A Practical Guide on How to Get Papers for a Dog

If you own a designer or hybrid dog breed and have never had official documentation for the animal, you might wonder whether it matters. The short answer is that papers matter a lot when you need to prove lineage, transfer ownership, or register your dog with a recognized club. The process of figuring out how to get papers for a dog can feel confusing if you adopted from a private seller or a rescue that did not supply any records. I have helped several friends navigate this, and the steps are more straightforward than most people assume.

The first thing to understand is that "papers" means different things depending on your goal. For a breeder, it often means a pedigree registry and litter registration with an organization like the American Kennel Club or the United Kennel Club. For an owner who simply wants proof of breed and health history, it may mean a breed certificate plus vet records and microchip identification. For those who adopted a mixed-breed or hybrid dog from an animal shelter, the paperwork path is different. Still, the core question remains the same: how to get papers for a dog when none came with the animal.



Start With What You Have

Before you contact any registry or club, gather every scrap of information about the dog. This includes the seller or breeder name, the date you got the dog, any photographs that show distinctive markings, and any vet records that exist. Even a simple vaccination card counts. If the dog has a microchip, write down the microchip identification number. If you have a DNA testing kit result from a service like Embark or Wisdom Panel, that can also help. The more documentation you have at the start, the easier it will be to fill the gaps later.

Many owners of designer dog breeds - think French Bulldog, Cavapoo, or Cockapoo - assume they need purebred paperwork to prove the breed. But not all designer breeds are recognized by every kennel club. For example, the American Kennel Club recognizes purebreds with a long lineage, while the United Kennel Club and the continental kennel club may register hybrid dog breeds that do not meet the strict breed standard. Knowing which club your dog belongs with is half the battle.

Contact the Breeder or Previous Owner

If you bought the dog from a breeder, that person should have a record of the litter registration and the puppy papers. Good breeders keep these for years. Call or email them and ask for a copy of the original registration number and any transfer of ownership documents. If the breeder is no longer in business or refuses to help, you may need to work with a registry service that specializes in designer and hybrid dog breeds without prior papers. These services can issue a breed certificate based on DNA testing and a sworn affidavit from the owner.

One friend of mine adopted a Cockapoo from a private seller who claimed the dog came from champion lines but had no papers at all. The seller had lost the original breeder certification. We contacted the breeder directly, found the litter was registered with the United Kennel Club, and paid a small fee to transfer the registration number to my friend's name. The whole process took about three weeks. Without that initial call, we would have had to start from scratch.

Use DNA Testing for Proof of Breed

If the original breeder is gone or the dog came from an animal shelter or a puppy mill situation, DNA testing becomes your best tool. A simple cheek swab can confirm the breed mix in hybrid dog breeds and even identify the specific designer breed lines. Many registries accept DNA results as part of the evidence for issuing a canine identification card or a breed certificate. This is especially useful for owners of hybrid breeds that fall between the cracks of traditional purebred paperwork.



When you send a sample, the lab returns a report that lists the breed percentages. Take that report to the registry you want to work with. Some clubs have their own DNA database. For instance, the American Kennel Club partners with specific labs and will not accept results from just any provider. Check the club's policy before you spend money. If you have a mixed breed with no clear lineage, you may still get a breed certificate that says "designer mix" or "hybrid" rather than a purebred title. That is still official documentation and is better than having nothing.

Work With a Registry Service

There are businesses that exist solely to help owners who have no prior papers. They walk you through how to get papers for a dog. You fill out an application, provide vet records, microchip identification, and DNA results, and they issue a registration number and a breed certificate. Some also offer litter registration if you plan to breed the dog later. These services are especially helpful for designer dog breeds that are not recognized by the major clubs but still need formal paperwork for travel, boarding, or ownership transfer.

One caution: not all registry services are legitimate. A few operate as fronts for puppy mills and will issue papers without any verification. Always check that the service is affiliated with a recognized kennel club like the American Kennel Club, the United Kennel Club, or the

continental kennel club. A legitimate registry will require some proof, whether a vet exam, a microchip scan, or a DNA test. If they ask for money and nothing else, walk away.

Register With a Kennel Club

Once you have a breed certificate or a registration number from a registry, you can apply for membership with a kennel club. This step is optional for most pet owners, but it is essential if you plan to show the dog or breed it. The club will issue a canine identification card and add your dog to its pedigree registry. The process usually requires a fee, a copy of your papers, and sometimes a photo.

