

YOU AND YOUR NEW RESCUE DOG: **STARTING OUT RIGHT**



Congratulations on adopting your new dog! Rescue dogs make very loyal and loving companions, but it is key to start out right to ensure a successful relationship. We have compiled some helpful information to ensure you and your new family member are happy together.

Key Points to make the Transition Successful [source - www.HSUS.org]

Don't make him be a party animal. For the first week or two, adopters should let the dog relax and unwind in the presence of the immediate family; there will be time for introductions to other friends and relatives later. This will help the humans develop a sense of the dog's tolerance levels and help the dog form a bond.

Go slowly. After the initial adjustment period, adopters should introduce new people gradually. Even if dogs have lived with children in the past, the dogs may not have had a good relationships with them. Since details about a dog's previous owners may be few, it's especially important that new experiences remain positive and non-invasive until adopters have a better idea of the dog's likes and dislikes.

Give him elbow room. Just as people want dogs to respect human space and boundaries, dogs have similar needs. Body pounding (hard patting), constant head-petting, hugging, kissing, disturbing rest or sleep, and allowing strangers to get in the dog's face are all possible invasions of a dog's personal space. While the dog might tolerate these things, it doesn't mean he enjoys them.

Limit social outings. Taking a newly adopted dog to a dog park will add more stress to an already physically and mentally stressed animal. The risk of fights due to aroused physical states is greater with a newly adopted dog. While socialization is important, there is plenty of time for dog parks and playgroups after the dog has settled into his new home and recovered from the stress of the shelter environment.

Teach remedial courses. Training is one of the most important gifts new adopters can offer their dog but, again, only once the dog has settled in. Adopters can begin to establish boundaries by slowly teaching simple behaviors, such as "Sit", at home before attending outside classes.

Be a positive leader. Be a good "pack leader" for your dog. Good leadership reflects the ability to guide, direct or influence—not dominate, intimidate or control. Adopters should use kindness while teaching a new dog the rules of the house; a gentle but firm influence will help build a relationship of trust.

Dogs Need Leadership

During the transition period, a dog needs time to adjust to the rules and schedule of your household, and he needs your leadership! A dog is a pack animal looking for guidance, and it is up to you to teach him good, acceptable behaviors. The dog will try to take charge if the human does not.

A dog cannot do damage unless you let that happen. Watch your new dog during the transition period. When you can't supervise, keep him in a kitchen, crate or other secure area with chew toys.

Beware of letting your dog on your bed or furniture if you haven't established all human family members as the leaders ("alpha"). Dominance-related problems often arise when a dog is on a higher physical level. Dogs don't seek equality; they seek and need leadership.

Don't issue a command unless you are in a position to enforce it. Telling a dog to do something, then not guiding him to obey if he chooses not to, teaches him to ignore you.

Beware of sending mixed signals that bad behavior is cute or entertaining.

Dogs Need Structure

Dogs thrive on routine so orient your new companion to your schedule. As long as you are consistent and provide leadership, the dog will adjust.

Set up a confinement area or crate, a place your dog will stay when you can't provide 100 percent supervision. If you decide to use a confinement area, it should be easy to close off with a baby gate. It should be free of anything the dog can chew on such as furniture, shoes, etc. The best place for a confinement area is the kitchen, laundry room, enclosed porch, empty spare room or small indoor area. You do not want to isolate the dog in a garage or basement. Remember dogs are pack animals, and they do not do well in isolation.

Your dog's confinement area is not a place to send him for punishment. It should be a positive place. The confinement area is a place your dog can call his own as he makes the transition to his new home. It is a happy place where he gets good items, like treats and his favorite toy. It sets him up for success in the process of house-training and alone-time training. Furnish the confinement area with a bed or a crate with something soft to sleep on, a water bowl and several toys, including a favorite chew toy.

People often give a new dog complete freedom right away. Then, when he has an accident or chews the wrong thing, they confine him, and confinement becomes punishment. If you start out giving your dog the run of the house, you're setting him up for failure. Better to give him a safe, confined place, so he can make a gradual and successful transition to his new home.

When you arrive at home...

- Take your dog out for a walk or bathroom break.
- Introduce him to his new home on a leash, and include his confinement area or crate. A crate is a valuable tool for a new adopter. Like a confinement area, a crate eases the process of house-training, chew training and alone-time training. It helps your dog to more easily make the transition to his new home.
- If your dog begins to howl, whine or bark, wait until he has been quiet for at least ten seconds before you respond. Otherwise, your dog will learn that whining or barking makes you appear or gets him out of the confinement area, and he'll bark or cry for longer periods of time.

You must get your dog used to short absences starting within the first few hours of his arrival. This is extremely important. You'll want to spend every minute with your dog when he first comes home, but you should prepare him right away for a normal routine. He must learn to be relaxed, calm and settled when he's alone. Alone-time training is necessary because dogs are highly social animals and being alone doesn't come naturally to them.

Leave your dog alone in his confinement area while you go out or spend time in another part of the house. Vary the length of your absences, from 30 seconds to 20 minutes, and repeat them throughout the day. If your dog seems comfortable, you can increase the amount of time he's left alone.

Remember, it may take several days or weeks for your dog to make the transition to his new home. A dog may have been at a shelter for a while, a stray for a bit or maybe his prior home was not a positive experience. It will take time for your dog to understand he is in a forever home where he can feel safe and secure.

Notes on House-training

Some adult dogs are not house-trained. If your dog has an accident, it's not because he's incapable or unintelligent; it's because he has not been properly trained. To successfully house-train your dog, you need to treat him like a puppy. The confinement area or crate is your key to success.

Until your dog is perfectly house-trained, never leave him alone unless he's in his confinement area.

- He must be 100% supervised when he's outside his confinement area.
- Take your dog out on a leash frequently. Start by walking him at half-hour intervals.
- If you see your dog sniffing and circling in the house, take him out immediately.
- Praise and reward him with a treat (cookie) when he relieves himself outdoors.
- Never yell or punish your dog for a potty accident in the house.

Socialization & Exercise

- Dogs need both physical exercise and mental stimulation. Remember: A tired dog is a happy dog!
- A good exercise program will make your dog a more relaxed and enjoyable companion.
- Depending on your dog's energy level, he will benefit greatly from daily aerobic exercise. Off-leash romps in secured areas, running or jogging & interactive games such as fetch or tug all help burn energy and keep your dog from getting bored and frustrated.
- Daily obedience training and food "puzzle" toys provide your dog with mental stimulation.
- Dog training classes help burn off mental and physical energy.

Identification

Keep an ID tag with your address and phone number attached to a snug buckle collar on your dog at all times. Many dogs never find their way back home due to lack of identification.