

Thank you for adopting a rescue dog!

The following information is provided in an effort to make your transition as smooth as possible for both you and the dog you are taking home. Please feel free to contact the rescue with any questions or concerns; it is our goal for the adoption to work for everyone.

Now that you have chosen a dog to be a member of your family and you have been approved for adoption, it is important that things are done in a way that not only ensure the safety of the dog, but that their emotional well being is considered as well. As the human element of the adoption, we are excited about the dog getting a great home. However, please bear in mind we are not able to tell the dog that perhaps they just hit the lottery (getting a great human family), only time and experience will allow them to settle in and understand they are here to stay with you and will be loved and cared for.

Your main goal at this point is to start to establish a relationship built on trust; this happens when you are fair, clear and consistent. There are several suggestions in this handout to tell you how to go about doing just that and will also detail some pitfalls you will definitely want to avoid.

Every dog has a different story. A dog that has been surrendered to the rescue may come with information about his/her background that you can rely on. Sometimes the stories have been added to or details left out. Many dogs were strays and little is known about their background. The unknown history means there may be some unidentified "baggage" for which the dog will need some extra help learning to adapt in certain situations. Dogs that were under socialized as puppies may also exhibit behaviors that indicate a fearfulness or trepidation. They may require extra patience and time to build confidence in their relationship with you and the world in general. Don't waste time feeling sorry for the dog as to what may or may not have happened in their past; both you and the dog will gain much more if you concentrate on making their life now and in the future a very good one!

Dogs have different personalities and characteristics just like people do. For some, the transition may happen more rapidly; for others, it may be weeks or even months before the dog truly feels like they are right where they belong! Please be patient as your dog adjusts to his new surroundings. It is important we give them the time and space they need.

Here are some tips to help in that time just before and after you have taken your new dog home:

Get your house ready for the new dog. Look around and see what may pose hazards or what you can do to help set things up for success. Pick up and put anything away that you do not want the dog to have access to, something he or she might potentially chew such as shoes, socks, small toys, papers, et cetera. Make sure electrical cords and such are not in a place the dog has access to when they are not directly supervised. Medications and other dangerous objects such as razors should be safely stored away.

Walk around your property to be sure there are no safety issues outdoors that need your attention such as in the garage or the lawn itself. If you have fencing, check for any holes or openings the dog could escape from. In the first weeks your dog is with you, you should not rely on the fence to keep them in but instead keep a watchful eye. Many dogs can and will climb a fence even to escape or dig underneath. Remember, they really don't know yet that they are "home".

Decide where you will want the dog to sleep and where the dog will stay when you are away from home: Crate, laundry room, your bedroom or other area. Crates are an excellent way to contain a dog and give them a space of their own. Crate trained dogs are an advantage to the owner because you know where your dog is and that he is safe and secure when he's in the crate.

If it is your goal that the dog be loose in your home, please keep in mind that particularly during this adjustment period the dog really needs close supervision and it can be very risky (and expensive) to leave them loose in your house without knowing more about how they may respond.

If you have other pets, introductions should be planned and carefully monitored. Even if your pets have already met and seemed to be accepting of one another, you should still exercise caution in those early days. If a fight occurs, it will be much more difficult to develop a good relationship between those dogs. If you need more information about how you should go about doing this, please ask!

Do not take your new pet home and throw a party, inviting lots of friends and family. That would be very stressful to the dog and could go bad. There will be time for others to meet your dog soon enough, for now he's still getting to know you and your household. A calmer environment will be much more advantageous at this point. Meeting one or two people on a given occasion might be a much better plan.

It is often wise to leave a leash on the dog even when inside for the first several days. Let the dog wander around but always under supervision.

It is easier to pick up the leash to move the dog away from something than to try to grab the dog's collar, which might feel threatening to the dog.

Outdoors you should definitely use a leash unless you are in a fenced area. Off leash the dog could run and you'll be very sorry you left the leash behind. Even if initially the dog seems glued to you, that does not mean he won't run if for some reason he is startled or sees something he considers worth chasing. That might be a squirrel, a bird, a leaf, a car, a bicyclist, a jogger, the mailman, who knows?