For hybrid dog breeds, the United Kennel Club and the continental kennel club are more accommodating than the American Kennel Club. The latter focuses on purebred paperwork and may reject a hybrid outright. Do not take it personally. There are clubs that welcome all breeds and mixes, and they offer the same level of official documentation. I have seen a Goldendoodle with a full set of papers from the continental kennel club that included a three-generation pedigree, even though the breed is a hybrid. The key was that the owner had DNA evidence and a vet-signed statement of the breed.

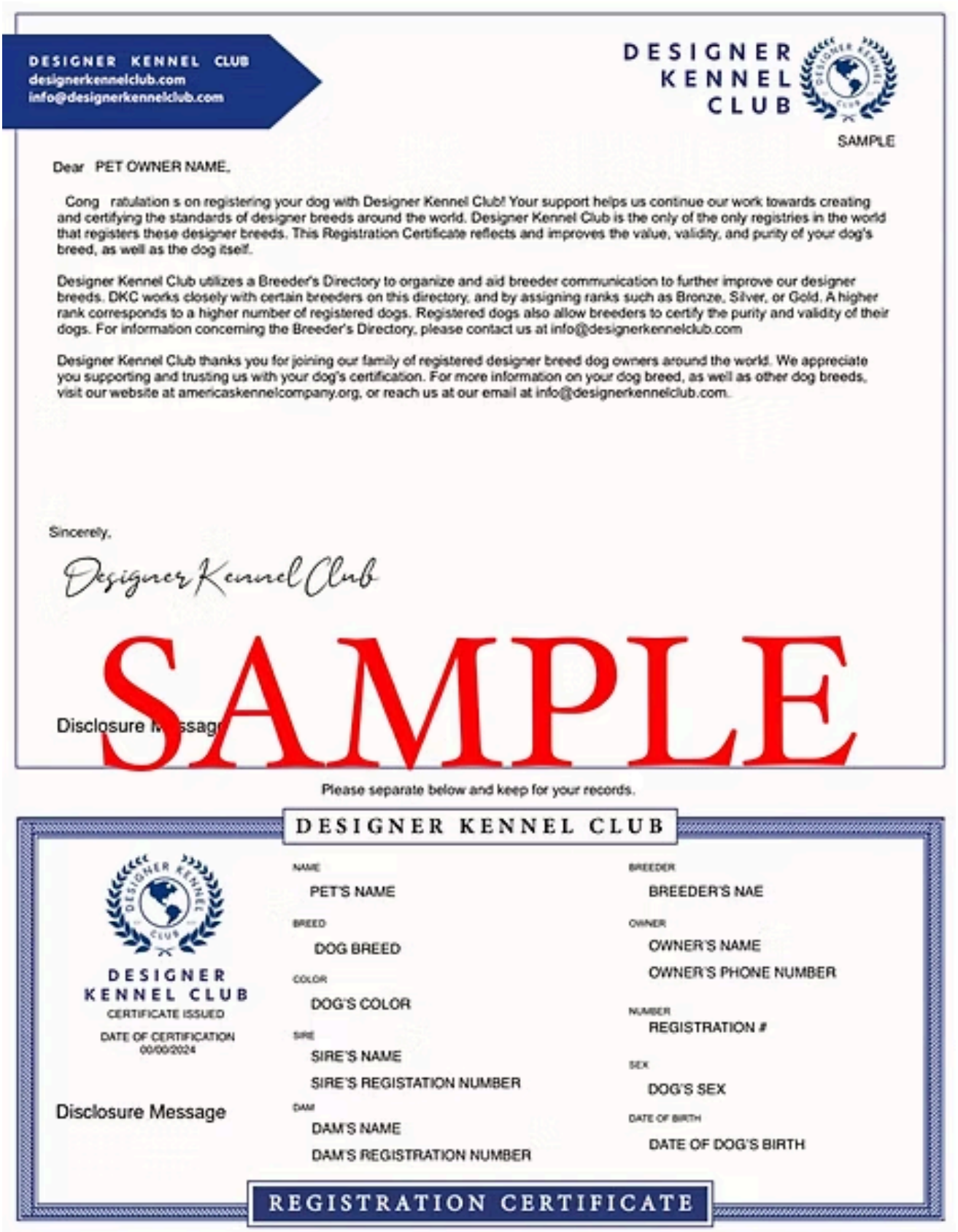
Keep Your Papers Current

After you obtain the documents, treat them like any important record. Store them in a fireproof box or scan them to a cloud drive. Update the ownership transfer information if you sell or give away the dog. If you move to a different state or country, check whether the local dog licensing laws require additional paperwork. Some places require a separate permit for designer dog breeds, and your existing breed certificate may not be enough.

