

VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES



Thank you for joining Zoomies! Zoomies is a volunteer initiative dedicated to offering support for dog owners during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please **read this guideline document in its entirety** and ensure that you understand all its components before taking any action. If there is anything you are uncomfortable with or unclear about, please do not hesitate to reach out to a Zoomies team member. We are here to support you!

VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS

HEALTH:

Please do not volunteer if you are currently experiencing or have experienced any of the following symptoms in the last 14 days:

- Fever;
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing;
- Fatigue;
- Flu-like symptoms;
- Upper respiratory symptoms;
- Loss of taste and/or smell;
- You have had close contact with someone in self-isolation or who is experiencing any of the above health symptoms in the last 14 days;
- You have had close contact with someone who is awaiting test results or has otherwise been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the last 14 days.

If during the time you are volunteering you begin to experience any of the above symptoms or have close contact with a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case, you **must** disclose this to your matched dog owner and to Zoomies immediately. You must also cease all volunteering until 14 days after the last symptoms have disappeared, or 14 days after the close contact occurred.

TRAVEL:

Please do not volunteer if any of the following apply to you:

- You have travelled outside of Canada in the last 14 days;
- You have had close contact with anyone who has travelled outside of Canada within the last 14 days;
- You have been in a gathering of 10+ people, with whom you do not reside, within the last 14 days.

If during the time you are volunteering any of the above applies to you, you **must** disclose this to your matched dog owner and to Zoomies immediately. You must also cease all volunteering for 14 days.



AGE:

Volunteers must be 16 years of age or above to register with Zoomies. Registered volunteers are welcome to bring children under the age of 16 along with them on walks, so long as the children are able to adhere to the safety guidelines below and the volunteers are mindful about monitoring interactions between the dog(s) and the child(ren). In cases where the dog is fearful or aggressive toward children, volunteers should not allow a child to accompany them on the walks.

LEGAL:

Volunteers must have no previous convictions for violent crimes nor accusations or convictions pertaining to animal abuse.

BECOMING MATCHED WITH A DOG OWNER

Zoomies will do its best to match you with a dog owner based on your responses in the [Volunteer Registration Form](#). This process may take some time as matches are also dependent on dog owner registration, so please be patient.

Once you have been matched with a dog owner, a member of our team will contact you to provide the owner's information. At this time, we ask you to contact the owner to introduce yourself and coordinate ongoing dog walking. **Zoomies does not enforce a dog walking schedule. This is to be mutually decided upon between the volunteer and the owner.**

Some details you may want to discuss with the owner include:

- how often you plan to walk the dog(s) and what days of the week/times of day;
- the average length of a walk;
- where you plan to walk the dog(s);
- the plan for days with inclement weather;
- any behavioural information regarding the dog(s) you should be aware of.

Once you have decided on a plan with the owner, you may begin walking their dog(s). It is critical that you follow our **Health and Safety Guidelines** as well as our **Safe Dog Walking Guidelines** detailed in the following sections.

Please respect the dog owner's privacy. Direct volunteer-owner communication is only to be had as it pertains to walking the owner's dog(s). At no time may you solicit the dog owner for payment (or payment in kind) for your services, nor may you solicit the owner for dog walking services outside the context of Zoomies.

If at any time you become uncomfortable with the arrangement, please get in touch with us. **You are never obligated to walk a dog you are uncomfortable with or unsure about.**

HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES

It is critical that volunteers adhere to our guidelines to minimize risk for both you as the volunteer, and the dog owner. Please familiarize yourself with the following list of precautionary guidelines:

- Use hand sanitizer to regularly disinfect your hands.
- If you opt to use gloves, be sure to sanitize them with hand sanitizer frequently to limit viral contamination.
- You are encouraged to wear a facial covering during walks and while exchanging the dog(s) with the owner. If you do not own a mask, you may choose to make your own facial covering using materials around your home, such as a scarf or bandana.
- Maintain a distance of approximately two metres (or approximately six feet) from other people as much as you can at all times.
- Once at the owner's address, ring the doorbell and step back two metres. Try to maintain this distance while exchanging the dog(s).
- At no point should you make physical contact with the owner or enter their home.
- Limit contact with the dog(s). While it may be difficult to resist giving smooches and snuggling, all direct contact poses the risk of viral transmission onto the dog's fur. Please limit contact as much as possible.
- If you have your own spare leash, consider using it (or ask the owner if they have a spare you can keep temporarily) to avoid handling the same leash.
- Try to walk dogs from different households separately to minimize the risk of viral transmission between the dogs (i.e. please do not walk your own dog(s) with the other owner's dog(s) if you can avoid it). If you *must* bring your own dog(s) along, only do so after consulting the owner.

