

Dog Body Condition Score Chart

The scale tells you weight; body condition tells you whether it's the right weight for your dog. **On the 9-point scale, 4–5 is ideal.** Check by hand and by eye, monthly.

FILLABLE PDF – TYPE ON A COMPUTER OR TABLET, OR PRINT AND FILL IT IN BY HAND.

DOG'S NAME

STARTING WEIGHT

VET'S TARGET SCORE

THE 9-POINT SCALE

SCORE	WHAT YOU FEEL AND SEE
1–2 · Very thin	Bones stick out; muscle loss
3 · Thin	Ribs easily felt and may be somewhat visible
4–5 · Ideal	Ribs easily felt under a thin layer of fat; waist obvious from above, tuck visible from the side
6 · Overweight	Slight fat over the ribs; waist visible but not prominent
7 · Overweight	Firm pressure needed to feel the ribs; no obvious waist
8 · Obese	Ribs felt only with heavy pressure; no waist or tuck
9 · Obese	Ribs can't be felt; sagging belly; fat on the neck, legs and tail base

HOW TO CHECK, AND WHY

The hand test
Ribs that feel like the back of your hand: about right. Like your knuckles: too thin. Like your palm: too heavy.

Muscle too
Feel the spine, shoulder blades, skull and hips: overweight dogs can still lose muscle.

Why it matters
Labradors fed 25% less lived significantly longer (Kealy, JAVMA 2002). 59% of US dogs are overweight or obese (APOP 2022).

Treats
All treats under 10% of daily calories. Overweight: 10–20% above ideal; obese: over 20%.

MONTHLY CHECK

DATE	WEIGHT	SCORE (1–9)	MUSCLE	NOTES

Talk to your vet before a diet, and call if your dog scores 1–2 or 8–9, or loses muscle or weight without trying.

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Sources: VCA Animal Hospitals (body condition scores; obesity in dogs); Merck Veterinary Manual (body condition scales; feeding practices); Pet Nutrition Alliance (muscle condition); Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (2022 survey); Kealy et al., JAVMA 2002. Some vets use a 5-point scale instead.