



# Best Practices

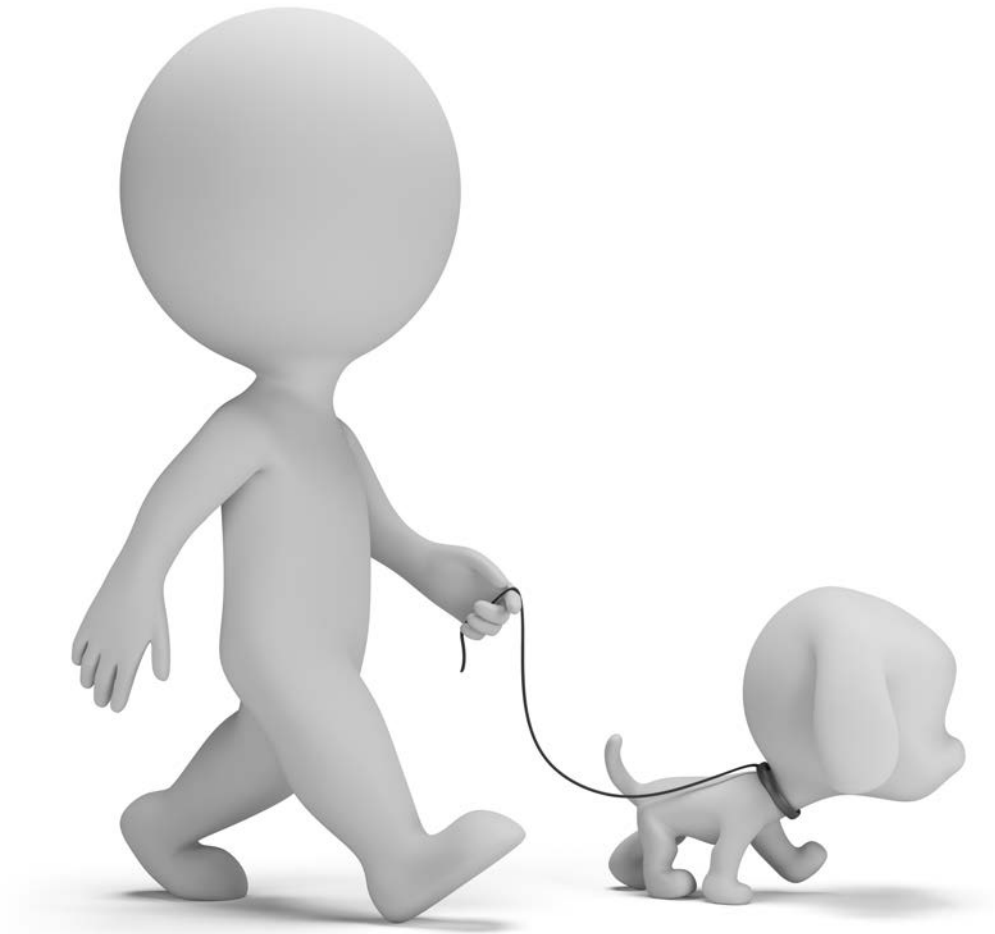
Some organizations are reluctant to start a dogs-at-work program because they worry about how to handle the questions that arise when discussing dogs in the workplace.

That's definitely understandable. There are a lot of things to consider: what dogs can and cannot do at the workplace; how it will affect employees who are afraid of or allergic to dogs; how to handle dogs that become a nuisance. But nine percent of companies have some type of pet-friendly program in place, so these programs can be successful.

While each company has created a plan that works for it, there do seem to be some characteristics and practices that can be found in most programs, no matter the type of company.

Let's look at the top ten best practices that most programs include.





**Dogs are to be kept on a leash when inside company facilities.**

Some companies even provide ID badges—complete with photo!—for co-woofers. The badges often include the office location and the owner's name and contact information.



**Dogs are accompanied by their owner at all times.**

When the owner needs to be away from the dog for a time (such as a short meeting), they should ask a colleague who knows their dog to watch them. If the owners are in their office, their dog should be with them. Baby or dog gates are useful in cubicles and offices without doors.



**Dogs with fleas are not to be brought to the office.**  
This is just good common sense!





**Dogs are not allowed in bathrooms, the cafeteria or eating space, or other communal areas.** This helps alleviate hygiene concerns, and it makes colleagues who are afraid of dogs or who have allergies feel safer in communal areas.



**Dogs are not allowed in meetings.**

This prevents distractions during the meeting, and it ensures that colleagues and visitors with allergies can attend meetings without a large dose of antihistamines! Some companies have indicated that the real reason for this rule is that dog farts were cutting all the meetings short. While that might certainly be true, the other reasons are important too.



**Doggie accident cleanup is the responsibility of the owner.**  
It's your dog, so you get to clean up after him or her. It's only fair, after all.





