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How much food should my dog eat calculator

One of the best ways to keep dogs healthy is to feed them the right amount of a high-quality dog food. Feeding your dog too much or not enough can have certain health consequences. Here’s why it matters and what you can do to determine how much to feed your dog. Why the Right Dog Food Amount Matters
If you feed your dog too little, they can suffer from nutritional deficiencies. However, if you feed your dog too much, it will eventually result in obesity and its related health issues, like: Musculoskeletal problems like osteoarthritis, cruciate ligament ruptures, and intervertebral disk disease Congestive heart failure Labored breathing Cushing’s disease Skin disorders Some types of cancer Shortened life span Reduced quality of life Giving your dog the right amount of quality dog food can help support your pet’s overall health and keep them feeling their best. How to Find the Right Amount of Dog Food for Your Dog
You need to account for several factors when determining exactly how much your dog should be eating. Consider the Important Factors
The correct meal size depends on factors like: Type of food Number of meals Body weight Metabolic rate Amount of exercise Look at the Feeding Guide on the Bag To start the process, take a look at the feeding guide on your dog food’s label. They are usually presented as a table that looks something like this: Unless stated otherwise, these amounts give you the total that is recommended for your dog over a 24-hour period. Most adult dogs should eat two meals a day, and puppies often require three or more feedings, so you’ll need to divide the amount in the table by the number of meals you are offering. Take Your Dog’s Lifestyle Into Account
Combine this information with your knowledge of your dog’s lifestyle to come up with the initial amount of food to offer your dog. For example, if I had a relatively inactive 35-pound Corgi who had a tendency to gain weight, I might start with a little less food than the table recommends. On the other hand, if my dog was a 35-pound Border Collie who never sits still, I would feed a little more. Consider Using a Calorie Calculator
Another option is to try using a calorie calculator for dogs, but keep in mind that while these often spit out a precise number, your dog’s actual needs may be as much as 25% more or less. Determine Your Dog’s Body Condition Score
Whichever method you pick, you’ll have to use a scale or body condition scoring system to fine-tune the amount of food you offer. Your veterinarian can help you decipher your dog’s body condition score (BCS) and determine an appropriate calorie amount. In general, dogs who are at a healthy weight have an “hourglass” figure when you look down on them from above. The abdomen should be narrower than the chest and hips. Are “tucked up” when you look at them from the side. This means that their chest is closer to the ground than their belly when standing. Have ribs that are not readily visible but are easily felt with only light pressure. Keep a Record of Your Dog’s Weight Change
Check your dog’s weight every 2-4 weeks and keep a diary of your results. If your dog is inappropriately gaining or losing weight, adjust your portion sizes appropriately. Make sure to discuss these changes with your veterinarian so they can ensure that there are no underlying conditions. Reassess the Portion Size if You Switch Foods
Every time you change dog food formulas, you will have to go through this entire process again, because the number of calories in the food will be different. Always Talk With Your Veterinarian
Talk to your veterinarian if you have any questions about your dog’s health or diet. They can help you determine exactly how much food to offer based on the specifics of your dog’s case. Dr. Jennifer Coates Featured Image: iStock.com/Chalabala Learn More: SaveSave Choose the type of food (wet or dry). Specify your pup’s weight in pounds or kilos. Select the appropriate lifestyle based on activity level. Press the button to calculate the results. Learn the number of calories your dog needs in a day and the corresponding portion size in cups or grams. Beware: This calculator provides generalized recommendations, and you should always consult your vet before using the results provided. It took a trip to the vet and a warning of the oncoming canine diabetes to open our eyes to the error of our ways. It turned out you cannot simply pour a heaping bowl every couple of days for your dog to enjoy. That’s what led our energetic poodle to become a sluggish couch potato, and that’s why we dove into the science behind the dog food portions, nutritional values, and feeding charts. With so many factors, like age, weight, lifestyle, and breed, affecting the recommended daily ration, it’s no wonder so many dog owners feel intimidated by the prospect of finding the right balance between starvation and obesity. We created this dog calorie calculator along with detailed instructions to help you master feeding canines, regardless of their age, weight, and habits. We are no veterinarians, so take our advice with a pinch of salt and run them by your common sense and the vet before you do anything drastic. Any online dog food calculator relies on the average caloric value of kibble or canned food designed for a particular life stage or activity level. As the amount of dog food calories per cup