



# bringing home a NEW DOG

If we could stress one of the biggest errors people make with their foster or newly adopted dogs, it is rushing the dog into their new world too fast. This shut down gives the dog a chance to breathe and relax into its new world.

## Don't:

- Overwhelm your new dog with a lot of new people
- Allow your new dog to spend time with your current pets without supervision
- Take your dog to new, crowded places

For the first few weeks of bringing a new dog home, there is an adjustment period. The dog determines who is the top person, or animal, which determines how they act. By pushing a dog too fast, we look like we are not the leaders, and the dog may feel like it MUST defend itself.

We coo and coddle, and drag the dog to home to home to person to person, and the dog has NO idea who we are. We correct for things it doesn't understand, we talk in a new human language using words he does not know.

A key thing to remember is that this is the "getting to know you" period. Even though you might already love the dog, and feel like they are your family, they still need to adjust to you and the new environment. Just think about how strange it would be if you were put in a new home, with people who were always trying to hug you and dragging you around meeting new people. Most people would be exhausted, confused, and scared.

It is unreasonable to expect a dog to endure something that most people wouldn't tolerate. Setting up some clear structure with your family for your dog will be paramount in making as smooth a transition as possible.

# PREPARING for a new dog

- Determine where your dog will be spending most of his time. Because he will be under a lot of stress with the change of environment (from shelter or foster home to your house), he may forget any housebreaking (if any) he's learned. Often a kitchen will work best for easy clean-up.
- If you plan on crate training your dog, be sure to have a crate set-up and ready to go for when you bring your new dog home. Please see our guide to crate training to learn the proper methods. We suggest crate training to all of our fosters and adopters.
- Dog-proof the area where your pooch will spend most of his time during the first few months. This may mean taping loose electrical cords to baseboards; storing household chemicals on high shelves; removing plants, rugs, and breakables; setting up the crate, and installing baby gates.
- Training your dog will start the first moment you have him. Take time to create a vocabulary list everyone will use when giving your dog directions. This will help prevent confusion and help your dog learn his commands more quickly. Not sure which commands to use? Check out our guide for how to talk to your dog.
- Bring an ID tag with your phone number on it with you when you pick up your dog so that he has an extra measure of safety for the ride home and the first few uneasy days. We suggest you get your dog microchipped and registered in case he ever gets lost.

# FIRST DAY

## with your new dog

- We know moving is stressful — and your new dog feels the same way! Give him time to acclimate to your home and family before introducing him to strangers. Make sure children know how to approach the dog without overwhelming him.
- We will let you know what and when the dog has been eating, either at the shelter or at his foster home. We suggest feeding at the same time every day, and feeding the same brand food for consistency.
- On the way home, your dog should be safely secured, preferably in a crate, or tied in the back seat or trunk (in a hatchback car/SUV). Some dogs find car trips stressful, so having him in a safe place will make the trip home easier on him and you. Make sure the dog is not able to climb around the car, as this can be dangerous for him, and also the driver.
- Once home, take him to his toileting area immediately and spend a good amount of time with him so he will get used to the area and relieve himself. Even if your dog does relieve himself during this time, be prepared for accidents. Coming into a new home with new people, new smells and new sounds can throw even the most housebroken dog off-track, so be ready just in case.
- If you plan on crate training your dog, leave the crate open so that he can go in whenever he feels like it in case he gets overwhelmed. Also, be sure to check out the do's and don'ts of crate training on our website.
- From there, start your schedule of feeding, toileting and play/exercise. From Day One, your dog will need family time and brief periods of solitary confinement. Don't give in and comfort him if he whines when left alone. Instead, give him attention for good behavior, such as chewing on a toy or resting quietly.
- For the first few days, remain calm and quiet around your dog, limiting too much excitement (such as the dog park or neighborhood children). Not only will this allow your dog to settle in easier, it will give you more one-on-one time to get to know him and his likes/dislikes.
- If he came from another home, objects like leashes, hands, rolled up newspapers and magazines, feet, chairs and sticks are just some of the pieces of "training equipment" that may have been used on this dog. Words like "come here" and "lie down" may bring forth a reaction other than the one you expect. Or maybe he led a sheltered life and was never socialized to children or sidewalk activity. This dog may be the product of a never-ending series of scrambled communications and unreal expectations that will require patience on your part.

# in the first FEW WEEKS

- Use crate training as a way to give your dog a safe space and a place to relax.
- Leashing around the house is an option. This also teaches the new safe zone when the dog is around you and other humans in the home.
- No intense obedience training should be done for the first two weeks -- just fun exercise. Maybe throw some toys for fun. Leash the dog if you don't have a fence outside. If you have a large yard, do not leave the yard with the dog. If you do not have a yard, taking the dog on a walk while leashed is acceptable. No car rides, no other dogs, (unless crated beside them), no pet stores. (The exception to this is of course if the dog needs to go to the veterinarian.)
- Exercise is a must. All dogs need to burn off energy. Do fun toss the ball games in your yard or on a lunge line if no fence. Remember to just have fun. Let the dog run and explore in the yard.
- Teach the dog that you are the one to look to, that you are now here for the dog! He can trust in you and look to you as his new leader. Eventually on walks you will see the dog look to you when he sees something, to see what your reaction is, lessening his mind about having to defend or control the environment. The dog now can relax and enjoy the walk.
- Once exercise/yard time is finished put the dog back in his/her crate. Let him absorb, think, and rest. If the dog goes to his crate on his own, he is telling you "I need a time out." Allow him this time. By having the dog out for long periods of time we are forcing the dog to keep accepting all new things. By putting the dog away we are asking him to accept a few things, then go think and absorb. When we get him out later, we introduce a few more things, so it not overload on the dog.
- Do not introduce the dog to other animals for these two weeks. If there are other pets in the house, they can meet and spend time together with supervision, but should not be left alone together until they are comfortable with each other. This could be after a couple of weeks, or it could take longer. The key is patience.
- Ignore Bad behavior. Ignore crying and/or barking. If you run to the dog each time they bark, whine, or cry, you are teaching the dog that doing those things gets your attention. The dog must learn to be secure when you are not there. Use the leash to correct jumping, exploring counters, etc.
- Praise good behavior gently. For example, the dog is sitting nicely next to you. Touch or softly pet the dog and tell them "good boy/girl." Let them know you appreciate good behavior. This makes naughty behavior not so fun if you ignore that, but praise the good!