guest manners. An outgoing Labrador can quickly turn jumping, begging, and overexcitement into habits if the rules are unclear.
2. Do 1–2 short daily training sessions of 2–5 minutes. Practise name response, recall, simple cues, and a little fetch or search work to tire both the brain and body.
3. Watch for early signs of trouble, such as constant barking, anxiety, destructive chewing, food obsession, or difficulty settling. Adjust the routine and training before these behaviours become habits.
4. Briefly review the first month and decide whether you need extra support from a trainer or behaviour professional to fine-tune the next steps.
5. A good puppy class can be very useful for a Labrador, but choose one that focuses on calm socialisation, impulse control, and positive training rather than chaotic free play.

### What to ask the breeder



Before choosing a Labrador puppy, ask the breeder clear questions about the puppy’s age, family background, health, temperament, and early socialisation.

1. How old is the puppy?
2. What are the parents like in temperament: calmer, more excitable, more vocal, more cautious, or more confident?
3. Are your Labradors mainly from show/bench lines or working/field lines? This is important because show-line Labradors are often heavier-built and calmer, making them better suited to many family homes, while working or field-line Labradors are usually more energetic, driven, and demanding in terms of training and activity.
4. Have either of the parents had any health problems? What health tests and screenings have already been done? Can I see health test results for the parents, including hip and elbow screening, eye testing, and relevant DNA tests such as EIC, CNM, and PRA where applicable?
5. How has the puppy been raised so far? Has the puppy been exposed to people, household sounds, handling, grooming, car travel, and other dogs?
6. Have there been any episodes of biting, panic, resource guarding, or strong anxiety?
7. Has the puppy already been gently introduced to a crate or carrier, grooming, handling, and short periods of being alone?
8. Will there be a contract of sale?
9. What support do you offer after the puppy goes home if we have questions about health, behaviour, or adjustment?

### If the dog is from a rescue centre or previous owners

If you are adopting an adult Labrador or an older puppy, try to understand the dog’s history, current behaviour, and any known challenges before making a decision.

1. How did the dog live before coming to the rescue centre or being rehomed?
2. Why is the dog being rehomed? Were there any behaviour-related reasons, such as aggression, barking, anxiety, destructive behaviour, difficulty being left alone, or toilet-training issues?
3. How long has the dog been at the rescue centre or with the current carers?
4. How does the dog cope with being left alone, travelling, meeting new people, and being touched or handled?
5. How does the dog react to children, strangers, other dogs, small animals, sudden noises, or unfamiliar environments?
6. Does the dog have any special health, behavioural, dietary, or care needs that I should know about?
7. Is there any history of biting, panic, resource guarding, or severe anxiety? For example, has the dog ever growled, snapped, bitten, or become tense when someone approached their food, toy, bed, or tried to take something from their mouth?

### If the answers are unclear

Vague answers about health can mean that the dog may have hidden medical problems, which can increase future veterinary costs.

An unclear behaviour history increases the risk that the dog may not fit your lifestyle, home environment, or expectations. This can lead to stress, daily management problems, and extra costs for training or behaviour support.

For Labradors specifically, be especially careful if there is no clear information about joint health, weight, food motivation, separation issues, resource guarding, or exercise needs. These are common areas where a mismatch can become expensive and stressful later.

### Useful external links



1. [The Concept of the Five Freedoms for Animals under the Animal Welfare Act 2006](#) >
2. [Foods not to give your dogs](#) >
3. [Stages of Puppy Development \(Neonatal, Weaning, Puppyhood, Becoming an Adult\)](#) >
4. [Dog barking laws](#) >
5. [Rules for Cleaning Up After Your Dog](#) >



### Breed-specific risks

**Labrador behaviour profile:** highly social, people-oriented, energetic, and bred as a working retriever. This is a soft-natured, friendly dog, but also a strong, active breed that needs daily structure, training, and healthy outlets for energy.



The rating shows how strongly this trait is expressed in the breed, not whether the dog is "good" or "bad".

