

Bringing Your New Dog or Puppy Home

Congratulations on adopting your new dog! You can now look forward to years of companionship and a great relationship. This document will help you help your dog make the transition to his/her new home.

When you adopt a dog, you are asking them to adjust to new surroundings, new people and a new routine. It is natural for them to be a little stressed or nervous; be patient with your new friend. If you already have other pets they must meet prior to making the final decision to adopt.

The Preliminaries: Before bringing your dog home

1. Make an appointment with your veterinarian to have your dog examined as soon as possible, in order to establish a health and wellness report with your own veterinarian. Some healthy, adult dogs that are very shy may benefit from a trip to the vet once they have established a bond with you and have become more confident.

2. Make sure you have either a sturdy kennel, or a leash to secure the dog in the car. They may be stressed and want to roam, making it unsafe for you and the dog. Please do not leave a dog in the back of a pickup truck; if they are not restrained properly, they could fall out or choke. They are also at risk of getting ear infections, and debris in their eyes and mouth from the wind. It is always safer to transport your dog inside the vehicle.

3. Obtain supplies that you will need: food and water dishes, leashes and collars, poo bags, dog beds and towels, shampoos and grooming supplies. An ID tag with the dog's name and your contact numbers is important to place on your new dog immediately, in the event the dog escapes from your house or leash and is unable to find his/ her new home. Please bring a leash or collar with you at the time of pick up. Leash, collars and ID Tags along with supplies and food are available at Howl To The Chief. All new adopters get a one time 20% discount on all supplies and 10% discount on food at Howl To The Chief 719 8th Street SE DC. www.howltothechief.com

4. If you have another dog, take them for a walk together and then enter the house together. Territory can be an issue at first. Make it a positive experience for all from the start.

5. Puppyproof your home: if you are adopting a young puppy, there are some precautions to take. Puppies are like toddlers; they can easily get into trouble. Cover or hide all electrical cords, don't leave anything you don't want chewed on the floor. Although it may be cute when puppies chew on old shoes, they can't tell the difference between an old shoe and a new one and you may be heading back to the shoe store for a new pair! Some toys have small bits of plastic that when chewed can cause serious intestinal damage. Make sure that toy time is supervised. Watch out for a puppy running around under your feet! It is also a good idea to confine your puppy to a "safe" room or kennel when you are not home so they don't get into trouble.

The first day in your dog's/puppy's new home

When you bring home your new dog/puppy, make every experience as positive as you can. A young puppy may develop an irrational fear if something startles them, especially if they are timid. Be gentle and encouraging, with lots of praise for good behaviors. Remember that negative attention is still attention and dogs may do destructive things to get extra attention. Let the dog sniff around but block off any areas that will be off limits.

It is wise to not overload your new dog / puppy with too much excitement or people the first few days. Don't plan on adopting a new puppy or dog the day of a big family or school event with too many strangers and activities going on. It's best to set boundaries at this point, if not, they will be more difficult later on. For example, puppies like to jump up. When they are small, it's cute, but when they are full-grown it can cause problems. So stop these types of behaviors at the onset, and keep the rules consistently enforced.

Introducing your dog/puppy to your children

Children must learn immediately that a puppy is to be played with, and not teased. Adult dogs that are being introduced to children may be frightened of the rough play or high activity. Also, teach your children not to play tug of war. This teaches the puppy/dog that they can take things from hands in a rough way, and children could end up being nipped.

Never allow children to pull on ears, tails or fur. Some dogs/pups may be mellow and not bothered, but some dogs are very sensitive. Teach them to be kind, and respect that a dog plays with its mouth like we play with our hands.

Children should not use their hands as toys, they may accidentally get a scrape as a result, and puppies / dogs need to learn to differentiate between hands and play toys!

Introducing your puppy/dog to the rest of the home

If you already have another dog in your home, it is important to have them meet on a neutral ground. The first dog may feel like its territory is being invaded and may want to protect it. If they meet at a park, for example, then they can meet on good terms and have their hierarchy established before going home. Dogs tend to sort out their place in a dog pack within a few minutes. You can expect to see them lean their neck over another dog's neck, put their feet up on the other's shoulders and stand tall. When they know where they stand, they will often play. Mounting does not always mean a sexual event. When a dog is fixed, it is a dominating move, and should subside when discouraged.

In a dog's world, feeding is very important. Depending on your dogs' temperament, feed them separately at first, and then slowly move them closer together should no sign of food rivalry exist. When they are done, remove their food bowls. It is best to actually feed the dogs yourself to improve the bond between yourself and the dog / puppy, as well as maintaining awareness of their overall health throughout their life.

Introducing your puppy/dog to your cat

Keep the dog and cat in separate rooms with the door closed so they can smell each other but not see each other. Then let the cat roam around the house when the dog is confined elsewhere, and vice versa. When ready, leash your dog and have them in a sit/stay, let the cat approach on his/her own. The concern here is that the dog may go after the cat, or the cat will scratch the dog. Give praise and treats when the dog is calm. Do short visits like this until they become accustomed to each other and tolerate each other without fear or aggression.

Monitor the two animals closely and do not leave them alone together until you are sure that they get along. Teaching your dog "leave it" is also helpful. Ensure that the cat has a retreat where they can escape from the dog. Also, keep the litter box in a space where the dog can't reach it. Many dogs find cat feces to be a tasty treat. The same goes for cat food, it often gives dogs diarrhea due to the high protein content.

Socializing your puppy/dog

This is one of the most important things you can do for your dog, and most especially a puppy. Puppies should interact with many, many people, dogs and environments in the first few months of their new home, and it should always be a fun, positive experience for the puppy. Prior to their 3rd puppy shot at 3-4 months of age, the puppy should not be in contact with any other dog unless you are 100% sure they are fully vaccinated and healthy. Puppies should never go to a dog park or public place until the 3rd shot in their puppy series is complete. Rabies shot cannot be given until 14-16 weeks of age.

Socialize your dog with both humans and other dogs, or it could develop behavioral issues. If your dog is timid, start out slowly and don't push it. Fearful dogs can also become quite dangerous when they feel threatened. If the dog is dominant and not socialized, it can also become a danger to other dogs and humans.

Utilizing dog services such as walkers, daycares and boarding areas can be very helpful. Dog parks and on-leash walks where you can encounter others safely is also essential.

One of the best things you can do for yourself and your dog is to participate in an obedience class. Group classes are best; they form a pack, encourage socialization and give distraction. Make sure that the class does the training in an everyday surrounding. Doing training in a gymnasium will teach a dog just that, and when it goes outside it will be unprepared to perform in real life. By doing training in a real-life way, the dog is getting prepared to learn things it will encounter day today and it will succeed.

The training class always tends to be more for the owner than for the dog: it teaches you how to work with your new dog / puppy and creates a stronger bond with your new companion. Families with children should have the whole family be a part of the class and everyday training. Consistency is the key; make sure that everyone is using the same words and commands so as not to confuse the dog.

Enjoy your new dog! If you have any ongoing questions, you can always contact us at Rural Dog Rescue.

www.ruraldogrescue.com