Flexi-leashes are not advisable; they have been known to break. They also can inflict injury on you or your dog, especially in situations where things are happening fast. They also potentially give you much less control of your dog when another dog approaches.

Visitors – even if they have done this regularly in the recent past--should not be permitted free access to walk into your home. This could trigger a fearful or protective response from the dog and a bite may occur. This would be extremely unfortunate. Keep your door locked so others must wait until you answer the door, or post a sign at your door to alert people you have a dog in training and to wait until they are invited in. This allows you the opportunity to be sure the dog is not going to dash out the door or react in a bad way toward your guest.

Children should be taught the correct way to approach and interact with a dog. The quick movements and high-pitched voices of children make many dogs nervous. Some dogs become highly aroused and excited to play, however, neither the dog nor the children may have good impulse control and such encounters can get out of hand. Therefore, it is important that an adult be on hand to supervise and intervene *before* the situation becomes too over the top.

Let's take a moment to look at how things might seem for the dog who has just come home with you. Imagine if you were suddenly dropped into a foreign land. While you're familiar with the type of inhabitants, you are not able to communicate with them in a language that you both understand. So YOU have to figure out what to do to keep yourself safe, meet your needs and hopefully be comfortable as well. For the most part these inhabitants may seem friendly but you aren't really sure. You might like it when they get really close to you or it may in fact make you a bit uncomfortable when they are crowding your space so much. And then you do something that you thought was entirely okay and suddenly the place goes crazy! Maybe they scream or yell or jerk you or even hit you. Maybe they are just giving you dirty looks. Whatever is happening, you are getting more confused by the minute. It is possible that you've done that same thing all the time where you

were before and no one cared. You might not even be able to figure out exactly what it was you did that made everyone change the way they were treating you.

Hopefully, this just gives you an idea what it might seem like for a dog in a new environment, especially one that has perhaps been moved around a lot lately, whether in a shelter, foster home(s), et cetera. That is why it is very important that you help set the dog up to be successful. Using a crate, gates or tethers can help prevent things like potty accidents or chewing household items. Keeping the dog on a schedule of eating and going out to potty, taking them outdoors on leash, will help them learn where you WANT them to go. Giving them a chance to settle in without a lot of forced interaction will also be better than trying to make that homecoming days of nonstop festivities.

Reinforcing the correct behavior will build (make stronger) the behaviors you want. That means when the dog goes potty outside, as soon as she finishes you say “Good girl” and pop a treat in her mouth right there on the spot. That gives the dog important information that she just did something that you really liked and she got something she really liked. Now she has reason to make that behavior stronger. You, though, have to hold up your end of the bargain by getting her out often on that schedule (upon waking up, after eating/drinking, after play, et cetera). Reinforce in other areas as well. If you like the behavior your dog is offering, be sure to praise her, Good Girl!, and if possible deliver a treat at the same time. Pairing those two things together allows that later on when you just say “good girl”, that will make her feel good as well!

Your voice is an important tool and you need to use it wisely. If your dog is relaxing calmly, by quietly saying “good girl” you let her know you like that and with repetition she should offer more of that same behavior. Think about it much like this: Moms who cook dinner night after night are more likely to enjoy doing so and make an effort to make really nice meals if her family appreciates her efforts!

Prevention and management are your best ways to make things work – close doors, put valued possessions away or out of reach. Use common sense and be fair to the dog, especially while he/she is getting to know you and your household. If the dog barks a lot out the window, do not allow the dog to continue to rehearse the behavior. To do so only allows that behavior to grow stronger. If you start yelling the dog may interpret those sounds that you are joining in the “barkfest”! Hooray! Instead, you have some options: Try calling the dog away. When he responds and comes to you ask him to sit and give him a treat. “Good boy!” You can then release him and at that time direct him to a toy, something he can engage with. Otherwise, he might be tempted to run back to the window and see if the show is still going on. Another option is to either block the dog’s access to that window with blinds or some other window covering, or using a gate to keep him out of that room. This is how we prevent the dog from rehearsing behaviors we don’t like. Every rehearsal makes a behavior grow stronger – keep this in mind.

