



What to Expect When Adopting a Rescue Dog

A Simple Guide for New Adopters

Bringing home a rescue dog is an incredible thing—but it’s also a big adjustment for them.

Most dogs coming from shelters or the streets are not “problem dogs.”

They are simply confused, overwhelmed, and trying to figure out where they are and who you are.

What you see in the first few days is not their true personality.

WHERE THEY COME FROM

Most of these dogs didn’t come from homes.

They come from the streets—where they’ve had to find food, avoid danger, and survive on their own without structure or safety.

Some are picked up as strays.

Some are brought in injured or sick.

Some are born outside and have never known a home at all.

FROM THE STREETS TO THE SHELTER

When they are rescued, they are brought to shelters—many of which are already overwhelmed.

- Shelters are overcrowded
- There are not enough volunteers
- Time with each animal is limited

They receive medical care, food, and safety—but most are placed in cages or kennels.

For many, this is their first time being confined.

They are surrounded by noise, stress, and unfamiliar activity.

They are safe—but they are also unsure.



THEN EVERYTHING CHANGES AGAIN

If they are lucky, they are chosen for adoption, fostering, or travel to another country.

But that comes with even more change.

- Crates and kennels
- Airplanes and long car rides
- New environments and unfamiliar people

Puppies may be separated from their mothers.

Dogs may be moved more than once in a short period of time.

Everything in their world keeps changing.

AND THEN... YOUR HOME

When they arrive, it may look like they've finally made it.

But to them, it's just another new place.

They don't know:

- Who you are
- If they are staying
- What the rules are
- Where they should go

They are going from survival... to shelter... to transport... to a home.

That is a lot for any dog to process.

WHAT YOU MIGHT SEE IN THE FIRST DAYS

Your new dog may:

- Have accidents inside
- Seem nervous or withdrawn
- Pace or feel restless
- Not respond to their name
- Not understand commands
- Eat too fast—or not eat much
- Sleep a lot or have trouble settling

This is normal.

They are adjusting—not misbehaving.



THE 3-3-3 RULE

3 Days

They are overwhelmed and trying to understand their environment.

3 Weeks

They begin to settle in and feel more comfortable.

3 Months

They start to feel at home and their true personality comes out. Every dog is different—but time makes a big difference.

WHAT THEY NEED MOST

Not commands. Not perfection.

They need:

- Patience
- Consistency
- Calm energy
- Time

Focus on building trust first. Training will come later.

HOW YOU CAN HELP THEM ADJUST

Create a simple, consistent routine.

Give them a safe space where they can rest.

Go slow with introductions to people, pets, and new environments.

Use positive reinforcement and stay calm.

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

- Expecting too much too soon
- Getting frustrated with accidents
- Introducing too many new things at once
- Trying to train everything immediately
- Giving up too quickly

Most issues improve with time and patience.



IMPORTANT: IF THE ADOPTION DOES NOT WORK OUT

If for any reason the adoption does not work out, the pet must not be rehomed by you.

- Do not give the pet to another person or family
- Do not give the pet to another rescue
- Contact Who Rescued Who NS immediately
- The pet must be returned to the rescue

This ensures the safety of the animal and allows us to find the right match for them.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO REMEMBER

They are not coming to you as a trained pet.

They are coming to you as a survivor learning how to be a pet for the first time.

With patience, they will learn.

And in time, they will become the dog you were hoping for—and more.

This is part of your adoption agreement.

**IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS, PLEASE REACH OUT.
WE ARE HERE TO HELP.**