varies among the popular brands, and your dog’s needs might differ from the norm, allow for up to 20% increase or decrease in portion size. Before we go into detail on how much to feed your dog, let’s go through the basics of calculating the ideal daily serving for your canine. You’ll notice our calculator comes with two food options, dry and wet, and these are the most common varieties. We did not include freeze-dried raw dog food into the calculations, as it’s less popular and generally not approved by the vets. We may add this option down the line, though. Unfortunately, there’s no way to include homemade food into our calculations, as dog food calories will vary greatly depending on the ingredients and recipes you use. To calculate the exact amount of DIY dog food, you’ll need to use an online tool that lets you calculate the recipe’s nutritional value based on the ingredients. Just make sure you choose the right components (for example, raw meat instead of cooked) and weigh them properly. Otherwise, your calculations will be way off. Weight is the key factor that affects your pup’s energy requirements. The heavier she is, the more energy she needs to keep active. That’s why you’ll need to provide the weight in pounds or kilos to calculate the daily portion size. You can identify it by weighing your dog on a scale if you manage to keep her still long enough. Or you can weigh yourself with a dog and subtract your weight from the number. Alternatively, the vet should be able to tell you the exact number using a special pet scale. Breed size is another crucial factor, though it’s mostly addressed by dog food manufacturers. The toy and small breeds have heightened metabolism that results in increased energy requirements. Large and giant breeds have a slower metabolism and don’t need as much energy to stay active. That’s why kibble for small breeds is usually more energy-dense and packed with nutrients than large dog food. If you consider dog food measurements calculated based on weight alone, you’ll have too much of a margin for error. Much like a human’s, a canine’s body goes through a series of changes with age that call for different nutrient levels. Puppies need more protein, calcium, and phosphorus to build strong bones and lean muscles, while adult dogs need much fewer calories per weight unit. Senior canines’ slower metabolism calls for a less calorie-dense diet with increased protein. Energetic dogs which can never sit still need more energy to remain active, while couch potatoes need fewer calories to support their idle lifestyle. That’s why our calculator includes an extra filter to let you choose the activity level of your canine to calculate the right daily serving size. Age is one of the crucial factors deciding the feeding guidelines for dogs. And whenever you adopt a puppy, you should be aware that his nutritional needs will differ from an adult rescue dog you picked up from the shelter. It all comes down to energy consumption. Like small children, puppies require more calories because their bodies go through significant changes, gaining weight, growing bones, and developing muscles. For these reasons, puppy kibble and canned food are always calorie-dense and rich in protein and fat. It’s designed to support steady growth and healthy development of all tissues and organs. If you pick up a bag of quality kibble, it will come with a puppy feeding chart with recommended daily servings. However, those feeding guides can be too ambiguous and result in under or overfeeding. To make a better estimate, use our dog feeding calculator that relies on a vet-approved formula to determine the resting energy requirements (REH) based on your pup’s weight and accommodates for heightened needs by using the age factor. For puppies under four months, the multiplication factor is 3, while older puppies can deal with the factor of 2. With the number of calories you set, divide the number by your preferred kibble’s caloric value to learn how many cups per day to feed. Divide this amount into three or four servings and feed them to your pup at even intervals throughout the day (every eighth to six hours). Younger puppies may need up to six feedings a day (every 4 hours). Do you have to stick to the puppy feeding schedule? Most vets recommend it while they frown upon free-choice feeding. Sticking to a schedule builds strong habits in young canines that will help them go through changes in the household without undue stress. Even changing the dog food brand or recipes will go much smoother if you use a feeding schedule. Besides, regular mealtimes make house training much easier, as most puppies need a walk within 15 minutes of eating. If you time the feeding and walk regime right, you won’t have any unfortunate accidents. First, let’s make sure we are on the same page concerning the difference between puppies and adult dogs. Different breeds are considered mature at different ages. For instance, the toy and small breeds can be called adult within a year of birth. So a 12-month mark is a time you want to start switching to adult food and follow the new dog feeding chart. Medium breeds can take up to 15 months to mature, while giant breeds leave childhood behind after 18 months. If you’re unsure whether your pup is an adult, consult the vet and ask about the appropriate time to make the switch and alter the daily portion size. You can follow the dog feeding guideline on the back of the bag or use