



Keys to a Successful Adoption Experience



The goal of all adoptions is to have a positive outcome for the dog and the adoptive family. Because we cannot know the true history of most dogs we serve, it is most important that the new family take the necessary steps to ensure that their new pet quickly gains a sense of security and trust with them. Please take a few minutes to read this carefully. It will save you stress later, and get your adoption off on the right foot!

Before you bring your new dog home, there are many ways you can prepare for the new addition to your family. Though your dog may be microchipped, he or she still needs an ID tag with your information on it (name, address, phone number). Have a collar waiting for your dog with the ID attached. We are happy to measure its neck and give you information, on request.

When your dog arrives, make sure the new collar fits well. Many dogs in new situations will pull out of their collars and run loose. If the dog does pull out the collar and run, it will be loose in a strange area with no contact information. A good rule of thumb is to make the collar tight, but with room to insert two fingers comfortably under the collar. If the dog has not finished growing, check the collar often to make sure it does not become too tight. Ensure safety by having your dog wear a harness when out for a walk. We prefer the nylon mesh harnesses sold at Petco. It is very hard for a dog to get out of this harness when properly fitted. Store employees will help you fit your dog. Another ultra-safe choice is a martingale collar, also available at various pet supply stores.

We beg you to keep your new dog on lead when not in a fenced-in yard or an approved, fenced off-lead area such as a dog park. Always use a leash or lead near traffic, as your dog can be distracted and fearful when faced with loud noise and movement.

Regardless of his past, **your dog's new life starts the day you bring him home**. What he needs most is for you to limit his stress, while providing consistent structure in the form of routines, training and confinement. Offering daily stress-release outlets in the form of play, exercise, toys and fun training is key at all times but downright critical for a newly adopted dog. Bring your pet home during a relatively calm time (not just before vacation or during the holidays when family and friends will gather). Keep things as quiet as you can. The first week is NOT the time to introduce him to groups of people. Remember, he has no clue of who you are or how you will behave towards him. Give him time to settle in to his new life, and then begin to introduce new people one or two at a time. Make sure new people do not stand over him, stare him down or invade his personal space. Allow him time to get a sense of security with each new person and allow him to approach them, rather than the other way around.

Other things to have on hand for your new dog include stainless steel bowls for food and fresh water. Unless otherwise advised by our veterinarian, CARE has been feeding your dog Purina One Smartblend Chicken and Rice Formula dog food or Purina One Healthy Bites puppy food. This is a good-quality, protein-based diet that is available at pet supply stores, Target, your local grocery store and most major retailers. Coupons are generally available online, too! Please consult the packaging for proper feeding amounts based on your dog's weight. Establish a consistent feeding schedule. Consistency is important. Your veterinarian can advise you best, but we recommend a twice daily schedule if you are open to it.

Provide structure for your new pet. Being social animals, dogs fare best when there is order in their pack. Order is demonstrated through clear, calm leadership. Simple things are best. Have him “sit” before you open the door. Have him “wait” when you let him out of his crate. Practice “leave it” a few times each day. These little things will go a long way in making your new dog feel secure and comfortable in your leadership.

At this point, what you teach is less important than how you teach it. Teach him tricks, work on his manners, start domesticating your new dog. Do what works for you. Your dog wants to please you, but it is your job to show him how. Praise the things he does well, and try to over look as many mistakes as possible. It will take him time to understand. Rescue dogs have already experienced confusion at the hands of humans. He is now looking to you for a stable, reliable bond.

Every dog benefits from training. Investigate dog trainers in your area and choose one who uses humane methods. We do not advocate the use of chain or prong collars, nor do we believe in yanking or lifting a dog by the collar. Gentle leaders are great tools when other methods don’t work well. They are available for purchase at pet supply stores.

Your dog needs you to be the leader of the pack. If you don’t function as the leader, your dog will start making decisions on his own, some of which may be inappropriate or dangerous. He also needs daily, loving interaction with you and a social life. Socialize your dog by bringing him on car rides, letting him around children and other dogs (fully supervised), taking him to the groomer, shopping with him at stores that allow dogs, and walking him in public places. Be mindful that your dog needs to be kept up to date with bordatella vaccines and heart worm prevention in order not to bring home intestinal parasites and kennel cough from places other dogs frequent.

Give your dog a “room” of his own. A great tool to help housetrain your puppy or retrain an older dog is a crate, appropriately sized. Many adopted dogs thrive on a confinement schedule partly because it limits their decisions. Sensible confinement also prevents stress-related behaviors like chewing or housebreaking mistakes. However, keeping a dog confined all-day, everyday, while you work and your family is away is not a good idea. Dogs are social creatures and crave interaction. Consider an option like doggie daycare, which is relatively inexpensive, or perhaps allow your dog to have play dates with neighbors and friends who can interact with them during your time away. The goal is to have a healthy, happy pet! Joy is an important addition to a dog’s life. Cultivate it where you can. Daily exercise and romps go a long way toward lessening stress, building attachment and having a good dog.



Good information on dog related topics are available online. Your veterinarian is a great place to discuss health related topics, and the training staff at your pet supply store store can assist with behavioral suggestions. Remember that rescue pets do not have a history of stable caregiving. They come from backgrounds that are unknown, and often with multiple caregivers in rapid succession. Please empathize with them as they transition from being an unwanted nuisance to a family member. They are counting on your commitment to being the one that permanently changes their future!

We hope you and your new best friend have a long and loving life ahead of you!