



ADOPTION PACKET

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Congratulations on adopting your new dog! Here is a compilation of some important tips and equipment when bringing home your new rescue dog.

Helpful Links

- [Recommended Supplies](#)
- [Puppy Packet](#)
- [Trust Point System](#)
- [Dog Body Language](#)
- [How Dogs Learn](#)
- [Reactivity](#)
- [Dog Bite Prevention](#)
- Do you have children or plan to in the future? Visit our [Household Harmony - A Guide for Parents with Children and Dogs](#)

The Acclimation Period

The first 30-60 days (with some dogs it may be longer) with your new dog should be calm and quiet. Hold back from having a lot of visitors over to meet your new pup. This time period is called The Acclimation Period. During this time, your dog will be getting to know you, their new routine and taking in all that their new life has to offer. This is also a time where your dog will be most vulnerable. Use this time to allow your dog to settle in and trust you. While it's important and great to keep your dog exercised, you can do so without overwhelming them.

Take your dog on long walks, hikes and such... however, do not allow kids, people and other dogs to meet and overwhelm your dog when doing so. Listen to your dog's body language to ensure all of the situations you are putting them in are positive and are setting them up for success. [To Learn more about Dog Body Language click here.](#)

The First Day... and Weeks that Follow

Before leaving the shelter or rescue, ensure your dog is on secure and a well sized leash and collar. When you arrive home, before exiting the car, please make sure you have a good hold of your new dogs leash. Some dogs tend to DASH when they see an open door.. you want to make sure they are secure and safe, always! An escaped dog is one of the most common occurrences that people experience with newly adopted dogs.

When you first arrive home, take your dog for a 10-15 minute walk to get some excess energy out and allow them to acclimate to their new outside surroundings before bringing them inside. Even if you have a securely fenced yard, be sure to keep your new pup on a leash for added control and safety. When you bring them inside the house, follow them on leash all throughout the house. Allow them to smell and explore every inch! If your dog is nervous about something, use some treats to create a positive association; be sure to keep things fluid and positive!



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Introduction into the New House

When you bring your new pup into the house for the first time, stay calm and relaxed to model the appropriate mood for your dog. Dogs are VERY good at picking up on people's energy and if they sense you are anxious or concerned, they will believe it is how THEY should be acting too. Stay close by as he/she explores - give your new pup the opportunity to sniff around and explore each and every room in the house. Even if there are rooms you want to have closed off to your dog, allow them to take a quick sniff of those areas to satisfy their curiosity. Ideally there should be nothing left around that you don't want them to potentially get ahold of. If your dog is nervous about something, use some treats to create a positive association; be sure to keep things fluid and positive.

After the initial tour of the land, plan on some quiet time to help your new pup get adjusted. Settle in to your favorite spot, even on the floor and allow them to *just be*. Give him/her space if they are feeling a bit too overwhelmed. Keep things light and easy. The most important is to be observant, not to push things, and to take them outside far more often than you think you need to in order to jump start the house training process. DON'T WORRY if they seem a bit anxious and unsettled. It is common for the first few days, even weeks, and often goes away once the environment starts to become familiar.

Interactions with family members

The main goal of each interaction is for it to be a positive, non-invasive, pressure free experience for the dog. That is most likely achieved if everyone is calm and low key so that the new dog is not overwhelmed. This is especially important if the dog is a bit cautious, and if there are children in the house!

EVERYONE (kids and adults alike) should refrain from invading the dog's space. This includes picking up the dog, hugging and kissing the dog, going over and petting the dog, bothering them while they're sleeping, laying down or eating/chewing a bone. All of these actions are ones that many kids will be inclined to do, but dogs find them very threatening.. especially when done by someone they do not know or trust.. which will be all of you in the beginning.

The BEST ways to interact with your new dog in the beginning:

Be calm, patient, and approachable. That means standing or squatting quietly, turned a little bit to the side, and you should wait to let the dog approach. Everyone should talk in a calm voice and avoid hovering over the dog. If the dog approaches, scratching or petting the under the chin or chest is the best way to say hello & thanks for coming to say hi. If the dog shies away, hold off on any attempts to make physical contact ,at least for now....you don't want to force the situation, this can cause barriers to establishing trust and lengthen the adjustment period for your new forever 4-legged friend.

Practice the 3-Second-Pet-Rule

Use the 3 Second Pet Rule and take little breaks when petting to ensure you are not mindlessly petting a dog when they may actually be feeling overwhelmed.