Hugging is something humans do; dogs may not appreciate being hugged because rather than affection it may feel like they are being restrained against their will. Children should be discouraged from hugging the dog or putting their face near the dog's face. Remember, this dog is in a new environment and may interpret such actions as a threat to their own safety.

Likewise, do not back a dog into a corner to capture him. You've taken away his ability to flee which might be something he would do in considering his own safety. Remember, he really has no way of being certain just yet that you in fact have his best interests at heart – you need to earn his trust. A cornered dog that is frightened is then left with two options: to freeze or fight. If you want to get the dog to go outside you might "Hansel & Gretl" him towards the doorway by dropping treats along the path to the door.

Encourage the dog to come to you by lightly tossing some tasty treats in his direction, eventually tossing them not as far so the dog can choose to come a bit closer to you, allowing the dog to move into your space rather than invading the dog's space. You can talk to him in a calm voice but generally the less said the better. Remember, the dog really doesn't understand our language and you may arouse his suspicions much like when someone tries too hard to be your friend, as that can make us nervous too! As he gets closer you can start to let him take treats from your hand as he is willing to do so.

FEARFUL DOGS:

A dog that is fearful may do things that outwardly appear to be aggressive behavior. The dog may bark and lunge at visitors or other animals. They may growl and back up. Their hackles may be raised. They may move forward and then retreat while making a lot of noise. Any number of things may be happening. Often times this dog is not necessarily aggressive but is more fearful, reactive. They are making an effort to convey a message much like a child on a playground might try to appear like he's challenging the bully, standing tall and yelling, "You don't wanna come over here and mess with me, I'll beat you up!" Inwardly, however, that youngster is thinking: If you take one step closer, I'm gonna pee my pants!

These dogs are likely to be attempting to portray themselves as big and scary but in effect they are experiencing a great deal of conflict themselves. They want greater distance between themselves and whatever they are fearful of and hope to create that greater distance by trying to appear scary or of some sort of threat. In reality that fear can turn into aggressive behavior, particularly if the dog feels he has no choice. That is also why we want to set things up so that the dog doesn't feel forced to nip or bite.

This is where it is important that you advocate for your dog, especially when other people or other dogs are present. When guests come you should NEVER allow people to just walk into your home. Keep the door locked or post a sign, if needed.

Even people who have always felt free to enter your home without knocking should be advised that until the dog has become used to his new surroundings, they should wait to be invited in. To do otherwise, is to potentially set the dog up for a difficult situation.

AGGRESSION

If you see signs of aggression, do not hesitate to seek professional help. Dogs may warn with a growl, a snap or nip if they feel pressured or if that behavior has worked for them in the past to make something/someone/some action they didn't like to go away or stop. Do not correct or scold a dog for growling – that growl is a way to communicate a warning that they don't like something. It is much better to heed a growl than to have a dog who has been taught not to growl and will instead go right to a bite.

Do not intervene in a dog fight as you will likely sustain the worst of the injuries. Be prepared to try to avoid such situations, however, if they do occur, it is best to create a loud noise that may startle the dogs so they discontinue fighting. You might also throw a blanket over one or both of the dogs to try to break up the fight or, if possible, insert a chair or large object between the dogs. You might also turn a water hose onto the dogs, which will generally interrupt the fighting.

If the dog does bite, DO NOT WAIT until other bites happen before seeking the help of a dog training professional. If the dog has opportunities to bite again and again, it is learning that biting works to make go away things it finds scary or bothersome. It is much harder then, to turn the situation around.

EXERCISE & ENRICHMENT:

Dogs are social creatures. They like being with you; it is one of the qualities that make having a family pet so enjoyable. We are responsible for making sure their needs are met. One of those needs is sufficient exercise. One of the reasons dogs can get in trouble is because if they are bored they will find ways to entertain themselves. If they don't get enough exercise, they have to do something with that pent-up energy. A 20-minute walk per day might be sufficient for a great percentage of pet dogs. Just being outdoors and with you is enjoyable for your dog who most likely revels in the sights, sounds and especially the smells found in that environment. Physical exercise is good for all of us and dogs are no exception. Playing fetch or Frisbee is a great way to exercise your dog, too. Indoors you can play fetch or other games, something like letting the dog find treats you have hidden around the room or using some of the interactive puzzle toys such as treat dispensing balls. This helps engage your dog's brain and that mental exercise is as important as the physical exercise.