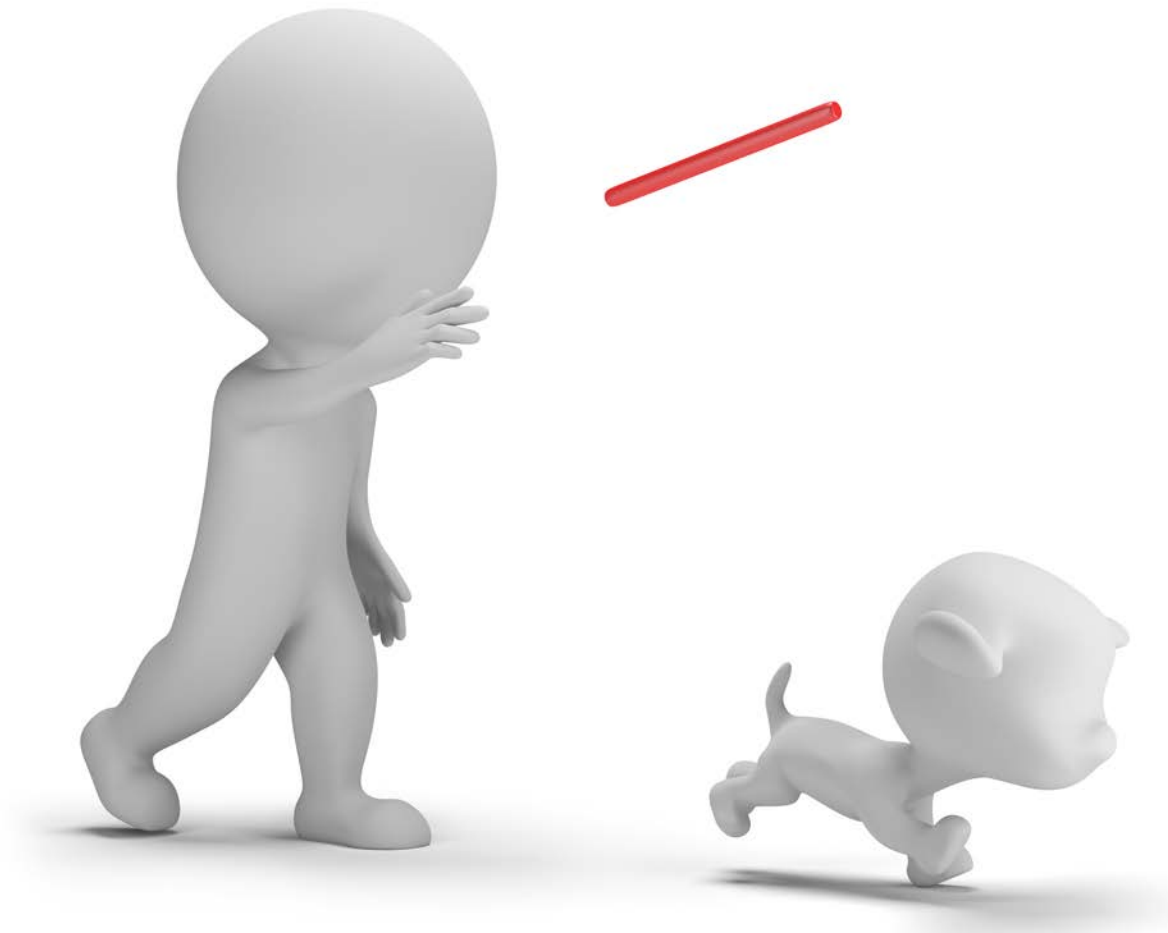
**Doggie waste in outside areas should be picked up by the owner.**

Again, it's only fair. Some companies do provide doggie waste bags, which dog owners can get from a receptionist or other designated location.



**Dogs who have repeated accidents inside need to stay at home until they are retrained.**

No one wants to keep cleaning up after a pet that cannot make it outside, and this would definitely hinder rather than improve an employee's work performance. But it's important to note that most companies don't consider this to be unforgiveable. The owners simply need to prove that their dogs have had some training to remedy the problem.



**Dogs who display any aggressive behavior may not return to the workplace. Loud barking and eating another employee's (or co-woofers'!) food are also not acceptable.** Dogs-at-work programs work only if there are clear rules established for what behavior is and is not acceptable. After all, no one would want a human co-worker who might randomly bite their hand or yell at them all the time. The same should apply to co-woofers!





**Employees with animal allergies may ask a dog owner not to bring a dog to the office if that dog makes it difficult for the allergic employee to work.**

This can be hard for some pet lovers to accept, but it is important that *all* employees have an enjoyable work environment. Having to work while sneezing, suffering from asthma attacks, and trying to see through watery, itchy eyes is not a pleasant experience. These employees need to feel like they have options in a pet-friendly workplace. This is one reason why a committee that represents all employees should be involved with the creation of the program. Ideally, options for the pet owner and the allergic employee should be available.





Dogs at work can be a successful, useful program if done correctly, and following these best practices can help ensure your program hits it out of the doggie park.

For more detailed instructions on developing a comprehensive pet policy, check out our other resource, *Creating a Dog Policy*.



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Dogs at Work is a social-advocacy company that makes good companies better through the successful integration of dogs in the workplace. If you would like to join us or make a contribution please contact us through our website [dogsatwork.us](https://www.dogsatwork.us) or through our Facebook group, Dogs at Work.

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