Also, renew your microchip identification registration annually. Many owners forget this step, and then when the dog gets lost, the chip leads to an old phone number. The same goes for vet records: keep a folder with every vaccination, surgery, and test result. That folder might become the basis for a future litter registration if your dog produces a litter.

What If Papers Are Not Possible?

Some dogs simply cannot get traditional papers. A rescue from a puppy mill with no known parents, no DNA sample, and no vet history may never qualify for a pedigree registry. In that case, focus on what you can get: a dog license from your county, a microchip, and a letter from your vet describing the dog's breed and health. That may not satisfy a kennel club, but it will satisfy most boarding kennels, trainers, and insurance companies. It also helps with ownership transfer if you ever rehome the animal.



DESIGNER KENNEL CLUB
designerkennelclub.com
info@designerkennelclub.com

DESIGNER KENNEL CLUB

SAMPLE

Dear PET OWNER NAME,

Cong ratulation s on registering your dog with Designer Kennel Club! Your support helps us continue our work towards creating and certifying the standards of designer breeds around the world. Designer Kennel Club is the only of the only registries in the world that registers these designer breeds. This Registration Certificate reflects and improves the value, validity, and purity of your dog's breed, as well as the dog itself.

Designer Kennel Club utilizes a Breeder's Directory to organize and aid breeder communication to further improve our designer breeds. DKC works closely with certain breeders on this directory, and by assigning ranks such as Bronze, Silver, or Gold. A higher rank corresponds to a higher number of registered dogs. Registered dogs also allow breeders to certify the purity and validity of their dogs. For information concerning the Breeder's Directory, please contact us at info@designerkennelclub.com

Designer Kennel Club thanks you for joining our family of registered designer breed dog owners around the world. We appreciate you supporting and trusting us with your dog's certification. For more information on your dog breed, as well as other dog breeds, visit our website at americaskennelcompany.org, or reach us at our email at info@designerkennelclub.com.

Sincerely,

Designer Kennel Club

SAMPLE

Disclosure Message

Please separate below and keep for your records.

DESIGNER KENNEL CLUB

DESIGNER KENNEL CLUB
CERTIFICATE ISSUED
DATE OF CERTIFICATION
00/00/2024

Disclosure Message

NAME
PET'S NAME

BREED
DOG BREED

COLOR
DOG'S COLOR

SIRE
SIRE'S NAME
SIRE'S REGISTATION NUMBER

DAM
DAM'S NAME
DAM'S REGISTRATION NUMBER

BREEDER
BREEDER'S NAE

OWNER
OWNER'S NAME
OWNER'S PHONE NUMBER

NUMBER
REGISTRATION #

SEX
DOG'S SEX

DATE OF BIRTH
DATE OF DOG'S BIRTH

REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE

I once helped a neighbor whose dog came from a hoarding situation. The dog had no microchip, no records, and no known breed. We could not get any kind of breed certificate. But we did get a county dog license, a microchip implanted, and a full set of vet records. When she

later moved to a rental that required dog licensing, those documents were enough. Sometimes good enough is better than nothing.

The whole process of how to get papers for a dog depends on your starting point and your end goal. If you want a formal pedigree and the ability to show or breed, you will need DNA testing, breeder records, and a registry. If you just want proof of ownership and health, a microchip and vet records will do. Either way, the first step is always to gather what you have, and the second is to be honest about what is missing. Fake papers are worse than no papers, and a legitimate registry will never cut corners.

For owners of designer and hybrid dog breeds, there are more options now than there were ten years ago. The rise of DNA testing and microchip identification has made it possible to document dogs that would have been invisible to the system. So if you have been putting off the paperwork because it seemed too hard, start today. Call your vet, order a DNA kit, and contact a registry that works with your breed. You will feel better knowing your dog has a record, and your dog will benefit from the security that comes with being a documented member of the canine world.