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1. Only make contact with the dog in 3 second intervals. For more sensitive dogs, you can do one or two seconds!
2. Observe their body language and let the dog tell you what you should do next.

Does the dog move away? Is the dog still while you're petting them then relax when you stop? This indicates the dog isn't fully comfy with your petting. *Does the dog come closer or nudge your hand?* This shows the dog enjoyed being pet and is asking for more.

When you cease petting, it will allow the dog an opportunity to choose to move away or to stay close. Giving them a choice in the matter will surely gain trust points between you both!

When interacting, always be sure to create an open and inviting space. To ensure you are doing this, never pet a dog when they may feel trapped. Look at the space around them, create an imaginary box with four sides. 2 (preferably 3) of those sides should ALWAYS be open so the dog can feel free to move away. This includes cornering on the couch or having multiple people pet the dog at once.

Crate Training

It's a great idea to acclimate your new companion to sleep in the crate every night for at least 30 days. Remember, dogs THRIVE off of a predictable routine. They want to be shown where to go and what to do especially during such a huge transition. You can also feed your dog in the crate to help acclimate them to it. Some dogs do not do well in crates, if this is the case you may need some trouble shooting with a trainer to figure out what is best for your situation.

We want any confinement space to be a place of comfort and calm for your dog. We do NOT want them to be a place of isolation, punishment, separation or a place they only go to when the entire family leaves the house.

Your dog should ALWAYS get something to lick, chew or forage when going into a confinement space or crate. This could range from a meal, handful of kibble, bully stick, frozen lick mat or kong type device etc. He/she should be left confined to a dog safe room or the crate when you are out of the house for any amount of time or unable to supervise him. This will prevent him from chewing on things and/or having accidents without you present to alter the behavior.

How do you know when it is time to allow your dog some freedom outside of the crate? Test them with short amounts of time outside of the crate and see what happens. If your dog does well, over time, increase the amount of time you are leaving them alone. A crate is a wonderful tool and your dog will learn to love it.

Bones and Resources

There are so many choices to choose from when it comes to doggy bones and chew toys. Be sure to read the labels and check the sources of any bones that you buy to ensure they are coming from a reputable place. High and low value safe bones are a great way to keep your dog entertained while they are in the crate or while you are out during the day. I recommend keeping nylabones in your dog's crate or out and available all the time, while giving a high value bone on special occasions.

During the acclimation period, pay attention to your dog when giving a lasting high value bone.



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The taste and scent of the bone can sometimes over stimulate a dog and in turn the dog may protect the bone. Always keep children away from any dog chewing a high value bone. If you need to take a high value bone away, always make sure to trade with a treat.

Pay close attention to how your dog acts when you walk toward them when they have a toy or a bone/chew. If you see her stiffen, or she growls/snarls, keep your distance and trade for a treat. If that doesn't work, try to grab the leash and see if they will drop the item for the exciting prospect of going for a walk.

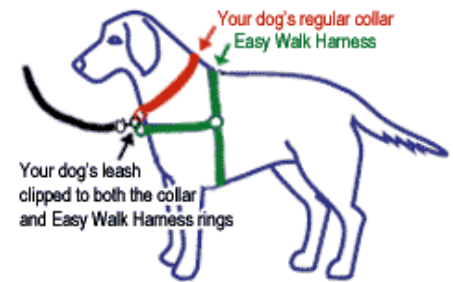
Harness and Collar

Please ensure your dog has a proper **fitting collar, leash and/or harness**. Failed equipment is one of the main reasons dogs can get loose!

Slip Leads can be a great safety tool when used correctly as they are impossible for the dog to get loose from. These are highly recommended for dogs who are slippery and quick to escape the harness or collar. Slip leads work well for transportation of rescue dogs, for the acclimation period of newly acquired dogs and for fearful dogs. Slip leads can be used at the same time as another leash/harness combo as a back up in case the other fails.

Martingale collar is a limited slip collar that prevents a dog from slipping out. This is the type of collar we send the dog home with. We love these collars and recommend you continue to use them!

Easy Walk Harness is a front clip harness that gently discourages pulling in dogs. We always connect the leash clip to both the collar and harness on the front. See photo. You can purchase these harnesses at any pet store and online. Even Amazon sells them!



