# Cold weather dog walk checklist.

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A quick checklist for winter walks, based on public guidance from veterinary schools and the AVMA. Below freezing, Washington State University vets say most dogs, especially thin-coated ones, should not stay out more than 10 to 15 minutes without a warmer space, and Purdue vets say puppies and short-haired pets should come inside below 40°F (about 4°C). No single number fits every dog, so use this list to check your own.

## Before you head out

- [ ] Know your dog's tolerance: puppies, small dogs and short-haired dogs are more vulnerable to the cold.[2, 3]
- [ ] Check the temperature. Purdue veterinarians say puppies and short-haired pets should come inside when it drops below 40°F (about 4°C).[2]
- [ ] Consider a sweater or dog coat for small, short-coated or cold-bothered dogs, and use a dry one each time, since a wet coat makes a dog colder.[2, 3, 4]
- [ ] Consider booties, and make sure they fit.[1, 4]
- [ ] Consider keeping the hair between the paw pads short and applying paw balm before each walk.[3]

## On the walk

- [ ] Keep the walk short when it is very cold.[3, 4]

- [ ] Below freezing, WSU says most dogs, especially thin-coated ones, should not stay out more than 10 to 15 minutes without a warmer space.[1]
- [ ] Watch for shivering, slowing or stopping, whining, anxiety or weakness, and get your dog back inside quickly if you see them.[3, 4]
- [ ] Check longer-haired dogs' feet for ice and snow.[3]
- [ ] Stay away from frozen ponds, lakes and streams.[4]

# When you get home

- [ ] Wipe or wash your dog's feet, legs and belly to remove de-icing products, antifreeze and other chemicals. Salt and de-icer can hurt paw pads.[2, 4]
- [ ] Check the paws for signs of irritation or injury.[4]
- [ ] Store antifreeze out of reach and clean up spills right away.[3]
- [ ] Make sure your dog wears a collar with up-to-date ID, and keep your details current in the microchip registry.[4]

# How cold is too cold to walk a dog?

There is no single number for every dog. Below freezing, most dogs, especially thin-coated ones, should not stay out more than 10 to 15 minutes without a warmer space, and puppies and short-haired pets should come inside below 40°F (about 4°C).[1, 2]

# What are the signs a dog is too cold?

Shivering, whining, anxiety, slowing down or stopping and weakness are signs of hypothermia, so get your dog back inside quickly if you see them.[3, 4]

> **Talk to your vet.** If you suspect hypothermia or frostbite, or notice concerning signs of a cold-related injury, call your vet right away. Your vet can also advise on coats and paw care for your dog.

Want the reasons behind each item? Read How cold is too cold for dogs?.

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# Sources.


1. Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine, Veterinary Teaching Hospital. When is it too cold for your pet? 2025.
2. Nickel A, Purdue News Service. If you think they're warm enough, wear a thin jacket and spend 10 minutes outside with your pet. Purdue University news release, 2019.
3. Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. Keeping your furry friends safe during winter weather. 2021.
4. American Veterinary Medical Association. Cold weather animal safety. AVMA.