<p><b>1. Need for activity and exercise</b> -----</p> <p>Very high. The Labrador is a working breed. Without enough physical and mental exercise, a Lab may find their own "job", which can lead to destructive behaviour such as chewing, stealing objects, digging, or rough play. Most Labradors need at least 60+ minutes of active walking per day, plus games, training, retrieving, or swimming. Mental exercise is just as important as physical exercise: food puzzles, scent games, and short obedience sessions help prevent boredom.</p>	<p><b>2. Tendency to bark or howl</b> -----</p> <p>Moderate. Labradors are not usually excessive barkers, but they may bark when bored, overexcited, frustrated, or seeking attention. If barking increases, it is often a sign that the dog needs more structure, stimulation, or calmness training.</p>	<p><b>3. Difficulty being left alone</b> -----</p> <p>High. Labradors are very social dogs and often cope poorly with long periods of isolation. If left alone too much, they may develop destructive behaviour, whining, barking, or signs of separation-related stress. Alone-time training should start gradually from puppyhood, with short, positive absences.</p>	<p><b>4. Relationship with children</b> -----</p> <p>Usually excellent. Labradors are often one of the best family breeds for homes with children. However, play should still be supervised by adults because Labradors are large, strong, and can be very enthusiastic, especially when young. Children should be taught not to climb on the dog, disturb them while resting, or tease them with food or toys.</p>
<p><b>5. Relationship with other animals</b> -----</p> <p>Generally friendly. Labradors usually get along well with other dogs and can live successfully with cats when introduced properly. Because Labs can be bouncy and playful, introductions should be calm and controlled, especially with smaller or more sensitive animals.</p>	<p><b>6. Coat care and shedding</b> -----</p> <p>Moderate grooming needs, but noticeable shedding. Labradors shed throughout the year and usually shed more heavily in spring and autumn. Regular brushing is needed to manage loose hair. Owners should be prepared for hair on clothes, furniture, and floors even with good grooming.</p>	<p><b>7. Training difficulty and manageability</b> -----</p> <p>Low to moderate. Labradors are eager to please and usually easy to train, but they can be overly excited, food-obsessed, and easily distracted by smells, people, and movement. The biggest training focus should be impulse control: not jumping, not pulling, not stealing food, and coming back when called.</p>	<p><b>8. Guarding and territorial behaviour</b> -----</p> <p>Low. Labradors may bark when someone comes to the door, but they are usually friendly toward people and are not well suited to the role of a guard dog. They are better described as alert companions than protective watchdogs.</p>

### Medical risks

Labradors are generally robust dogs, but the breed has several important health risks to keep in mind. Not every Labrador will develop these problems, but responsible owners should be aware of them, choose breeders carefully, and keep up with routine veterinary care.



Issue		Mitigation strategy
<b>Weight and metabolic issues</b>	Labradors are highly food-motivated and are prone to weight gain. In one study, obesity was diagnosed in 8.8% of Labradors over a year.	This is one of the most preventable Labrador health risks: measure meals, limit table food, count treats, and monitor body condition regularly rather than relying only on the number on the scale.
<b>Orthopedic and joint problems</b>	Labradors can be prone to hip dysplasia, elbow dysplasia, arthritis, and other musculoskeletal problems. Around 15% of Labradors may experience musculoskeletal issues, with arthritis and degenerative joint disease reported more often than in the average dog.	Joint protection starts early: keep the puppy lean, avoid excessive jumping and forced long exercise while growing, and choose a breeder who screens breeding dogs for hip and elbow health.
<b>Ear, nose, and throat conditions</b>	Ear infections are one of the most common health problems seen in Labradors. In one large study, ear infections were recorded in around 12.8% of black Labradors, 17.0% of yellow Labradors, and 23.4% of chocolate Labradors.	Because Labradors have drop ears and many enjoy water, owners should check the ears regularly, dry them well after swimming, and contact a vet if there is redness, smell, discharge, or frequent head shaking.
<b>Eye conditions</b>	Progressive Retinal Atrophy, or PRA, is a rare clinical disease in well-bred Labradors, but some dogs may carry PRA-related genetic variants. Responsible breeders use DNA testing to avoid producing affected puppies.	When choosing a puppy, ask for evidence of relevant eye screening and DNA testing, including prcd-PRA where appropriate. Owners should also watch for night blindness, bumping into objects, or hesitation in low light.
<b>Neuromuscular and exercise-intolerance disorders</b>	Labradors can carry inherited conditions such as Centronuclear Myopathy, also known as CNM, and Exercise-Induced Collapse, known as EIC. These conditions can seriously affect movement, stamina, and safety during activity.	Responsible breeders should use DNA testing for inherited conditions such as CNM and EIC.
<b>Cancer</b>	Hemangiosarcoma is an uncommon but serious cancer. Labradors, like many large breeds, may be at higher risk than smaller dogs.	Any unexplained weakness, sudden collapse, pale gums, abdominal swelling, or unusual lumps should be checked by a vet promptly. Regular health checks are important, especially as the dog gets older.
<b>Heart and structural conditions</b>	Tricuspid Valve Dysplasia can occur in Labradors. This is a heart condition, and may require veterinary monitoring if detected.	Ask the breeder whether there is any history of heart disease in the line, and make sure your vet listens carefully for heart murmurs during puppy and annual health checks.

### Disclaimer



This Pet Match Report is designed to help you make a more informed and responsible pet decision. It is based on the information you provided, PetMatch AI's structured compatibility framework, curated breed, behaviour, care, cost and welfare data, AI-assisted analysis, and guidance developed with animal-care and behaviour specialists. It is intended as decision support and guidance, not as a guarantee of future behaviour, health, temperament, costs, or suitability.

Every pet is an individual. Breed traits, predicted risks, behaviour, care needs, and compatibility can vary, and pets change as they grow, settle into a new home, and experience new situations. Nothing in pet ownership is completely "set in stone." With patience, love, consistent care, training, and appropriate support, many pets can adapt and become a deeply loved and inseparable part of the family.

PetMatch AI is not a veterinary, medical, emergency, legal, or insurance service. This report does not diagnose, treat, prescribe, or replace an individual assessment by a qualified veterinarian, registered veterinary surgeon, or other appropriately qualified professional who has examined the specific animal and your circumstances. You remain responsible for your final decision and for meeting your pet's welfare, health, training, and care needs.