Drag Leash

Whether your new dog is a bit shy or an overzealous pooch, a great tool to help with non-confrontational communication is a drag leash. Buy a thin leash and cut the handle off of the end so he can drag it around without it getting stuck. Keep this drag leash on your dog at all times in the house or out in your yard. Always take off when they are left alone or in the crate.

If your dog is shy, the drag leash can help by gaining gentle control of him indirectly. Instead of approaching dog, go to the end of the leash. Try attaching the leash to you while hanging around the house so your dog learns to be close with you in a healthy, indirect way.

If you're bringing home a more energetic pup, the drag leash can be useful to gain quick control over your dog if he decides to hop up on the coffee table or if he grabs an expensive pair of shoes. You can also use the drag lead to keep your dog under supervision without having to put them in the crate. Grabbing the end of a leash is WAY less threatening than trying to grab the collar!



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Feeding

Take turns having each member of the family feed your dog to help them bond with everyone in the household. Only feed once in the morning and once in the evening, leave the food bowl down for about 20 mins. Whether or not your dog has eaten the full meal, pick up the bowl and feed the next feeding time. Dogs need a routine, try not to let your dog graze over long periods of time. This takes away from bonding with your dog at the ever-important feeding time! Do not bother your dog while they are eating. Allow them some space to enjoy their meal and do not “test” them by putting your hand or face near their bowl.

Don't be alarmed if your dog is picky or slow to eat the first few days after arriving home with you. They are going through a huge transition and it may take them a few days to get comfortable enough to eat. Keep an eye on him and you may try to entice eating by using chicken, canned food or broth over top of their kibble. If they don't start eating after 2 days, reach out to your adoption/foster processor or veterinarian.

Feeding time is also great time for training! Use each individual kibble as a treat and work on some obedience, desensitizing or take some with you on a walk. Remember to make each and every experience a positive one!

Sticky Situations

Sticky situations are areas of potential conflict between multiple dogs or between human and dog. These areas of conflict are a risk for diminished trust between beings or even risk of a bite.

Potential conflict areas can come in the form of **space** or **resources**

Factors that can cause Sticky Situations to be even more important to pay attention to are:

- increase stress level in the dog and stress layering
- if they are new to the environment, person/people or dogs
- senior dogs with potential body pain
- dogs with medical issues
- dogs who had a recent aggressive incident or reaction
- dogs with a history of aggression, fear or reactivity

We can easily recognize Sticky Situations by assessing any resources that might be valuable to the individual dog. Even if you don't know the dog, you can make an educated guess on what the dog might hold value in. Here is a list of common resources:

- Food or toys
- Bowl (water or food)
- Comfortable space (an area with a blanket, bed or elevated cot)
- Enrichment devices (ex. kong even after it's finished)
- Human affection
- Treat pouch
- Handing out treats - two dogs go for the same treat



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Multi-Dog Household

Fast is slow in the dog world! There is no rush to get all of the dogs in your house integrated and together 24/7! Dogs need time and shared positive experiences to build trust with one another. If you move too fast and put them in too many *Sticky Situations*, you are going to be doing more harm than good. Miscommunications happen when we put dogs in situations they cannot handle and when we are not paying attention to what their body language is telling us.

You may want to use a baby gate, crate and/or a separate room or space will create a safe and calm area for your new dog where he can eat, drink and get plenty of rest. Feed your new dog in the crate for the first few months. Allow your resident dog(s) and new dog visual access to each other through pens, gates, etc. They may choose to sniff through these barriers. If all looks good, you can do slow introductions through parallel leashed walks or controlled playtime in the yard. Always manage interactions between your resident dog and the new dog. Avoid situations that may create conflict like sharing space on the couch and around food/resources for the first few months.

When feeding, always feed separately from your resident dogs. DO NOT give your new dog and resident dogs bones, lick mat or other high value resources together. Do not leave items around that your resident dog and/or new dog might find valuable enough to have conflict over, like food, bones, bowls, toys.

Exercise Outlets

Most of the time people give dogs two types of exercise outlets - pulling on walks around the neighborhood or unstructured free time in the backyard. While these aren't wrong or bad ways to exercise your dog, it simply might not be fulfilling enough for certain growing puppies or adult dogs. The more fulfilled your dog is, the less time and energy they will spend chewing up things around your house, barking at other dogs across the street and becoming anxious when you're not home.

It is important to figure out the type of play and enrichment that fulfills your individual dog the most. Consider the dog's breed genetics and what traits you see the puppy naturally do without your influence.

