

Dog Mobility Checklist

Spot subtle signs of discomfort at home — before they become bigger problems.

Your dog communicates through movement every single day.

This checklist helps you notice what's worth watching — and what to do next.



Movement & Gait

Reluctance to walk or slow to get going

Especially on lead or first thing in the morning

Shortening of stride on one or both sides

Subtle but worth monitoring over a few days

Head bobbing when walking

Often a sign of front limb discomfort

Bunny hopping at the back end

Both back legs move together rather than alternately

Slipping or stumbling more than usual

Even on familiar surfaces

Getting Up & Lying Down

Slow or stiff when rising from rest

Particularly after longer rest periods

Choosing hard floors over soft beds

Dogs in discomfort sometimes avoid pressure on sore areas — or seek firm surfaces for support

Changing position frequently when lying

Restlessness can indicate discomfort finding a comfortable spot

Using front legs to 'pull' themselves up

Rather than pushing up from the back end

Posture & Body Awareness

Hunched or roached back

A rounded topline can indicate core or spinal tension

Head carried low or neck appearing stiff

Watch for reluctance to look up or side to side

Uneven weight distribution when standing

Shifting weight off one limb

Tucked abdomen or tense belly

Can indicate general discomfort or guarding

After Exercise

Stiff or sore the next morning

Post-exercise soreness that lasts more than a day is worth noting

Sleeping more than usual after walks

Some tiredness is normal; excessive fatigue less so

Lameness appearing after rest post-exercise

'Warm-up lameness' is a pattern worth flagging

Reluctance to do activities they usually enjoy

A sudden drop in enthusiasm for walks, play, or stairs

Behaviour & Daily Life

Snapping, growling or flinching when touched

Pain responses — especially if this is new behaviour

Avoiding stairs, jumping in/out of car, or the sofa

Self-limiting movement is often overlooked

Licking or chewing a specific area repeatedly

Often points to localised discomfort

Changes in appetite, mood or overall energy

Subtle but consistent shifts are worth noting

What to do if you ticked anything above:

Don't panic — one tick doesn't mean a diagnosis. But patterns matter. Keep a simple log for 5–7 days.

If signs persist or worsen, share your observations with your vet or a canine physiotherapist.