

Bringing Home Your New Dog

Congratulations on adopting your new family member! Your dog's homecoming will be filled with new beginnings and lots of changes for both of you. But just as we humans find moving to be a stressful event, your dog's happy homecoming can also be a stressful time. This is especially true for adolescent and adult dogs who have left behind a prior life and routines often unknown to us. Experts agree that although every dog is an individual there is some predictability in transitioning a dog into a new home.

Amid all the change, providing some quiet time, a routine, and structure can be much needed soothers and aids when settling your newest family member into your home. Here a few reminders and tips to help your adopted dog transition into his new life more smoothly and successfully.

Rule of Threes: Three days, Three Weeks, Three Months

Canine experts have coined this triplet the "magic of threes". Behaviors of many newly adopted dogs, especially adolescent and adult dogs, often fall within this trio of settling-in stages:

The First Three Days: Suddenly finding themselves in a new environment and surrounded by strangers, dogs often don't show you too much about who they are until they've been there a few more days. As they are soaking in the many changes that come with their new life they may be a bit anxious or timid as they encounter something new at every turn. They may find it hard to settle into one spot. Perhaps they pace, or maybe they seek out a quiet spot just to ponder and process all the newness surrounding them.

The First Three Weeks: After about three weeks many dogs have settled-in to the extent that they behave as though they feel like they are "home" now. With your patient and consistent guidance they are beginning to learn your household rules and routines.

The First Three Months: By about the end of this third month, your new best friend is likely to be settling in. Your efforts to establish a predictable daily routine has helped your dog fit into your routine. Although training and management are always ongoing, you and your new companion are hitting your stride.

Safety First

- Keep a collar with identification tags on your dog at all times!
- Don't leave your new dog alone in a yard until you have established a routine and your dog is more comfortable in his new surroundings. Check for gaps in fencing or gates that a small dog might slip through. Remove any items that a dog might use to leap-frog over a fence. Keep your dog leashed when not in a securely fenced area.

- Be vigilant about opening doors or gates leading outside. Have your dog on leash, or behind a closed door or baby gate before you open the door to avoid a door-dash or gate-escape.

Tips for Success:

- **Assume your new dog is not house trained.** Even previously house trained dogs can be confused in a new home. When you arrive home with your new dog, immediately show them where to potty and continue to do so in the weeks to come. Be consistent, and maintain a routine. *Review and practice the housetraining tips included in your Adoption Packet handout starting with day one!*
- **Limit Access and Monitor.** At first, limit your dog to one room or area where you can directly observe and supervise. Simply close doors to other rooms or spaces. This allows your new dog time to become familiar with the smells and sounds of his new home without being overwhelmed. The close proximity to you allows you to monitor and supervise your new dog and facilitates bonding. Try to limit your time away from home those first days; your spending time with him will help him to become more comfortable in his new, unfamiliar home.
- **Crate Train or Establish a Safe Indoor Confinement Area.** Invest in a crate. Crating your dog gives him time to process new experiences in a secure and safe spot and greatly aids in house training and alone time training. The crate should be roomy enough to allow your dog to stand up, turn around, and lie down comfortably. An alternative to a crate is a dog-proofed part of your home, such as a laundry or mud room blocked off with a baby gate. A crate or a confinement room serves as cozy private den where your new dog can relax, let his guard down, nap and just take a break!

It is OK for your dog to sleep throughout the night in a crate but crating during the day should be limited to no more than 4 hours. Read the Crating your Dog handout in your Adoption Packet for the how to's and additional benefits of crating.

- **Don't overwhelm your dog.** Give him time to settle in. He doesn't have to meet the extended family, all your friends, and the neighbors the first few days home. Stick around home base. Give your dog plenty of quiet time, especially in the beginning. It will help him adjust to his new environment. Resist the urge to join a crowd, dog parks, or any potentially over-stimulating or overwhelming activities. Especially in those sensitive first three weeks at home.
- **Create routines.** Schedule meal times, walks, and play sessions for the same time every day. Dogs learn by consistency and repetition. Your new dog will benefit from the comfort of predictability and structured routine. The sooner you establish these, the better. Feeding and walking routines also greatly assist with house training.
- **Monitor interactions.** In the beginning (and always with kids), don't leave your dog alone with new people or dogs. Be there to supervise and step in to end the

interaction if your dog appears uncomfortable (tail tucked, ears flat, crouching, backing away/avoiding contact).

- **A Tired Dog is a Good Dog.** In addition to structured walks, try to offer your dog 2 sessions/day of aerobic exercise. Depending upon your dogs size, age and physical condition this might be a 20 minute game of fetch in the backyard or a ½ mile jog while you condition your dog for longer runs.
- **Catch them in the act of doing something good!** Reward behaviors you like. Give them a yummy treat, praise or affection. That will make the good behaviors happen more often!
- **Basic Manners Training.** Consider enrolling your dog in a Basic Manners class. Not only will you learn how to best train your dog but partnering with your dog in class is a fantastic bonding experience and will help your dog learn to stay attentive to you in distracting environments and around other dogs. Ask for professional help if you need assistance in training you dog or addressing behaviors of concern.