01 / DOG-FIRST BRIEF

Start with your dog

Use this before judging a cottage. What is manageable for one dog may be unsuitable for another.

DOG NAME(S) / AGE(S)

DESTINATION / HOLIDAY DATES

A How does your dog use a garden?

Select the behaviours that genuinely apply; these determine what you need to check.

- [ ] Jumps or climbs
- [ ] Digs or squeezes through gaps
- [ ] Reacts to neighbouring dogs / noise
- [ ] Chases wildlife or livestock
- [ ] Needs easy step-free / toilet access
- [ ] Travels with other dogs

B Set your non-negotiables

A requirement is not a preference. If it cannot be confirmed, ask the host before booking.

Must have / must avoid 01

Must have / must avoid 02

Must have / must avoid 03

C What can be managed with supervision?

A dog may still need a lead or close supervision in an enclosed space. Note any management plan.

Decision rule: the garden must fit your dog - not a generic fence-height score. Unconfirmed details are questions to resolve, never evidence of safety.

02 / PRACTICAL ASSESSMENT

Inspect the garden story

Record specific findings and evidence. Avoid treating a Yes or No answer as automatically positive.

PROPERTY / LISTING	

CHECK / WHAT TO ESTABLISH	FINDING / EVIDENCE
01 BOUNDARIES Whole area enclosed; lowest point and materials	
02 OPENINGS Gaps, hedge bases, gates, latches and climbable items	
03 ACCESS Direct route from accommodation; who can enter	
04 PRIVACY Exclusive or shared use; pass-through activity	
05 SURROUNDINGS Roads, paths, livestock and neighbouring dogs	
06 HAZARDS Ponds, drops, plants, chemicals and damaged areas	
07 COMFORT Shade, surfaces, water access and usable routes	
08 DOG RULES Supervision, off-lead restrictions and dog limits	

How to record a finding: "Lowest fence 95 cm at side gate (owner email, 14 Nov)" is more useful than "Garden: yes". Keep unknowns explicit.

03 / EVIDENCE & DECISION

Decide with confidence

Evidence quality matters. These are booking decision gates, not a numerical safety score.

OBSERVED	A recent photo or direct inspection shows a specific feature. Note what is not visible.
STATED	The host gives a specific written answer. Request further evidence for critical details.
UNKNOWN	No usable answer, an incomplete photograph or a vague claim. Keep it unresolved.
CONFLICTING	Different sources disagree. Ask the host to clarify before relying on either one.

A Evidence log

Capture the answer, source and date for the highest-impact unanswered details.

01

02

03

B Decision: select one outcome

☐ **CONSIDER**

Core needs supported; no known incompatibility.

☐ **ASK BEFORE BOOKING**

At least one essential fact is unknown or conflicting.

☐ **RULE OUT**

A known condition conflicts with your dog’s needs.

Why / what must be resolved next?

04 / COMPARISON WORKSHEET

Compare two real stays

Use this after enquiry replies. Keep missing evidence visible instead of relying on attractive photographs.

DECISION FACTOR	STAY A	STAY B
Property / location		
Lowest boundary height / type		
Gates, gaps and weak points		
Access, privacy and shared use		
Nearby dogs, livestock, roads		
Hazards, shade and surfaces		
Evidence received / date		
Dog-specific non-negotiables		
Unknowns needing clarification		
Your decision and why		

Tip: A property with fewer unanswered critical questions may be easier to judge - but a confirmed mismatch with your dog still rules it out.

05 / ASK, VERIFY & ARRIVE

Turn questions into answers

Send a focused enquiry, keep the response, then check the actual garden before your dog explores.

COPY-READY HOST ENQUIRY

Hello, I am considering your property with my dog(s). Before booking, could you please confirm:
1. Is the whole garden enclosed? What is the lowest boundary height?
2. Are there gaps under gates, hedges or fencing, and do all gates latch?
3. Is the garden exclusively for our use, with direct access from the cottage?
4. Are other dogs, livestock, roads or public paths immediately alongside?
5. Could you send recent photos of each boundary and gate?
Please say if any detail is unknown. Thank you!

A Five-minute arrival check

Keep your dog secured while you walk the full boundary.

- [ ] Walk every boundary and inspect at your dog’s height.
- [ ] Check gates, latches, hedge bases and possible escape gaps.
- [ ] Look for damage, climbable objects and unexpected access.
- [ ] Check neighbouring activity, livestock and obvious hazards.
- [ ] If anything differs, use a lead and contact the host.

B Arrival notes / changes from the listing

Important: This workbook supports informed decisions, not a formal safety inspection or containment guarantee. Conditions change; supervise dogs outside and use a lead where appropriate.

Further reading: Dogs Trust (escaping dogs, garden safety) | Blue Cross (dog-friendly gardens)