our dog food amount calculator to determine the right number of calories, grams, or cups. Here’s a quick algorithm for using the numbers you get: Calculate the daily caloric requirements of your dog using our calculator. Locate the caloric value of the food on the back of the bag (calories per an 8-oz cup). Divide the first number by the second, and you get the number of cups you need to feed your pooch. If you prefer a more precise method, you can go about calculations another way: Calculate the daily caloric value for your dog’s weight and life stage. Locate the caloric value of the food in calories per kilo. Divide the first number by the second and multiply by 1,000 to get the daily serving in grams. Use the kitchen scale to measure out the right amount of food. Find the scoop that fits the serving size for daily use. Once your pooch is used to the new kibble, it’s time to establish a new dog feeding schedule and lower the meal frequency to two or three times per day. So instead of dividing the daily portion into four or six parts, you’ll need to split it in half. If you notice your pooch leaving food in the bowl after mealtimes, consider reducing the portion size. And if your pup is constantly begging for food, you might need to increase the daily ration. The energy requirements and portion size are also bound to change with any significant lifestyle changes. For instance, if you take up running with your canine friend, he will need more food. And if you take him to be neutered, the portion size is bound to go down. In any case, keep an eye on your pup’s health and mood, as you are the best judge of his needs. The WSAVA Global Nutrition Committee developed a Body Condition Score with nine levels of fitness. Five is considered the ideal weight for a canine, and that’s what every pet owner should strive for. Your pooch is in perfect shape if: You cannot see her ribs sticking out but can easily feel them under a light layer of fat on the sides. Her waist is visibly smaller than the chest and butt when you look from the top. The tummy is tucked up and is further away from the ground than her chest when you look from the side. Obesity is the more common problem among canines, caused by free-choice feeding or poor dog food serving size control. If your pup’s sides are swelling with fat and her tummy is distended, your vet will suggest the right weight loss kibble, and you can use our calculator to learn how much to feed her. Weight control kibble is usually lighter on calories and fat and packed with protein and L-carnitine to support healthy digestion and feel more filling for your pup. You’ll need to stick with the resting energy requirement for her ideal weight to ensure the numbers on the scale go down. So instead of filling in the dog’s current weight, use the weight you wish to achieve when using our calculator. If you rescue a shelter dog who’s severely underweight with ribs sticking out and not an ounce of fat on his sides, you’ll need to consult the vet and stick with a doctor-approved dog feeding guide. Once again, you’ll need to rely on an ideal weight indicator, not the current number. Our calculator will provide an average caloric value your new pup will need based on that ideal weight, as well as the resting energy requirement number factoring in the 50% increase to promote sustainable weight gain. Whether you’re feeding your pooch to lose or gain weight, pay close attention to his health. You’ll notice the first signs of weight correction within four weeks. If no change happens, consider another visit to the vet to look for hidden reasons for obesity or malnourishment. If you were wondering, “How many calories does my dog need?” our calculator will provide the answer. But the actual serving size depends on many factors. Let’s put on our science hats and remember school classes. A calorie is a unit of energy, and it can come from three organic sources present in dog food: proteins, carbohydrates, and fat. One gram of proteins or carbs provides four calories, while one gram of fat generates nine calories worth of energy. So the more fat there is inside the bag of dog food, the more energy-dense it is. But fat cannot be transformed into protein for building muscles. That’s why it’s so vital to pay attention to the macronutrient composition along with calories. Manufacturers take decades to perfect their formulas to find the perfect balance for every life stage and breed. They pick macronutrients that come from various sources, like poultry, meat, grains, vegetables, and legumes, and turn them into dry and wet formulas. So how come the number of calories in dry dog food is very different from wet dog food even if they use the same ingredients? Kibble revolutionized the way we feed dogs in the middle of the 20th century. It became an instant hit, as it’s cheap, easy to ration, and super-nutritious. The ingredients combined in dry dog food are dehydrated, heat-treated, and shaped into bite-sized pieces. As a result, most kibble products come with barely 10% moisture left. Every piece is chock-full of nutrients, and the exact numbers are specified on the bag, with protein levels usually above 20% and fat content of around 10% to 15%. After you use our dog food calculator and measure the right amount of cups, it may seem like the portion is too small for your dog. But once you remember how calorie-dense kibble is, you’ll realize why it’s the most affordable and cost-efficient