Remember as well to give your dog some time to relax during the day. A dog who is constantly bombarded with activity and sights and sounds make become overly stimulated and have a hard time settling down or paying attention. Provide periods throughout the day that the dog can take a nap and be left alone to lie on his mat or go in his crate if he chooses. Sometimes children have to be reminded to leave the dog alone for a while.

HOUSETRAINING:

Accidents may happen. Be prepared. Have a product on hand that is designed for pet accidents; these enzymatic cleaners will eliminate the odors so that the dog will not be inclined to return to that spot. Regular household cleaners will not do a sufficient job on pet accidents.

The dog must be supervised at all times. Feed the dog on a schedule and keep a potty schedule as well. If needed, post a chart on the refrigerator so everyone knows who is responsible for taking the dog out and when.

When the dog goes to the bathroom outdoors, be sure to treat and praise as soon as the dog is done and in that very location. This will teach the dog that that is where you want him/her to potty.

CRATING:

Crating can be a very useful tool in training a dog and helping him/her adapt to his new environment. Crating also has a number of other advantages. Your dog will fare better at the vet, a kennel or the groomer's if they have been accustomed to being in a crate. It helps keep your dog safe while you are away because if he's crated he can't eat your houseplants, get into the trash, or pull down your blinds. Occasionally, when you have company (perhaps someone who is allergic or afraid of dogs, or a family with unruly children) it is convenient to be able to put the dog in his crate while providing a favorite chew toy.

When crated, if the dog cries, whines or barks, DO NOT open the door to let the dog out, otherwise the dog learns that behavior gets the crate opened. Wait for the outburst to stop, even just momentarily at first, and then let the dog exit the crate. It is important you give it time for the dog to understand that you are not going to give in.

A crate should be large enough for a dog to stand up, sit down and turn around. It should not be large enough that the dog can sleep on one side and be able to use the other side as a bathroom area.

TRAINING:

Please consider taking your new dog for some training. To do so will allow you to develop a better bond with your dog and give you the opportunity to see how smart your dog really is! You'll learn new things and see your dog in a different light. A one hour a week class can also stimulate the dog's mind and learning process and will encourage you to help your dog be his/her personal best. You will have an opportunity to ask questions and do some problem solving. Most importantly, you may avoid some pitfalls and get started on developing good habits rather than bad ones.

Remember, to adopt a dog does require a certain commitment and you will want other people to like your dog just as you do. Neighbors, relatives and friends usually do not appreciate an unruly dog. So do yourself a favor and invest some time and a little money in a training session or group class – this can make the difference and

lead to a much more harmonious existence in your household. It is important, however, that you are comfortable with the training methods used and that the instructor is well qualified to help you. Training should be enjoyable for both you and the dog. Ask questions, get recommendations from friends and relatives, if possible. The rescue staff may also be able to provide you with some names of some good trainers in your locale or you can do research on the Internet as well.

Here are some sites that will help you search by location:

Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers: www.ccpdt.org

International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants: www.iaabc.org

A word of caution about the Internet and, for that matter, TV shows about dog training: There is a lot of good information and helpful hints that can be found on the Internet and some television shows. There is also a lot of conflicting and downright erroneous information that in effect could sabotage your efforts with your dog. Television shows are edited to show you just the parts they want you to see – it'd be great if real life could always work like that.

It is important to have a well thought out plan where each part works well with the other methods and strategies included. To pick and choose from a variety of sources runs the risk that the pieces don't necessarily fit together well. So, as with most things, it is good to have professional advice you can rely on.

This is by no means a complete description of everything you need to know about in working with your dog. It is meant to give some general observations and possible guidelines when interacting with a new pet.

PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE to be in touch with the Rescue Group if you are experiencing any sort of difficulty with your newly adopted pet. Don't let those situations continue because they are much more easily turned around if we know sooner rather than later, particularly if any aggressive behaviors are involved.

Rose's Rescue certainly hopes you will keep in touch. We treasure those wonderful reports of our forever homes along with photos. It is these type of things that help us continue to do what we do, one dog at a time!