SAFE DOG WALKING GUIDELINES

- **Do not let the dog(s) off leash in an unfenced area.**
- Follow all instructions given to you by the dog owner pertaining to proper care and interaction with the dog(s).
- Never leave the dog(s) unattended.
- Always attach the leash to the collar or harness loop, **not** the ID tag ring.
- Make sure that the dog's collar or harness is tight enough that it cannot be slipped out of, but not so tight that it impedes breathing or causes skin irritation.
- If transporting the dog(s) by vehicle, ensure that the windows are not open wide enough for the dog(s) to fit its head through. Having its head outside a moving vehicle subjects the dog(s) to possible injury by the impact of insects, flying debris, or even passing vehicles, and poses a greater risk of escape.
- Be aware of anything the dog(s) may be fearful of or reactive to, so you may either avoid these triggers as much as possible, or be extra vigilant when coming in contact with them.



- Do not bring the dog to a dog park unless it has been pre-approved by the owner and you are comfortable that you fully understand the dog's typical behaviour around other dogs. It is still recommended by Zoomies, however, that you avoid dog parks as there is increased risk of viral transmission whenever two dogs from different households come into contact. If the dog park is not fenced, you should **not** let the dog off-leash. If you have been assigned to a high-risk owner, **you should not bring the dog to a dog park.**

TIPS FOR SUMMER

Summer weather comes along with a few extra considerations when it comes to responsible dog care:

- It is important to remain vigilant as to the temperature of the ground when walking a dog. Asphalt, for instance, can begin to cause damage to pups' paws when the air temperature is just 25 degrees Celsius.
 - A quick rule of thumb when testing ground temperature is to stand on the ground barefooted, yourself, or hold the back of your hand to the ground for seven seconds. If the ground is too hot for you, it is too hot for the dog.
 - On particularly hot days, consider walking the dog in the early morning or evening if possible, when the temperature is cooler.
 - Stick to sidewalks and let the dog walk on the grass as much as possible.
 - Keep alert for signs of pain, such as whimpering or whining and lifting or licking their paws. If this occurs, check the dog's paws for redness and/or blisters.
- Dogs are at a greater risk of overheating than humans, so it's important to keep an eye out for signs of heatstroke:
 - excessive panting
 - excessive drooling
 - dark or bright red tongue and gums
 - sticky or dry tongue and gums
 - staggering
 - appearing to be in a stupor
 - glassy eyes
 - rapid heart rate
 - bloody diarrhea
 - vomiting
 - seizures

If you think a dog may have heat stroke, seek veterinary attention immediately.



- Tips on keeping a dog cool:
 - avoid heavy exercise on particularly hot days (e.g. limit running)
 - take frequent walk breaks
 - keep to the shade as much as possible
 - provide the dog with cool water (not ice water, which will constrict blood vessels and impede cooling)
- Bring water for longer walks to avoid dehydration (for both the walker and the dog). Ask the dog owner if they have a collapsible dog bowl (or other alternative) you can take with you on walks. You can also bring along your own bowl for the dog if the owner does not have one to offer, but the bowls should be thoroughly washed before and after use so they are not being shared between dogs of different households without being cleaned between uses.

GOVERNMENTAL MANDATES AND EMERGENCIES

As the COVID-19 crisis evolves, so too do governmental regulations and mandates. A list of provincial offences pertaining to the declared state of emergency can be viewed [here](#). It is recommended that you review these offences prior to walking a dog.

Always carry a form of government ID with you when on a walk and in the event that you are questioned by an authority regarding your purpose for being out in public, you may present them with [this letter confirming your volunteerism](#). **This letter may only be used within the context of completing a dog walk with Zoomies.**

THANK YOU

Zoomies thanks you sincerely for becoming a part of our community of volunteers! We believe that no one should have to choose between their health and taking care of their beloved pet. Our initiative depends on volunteers like you and we simply **cannot overstate our appreciation**.

We'd love to recognize your efforts, so feel free to post pictures on our [Facebook page](#) of you and the dog(s) you've been matched with! These pictures help to keep up morale and encourage more participation within the initiative!

Stay safe and stay healthy!

