

# At Home with the Newly Adopted Dog

("Unless an adoption is done well, it is not worthwhile")

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This information is provided to ensure you the best possible outcome for this adoption. Expect bringing a dog home to be a major **project!** A dog's behavior in the kennel or foster home does not necessarily reflect the behavior you will encounter at your home! Expect the dog to act like a dog! Align your expectations with reality! A dog will eliminate in the house if not trained to use the outdoors. A dog will jump up to greet. A dog has a need to chew. A dog will be frustrated going into a new home and will be destructive if not carefully managed. A dog will protect himself if he feels he or his space is threatened. Anticipate it will take about 3-6 weeks for your dog to "settle in". We appreciate that you have chosen to attend our training classes to learn more about dog behavior.

## ***Children, Dogs & Safety***

Children and dogs require *vigilante* supervision! Never take someone else's word that this dog is "Good with children". It is your responsibility to educate and not allow children to: Chase or tease the dog, try to hug and kiss the new dog, (this crowds his space), try to take objects away from the dog, disturb the dog when he is eating or sleeping, has a bone or otherwise tease the dog. A child can easily make a dog feel nervous and/or threatened. Dogs growl and bite when they feel threatened and/or feel a need to protect themselves. People hire lawyers, sue and kill each other. If your dog growls or snaps, seek help immediately.

## ***Housetraining***

Regardless of what you think this dog already knows about eliminating outside, in a new situation your dog will not know where to go to the bathroom unless *you take him outside, on a schedule, to the same spot.* Stand still with the dog on the lead. *Reward him* with praise, a treat, fetch or a run around the yard after he does his business! This way he will associate "doing my business outside will make good times begin!" When you first go inside your home, *do not* turn him loose to run through the house! *Keep him on a lead and introduce him to one room at a time.* If he eliminates in the house it is likely because he has not been closely supervised and provided the opportunity to go outside. Feeding the dog on a schedule will help with the housetraining schedule. Please do not blame or punish the dog for eliminating inside. Instead, monitor more closely and reward success.

## ***Left Alone and Destructiveness***

Expect your dog to be *frustrated and destructive!* Arrange that he be in an area where minimal damage will occur when left alone. Practice leaving him alone for short periods (5-10 seconds) and returning. Keep departures and returns low-key. Progress gradually to being gone for longer periods. Help your dog focus on a special chew toy to relieve stress. A kong toy stuffed with low-fat peanut butter or cream cheese provided 5 minutes prior to leaving may be helpful. Redirect inappropriate chewing to the appropriate item.

## ***Crate Training***

Dogs are den animals and crates can offer a den atmosphere for the dog. They also are a great asset with housetraining and minimizing destructiveness. Crates should always be a desirable and attractive place to be. A good way to introduce a dog to a crate is to have a *tasty morsel* of food inside a crate with the door *closed* and let the dog *want* to get in! Open the door and let him go in to get it. Do this several times before closing the door. Then rehearse closing the door for a moment and open. Repeat this leaving it closed for progressively longer periods. If you open the

door when the dog begins to whine or bark, the dog learns that whining or barking gets you to open the door. As you leave the dog for longer periods, use the stuffed kong strategy.

### ***Jumping up***

Jumping up is a normal greeting ritual with humans. It is encouraged by acknowledging it by either pets and scratches or admonishment. Turn away from the dog when he jumps up. Reward dog with your attention or a treat when he has all four feet are on the floor. Instruct others to withhold attention until dog has all “4 on- the-floor”. If the dog has been jumping up prior to your getting him (which he probably has), initiating this modification strategy will initially result in him *jumping up even more* to try and make his effort work to receive attention. This is called an “extinction burst”. Responding *consistently* by turning away and rewarding “four on the floor” will change this behavior over time.

### ***Feeding***

For the first several days in your home, divide the food into small portions, call your dog to you and feed the dog from your hand. This will help the dog associate *you* as the provider of good things! Gradually elevate your hand slightly above dog’s nose level and then feed after the dog sits!

### ***Teaching bite inhibition***

Biting too hard is normal but gets many dogs in trouble. Helping a dog to learn the strength/gentleness of his mouth is an important endeavor. If the dog grabs at a treat too forcefully, loudly shout “OW!” as you withdraw the treat and act hurt for a moment, (this teaches the dog that too much teeth touching your skin hurts you *and* makes the treat go away). After a pause, offer the treat again and say “easy” or “gentle” and allow the dog the treat *if* the response is improved from the prior attempt. Repeat the “OW!” startle again if the dog is again to forceful taking the treat. This approach helps the dog learn that a *gentle mouth gets the treat; rough mouth makes it go away*. Continue to rehearse this ceremony indefinitely to achieve and maintain a soft mouth.

### ***Exercise***

Your dog will benefit from plenty of exercise. Fetching a ball or running is tiring and good. It is a good reward for eliminating outside. Do not play “tug of war” with your dog unless you want him to learn the power of his jaws and mouth.

### ***Another dog in the home?***

We encourage you to bring your current resident dog to the Shelter for a dog-dog introduction to evaluate compatibility before taking home the new dog. *Generally* a younger dog of the opposite sex is a better choice. Always introduce dogs outside on neutral territory first. With the help of another person walk the dogs parallel to each other without contact to notice their response to each other. Dogs learn by association. While still separated, I like to let one dog slobber at a treat in my hand and then I give it to the other. Then I let the *other* dog slobber on a treat and give *it* to the other dog. When you get home and before you go inside, pick up bones and toys to prevent issues over resources. Have the resident dog confined and introduce the new dog to one room at a time, ON LEASH. This allows his scent to permeate the rooms as well as you will be vigilante to not allow any territorial marking! Remove him to another area for confinement and drop some treats around on the floor and let the resident dog into the house and let him smell around. This assists the association that, “Hmmm, the presence of this other dog in the house makes treats appear on the floor. Good thing!” Repeat this procedure. When you do introduce the two dogs together, make lots of exceptional treats “fall out of the sky”. Again, the association is a positive one.

### ***A preexisting cat in the home?***

Arrange for your cat to have a safe area (separate room behind closed door) before introducing the dog into the home. During the learning process never allow the dog to chase the cat. This will invoke a normal prey drive in the dog. Keep them separated for several weeks. They will be very aware of each other by the presence of each other's scent. It might be helpful to set the dog's food bowl on a towel that has been rubbed on the cat and the cat's food bowl on a towel that's been rubbed on the dog. This will help each animal have a good association of the other. Allow the cat into the house area only when the dog is outdoors or shut away in another room. After the separation period, introduce the cat into the room with the dog on his lead. Pairing this meeting with special food will continue to help a positive association, cat = treat. Proceed cautiously. Be sure the cat always has an accessible safe zone.

### ***Summary***

Set the dog up for success; expect him to act like a dog!

Focus on acknowledging /rewarding the dog with praise and/or a small, treat when he does something right, vs. scolding him when he does something you don't like.

Feed from open hand initially and occasionally so dog perceives you as provider.

Turn away when dog jumps up, praise when "four on the floor".

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If you would like a more detailed version of this information, please see the handout:

**"I'm Bringing Home a Dog, What to Do?"**