→ ***Does your dog chase after squirrels and chipmunks?***

Get a flirt pole and let them chase in the form of play! Not only are you engaging them physically and mentally, but you are also bonding with your dog with what *they* like to do best! Adding structure to this game can help teach your dog to regulate their energy. For example, have them chase the flirt pole for a minute or two, then collect the flirt pole in your hand and hold it up high above your dog. Your dog might jump and clamor to try and get that flirt pole. You will not give it to them until they settle down. Eventually, they will sit, stand or lay down. Once they do, say "Get It" and drop the flirt pole on the ground! You just turned a big nuisance behavior like your dog frustrated, dragging you on walks chasing squirrels into a constructive



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game with more energy output and bonding.

→ ***Does your dog have his nose to the ground all the time and like to follow you around the yard?***

This type of dog might need new, exciting spaces to smell and explore! Consider taking them to different fields on a long line or hiking in the woods. Bring treats with you and practice having your dog recall to you while they follow along! You can also order hunting dog scents online like rabbit or duck scent (there are quite low cost too!). You can spray these in a line in your yard every few days. When you let your dog outside, they will have a new scent to experience!

→ ***Does your dog constantly dig holes in the yard, roll in things and paw up worms?***

This dog would love extra foraging activities into their routine or even a sandbox to dig in! Consider packing up their breakfast or dinner and a treat pouch on a walk. Every few minutes say "Find it!" And toss a handful of kibble onto the grass and let your dog forage! You can also drop their meals or treats in the yard, living room floor or crate/pen spaces for them to search around for!

Always strive to get dogs out, experiencing life as much as possible!

Real fencing vs Electric fencing

I will often recommend real fencing as an alternative to invisible fencing. Electrical fences send an electric pulse, or shock, through the dog whenever he gets too close to the fence line. To dissuade the dog from crossing the fence line, however, the shock must be at the very least unpleasant. Often dogs will stay in the yard until something very interesting, such as a squirrel, comes along outside the fence; then they will risk the shock to get to the squirrel, but they won't risk the shock to come back into the yard. Not only can an electric shock hurt your dog, in the very least, but they won't understand where it is coming from. This type of traumatic event can cause a newly transitioned rescue dog to lose trust and become fearful.

Electrical fences depend on underground wiring to stay connected, and on the collar batteries to stay charged. The dog must also be wearing the collar at all times in the yard. If any of these situations fail, the dog will no longer be shocked when approaching the fence, and thus will not be contained by the fence. This opens up the dog to all the dangers of roaming loose, such as being hit by a car.

A large drawback of electric fences is that they do not keep other critters and humans out of the yard. A dog with an invisible fence is more vulnerable to an altercation with a roaming dog, skunk, raccoon or other wildlife; the other animal can easily get into the yard, but the dog cannot escape by leaving the yard. Without a physical fence, a child could wander into the yard, a highly potential bite situation. In addition, dog thieves typically find electrical fences far easier to overcome than physical fences.



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Simple tips that make a world of difference!

1. **All dogs want a calm, consistent and fair Leader.** Work together with your dog as a relaxed partnership with clear communication and proper guidance.
2. **Trade with a Treat!** Always keep a supply of high value treat in your fridge like hot dogs, cheese or chicken. If your dog happens to get a hold of something he shouldn't or you need to get a bone away from him, NEVER walk up and snatch it away. That is completely unfair to your dog (just as you wouldn't appreciate someone snatching your dessert away from you and your dinner table...). Always give them the option of trading for something better. Throw some treats on the floor or call your dog to you so they leave what they are possessing for the treat in your hand!
3. **Create a routine.** Just like humans, dogs thrive on routine and structure (and of course LOVE!) Be sure to create a well working routine that your new dog can fall right into, just like he has been there all along for years.
4. **Obedience training** works wonders for all dogs of any size, shape or breed! Work with a trainer near you or contact us for trainers we recommend to help you get started!
5. **EXERCISE!** Dogs of all sizes and ages NEED engaging exercise. Lack of healthy physical and mental stimulation is the number one cause of behavior problems in dogs.
6. **Remember, dogs don't appreciate confrontation.** Always have your dog come to you rather than you approaching your dog. Especially when they are sleeping or settled down. You don't want to startle them! Stand a few feet away, squat, clap your hands and call your dog over to you. They will appreciate that much more than waking them up with a sudden pat on the head.