option for feeding your pup. When it comes to wet dog food, calories and nutrients become more complicated. If you look at the nutrient info on the can, you will be surprised to see minuscule numbers of calories, protein, and fat. It happens because canned dog food is usually 80% to 90% moisture, meaning you’re paying mostly for water or broth. So how can wet dog food manufacturers claim their products meet the AAFCO’s guidelines? It’s all because those standards are listed on a dry matter basis. If you deduct the moisture content from the can’s weight, the nutrient levels will skyrocket, as water doesn’t hold any protein or fat, so it comes with zero calories. So when you calculate the amount of food for a dog, the weight of wet food will always be significantly larger than that of kibble. Unsurprisingly, that makes wet food a much less cost-efficient option, but it is sometimes the only alternative for tiny puppies or fussy eaters. First and foremost, you need to remember that any feeding guide for dogs specifies daily portions, not a single meal. The same is true for our calculator. So if you feed your pooch more than once a day (and you really should), you need to divide this serving accordingly. For instance, if the calculations say your pup needs three cups of kibble, you can either feed him one cup three times per day or 1 ½ cups twice a day. Veterinarians and nutritionists are set against free feeding when food is always readily available in the bowl. This leads to unhealthy eating habits and prevents your dog from forming a much-needed routine. Two or three feedings are ideal for adult and senior dogs, as going hungry for over 12 hours may cause digestive issues. There’s no such thing as ideal dog feeding time, so you should build it into your daily routine to ensure it stays consistent throughout the years. For instance, if you used to deal with early shifts and fed the pup at 5 AM before leaving for work, get ready to be woken up at the same time for years to come. Training your pooch out of this habit will take time and patience. What if your pup is a special snowflake and doesn’t conform to recommended feeding for dogs? Some canines are grazers and have no issue with going hungry whenever you remove the uneaten food from the bowl. Such eating habits are highly unhealthy, but you can find a workaround as long as you stick with the recommended daily portions. Pour the set amount into the bowl in the morning and make sure it’s gone in 24 hours. As long as your dog’s weight remains healthy, you can use this tactic. Automatic feeder toys are also a great option if your dog refuses to eat at set times. They will dispense kibble at random intervals to entice your pup and become a great source of entertainment for the whole family. We bet you didn’t expect the answer to your simple question of “How much should my dog eat?” to be so convoluted. It may seem like overkill at first glance, but nutrition is the foundation of your pup’s health. And the sooner you figure out the right dog food amount and meal schedule, the stronger and healthier your pooch will be in the long run. Hopefully, our explanations are clear enough to help you make sense of what, how much, and when to feed dogs. And our online calculator is here to provide a precise estimate based on your pup’s weight, life stage, and activity level. As long as you stick to the recommended portions and keep an eye on your dog’s needs, your canine will be happy and healthy for years to come. How Many Times Should a Dog Eat in a Day?
Adult canines will be happy with two or three meals a day, spaced no more than 12 hours apart. Such a feeding schedule promotes healthy nutritional habits. Puppies require more feedings, so you will need to provide three to six meals a day with smaller portions and gradually reduce the number of mealtimes to two or three per day. And remember that vets are firmly against free feeding. What Time of Day Should I Feed My Dog?
With two mealtimes a day, morning and evening are the best times for feeding, though you can add a third mealtime at lunch. Dogs are creatures of habit, so you can organize feeding around your work schedule. Is It Okay to Feed a Dog Once a Day?
It may only be alright for dogs who prefer grazing, as they can pick at the food throughout the day. However, suppose your dog gobbles the food in one sitting as soon as you pour it into the bowl. In that case, his stomach will be overflowing with gastric acid by the next mealtime, and that can ultimately lead to vomiting and digestive disorders. If you cannot feed the pup two times a day, consider investing in an automated feeder. How Many Times a Day Should You Feed Puppies?
Puppies under four months old will need six or more feedings per day. As they age, you can gradually reduce the number of meals to two or three feedings interspersed throughout the day. Remember that small breeds take up to 12 months to mature, while large and giant breeds achieve maturity in 15 to 18 months. How Much to Feed a Pregnant Dog?
The first six weeks of pregnancy do not require any changes in feeding. After that, the energy requirements increase by up to 60%, and so should the caloric value of the food you provide. Focus on delivering highly digestible food with a portion size a third or two-thirds larger than usual. Post-pregnancy, free-choice feeding is the best option during the first four weeks.

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