

Bringing a New Dog Home

Planning on bringing a new dog home? Or maybe interested in fostering? Or perhaps you've already brought a new dog home and are having problems?

Give 'Em A Break

Naturally, the first thing you want to do with your new dog is ... everything! We KNOW you are so excited and you want to share your new addition with everyone you can. And after all, isn't socialization one of the most important aspects of dog ownership? Yes. BUT before all of that comes the bond and trust between dog and owner. Your new dog needs time to adjust and there are many scenarios that people put their new dog through that only encourage negative behaviors to surface.

So, what are you planning on doing when you finally get your new family member?

"Well, we plan to go to PetSmart to get a new collar, leash, bowls, toys, etc. and of course we want to show him off to everyone! We might also stop by the in-laws place on the way home. On and then there is my best friend who has a dog too and we KNOW they would get along beautifully! And then when we go home, we're going to let her out with our other three dogs and the cats so they can meet one another and wear each other out playing."

Imagine that from the dog's point of view. He might like you, but he doesn't know you yet. He's facing new people, new routines, and new rules all at once. He's stressed, and every additional challenge adds to the stress. Just like a human, your dog might react by becoming defensive and short-tempered, or fearful and shy. Think about this: the majority of us when put into new situations do not put all of ourselves out there and we are much more likely to withdraw from situations that make us uncomfortable. Things many people forget is that we expect our new dogs to be so accepting of everything and we put them in these very similar situations and then become alarmed when they 'act out'. Remember, to them, you are putting them in situations that make them feel uncomfortable.

You can make this transition easier by taking things slowly, and simplifying the introduction process. We call this the "Two Week Shutdown". During these first weeks, avoid unnecessary stressors while the dog settles in, keep everything positive, and take it slowly. Two weeks is just a guideline, some dogs will need less others will need more.



Two Week Shutdown

- **Limit introductions** to immediate family and caregivers. He doesn't need to meet your neighbors, your friends, and other animals yet.
- **Avoid walks.** Walks are stressful and overstimulating. If you have a yard, use that for outside time and getting to know each other better. Believe me dogs can live two weeks without walks.
- Make **exercise and yard time** fun, relaxing and tiring!
- **Do not take them** to pet stores, dog parks, other people's homes, etc. Again, these situations provide an overabundance of stimulation that your dog needs to have the trust built in you for YOU to handle the situation so they don't have to.



- Set him up to succeed. That means avoiding complicated training and socializing situations for now. **Just fun exercise :)**. Celebrating his successes together and avoiding corrections will strengthen your bond.
- **Crate the dog** in a room by itself if possible. It will be a safe haven for him in a time of uncertainty. It also keeps him isolated from other pets and helps him make good choices like NOT peeing inside or destroying your shoes.
- **Keep them leashed** to you when they are not crated. Yes, even in the house and yes, even if you have a fully fenced yard. Why? It keeps them from getting into trouble and if they aren't housebroken, they can't go out of your sight and have an accident. Or, if someone new comes in the house, keeping them leashed to you can help to prevent reinforcing undesirable behaviors like jumping on people.
- **Allow the dog 20-30 minute intervals of time** in and out of the crate, AFTER exercise/yard times, and ALWAYS on a leash (see point above). Then PUT THE DOG AWAY. Let it absorb and think and relax. So for instance, take the dog out for 20-30 minutes, then crate the dog for about 20-30 minutes. As time progresses, the intervals can be increased as the dog relaxes to help the dog adjust to a more accurate routine.

- **Ignore crying or barking**, if you run to him each time he will think barking and crying will get your attention. The dog must learn to be secure when you are not there.
- Do not allow your **new dog and your existing pets** into a 24/7 free for all. Everyone in the household will need time to adjust to the new living arrangements and routine. It's important to take things very slow initially and keep things positive and upbeat. I do not introduce resident dogs for these two weeks, but they can be side-by-side in crates. Crating the dogs side-by-side will help them get used to one another but GREATLY limit any interactions for the first two weeks. As the dog begins to relax more and look to you for direction, introduce the dogs/pets slowly. I keep initial introductions VERY short. 10-15 minutes at a time. Supervise ALL the time and increase the time by small amounts daily.

Every dog is different

Some might just fit right into your life with enthusiasm. Young pups sometimes handle things more easily than older dogs. A very timid or very reactive dog may need extra care, or one coming into a dramatically new environment (for example, a former yard dog moving into a house). But any new dog, especially one coming out of a chaotic shelter environment, will go through an adjustment period.

By giving the dog a 'time-out' the dog can learn its new works, its new people, and begin to relax and blossom under your care. So SLOW IT DOWN! You will see a HUGE difference in the dog and begin to see its honest and true personality. It will make a for a better 'honeymoon' period and save you both a lot of stress down the road. Two weeks may seem like a long time, but it's very short in comparison to the next 10 or so years you will with your new companion.

Stacie Sparks, Volunteer for Life Line for Pound Buddies, is the person who originally wrote the Two Week Shutdown, this was compiled from her method.

Additional resources (click on links for more info)

http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/dogs/tips/bringing_new_dog_home.html

<http://www.arlboston.org/welcoming-your-adopted-dog-into-your-home>

<http://www.reachoutrescue.org/info/display?PageID=9829>