



HELPING YOUR NEW DOG ADJUST

Congratulations on your new pet. Although we know that the best thing for a pet, especially a shelter pet, is a new home, *they* don't always know it right away. Moving to a home is a change in the daily routine they have grown used to. Dogs may feel stress in their new environments because they don't yet know your schedule or expectations. To help them in this transition, we recommend planning for a two- to three-week adjustment period.

Creating Structure:

The goal is to teach your new pet that you are their buddy and that your home is a safe one. You want them to look to you for direction.

- Keep feeding, resting, walking, and house training on a schedule. If your dog feels their new environment is predictable, it can help reduce anxiety and nervousness.
- Give them a “safe space” of their own. The transition to a new home can cause some pets to panic or get bored or restless while you are out – so a safe place protects your pet (and your belongings). Before you bring your new pet home, set up a crate or designate a closed off area where they can't do damage to themselves or your property when they're home alone.
 - Respect their safe space. If they run to their crate or room when nervous or have done something wrong, don't enter or remove them. It is their space, and they're telling you they need some time alone.
- When you first get home, leave the leash on your dog while they explore their new environment. This lets them explore while still allowing you to safely guide them off furniture or away from off-limits areas. Grabbing your new dog could startle them, so using a leash lets you do this without having to physically handle them.
- Although you may want to spend all of your time with your new dog on its first days home, this could make your first departure to work harder for them. Allow your new dog to be alone for short periods to help reduce the shock of the change that comes with your work schedule. The length of alone time should start at five minutes and slowly increase in ten-minute increments.

Examples:

- Go to your car and tidy it up.
- Take a trip to the gas station.
- Take a trip to the grocery store.
- For the first three weeks as you build your bond, focus on exercise and scheduling consistency instead of obedience training.

- Use toys as a way to build your bond. Do not leave toys readily accessible, except in their crate. If it is playtime, take out a toy and interact with the dog. When playtime is over, put the toy away. This creates a positive association that you are the person who brings fun things.
- Exercise is very important. Tossing a ball, running around the yard on a long line, and taking short “sniffing walks” around your yard and the neighborhood are all positive activities. After the exercise session is over, give your dog some down time in their crate or room. This helps them learn to “turn off” and relax.
- Create a fun “leaving” routine. Put them in a safe place (crate or other) and leave a safe chew toy when you walk away. This will show them that you leaving brings them good things. Ignore crying, barking, and whining when you leave.
- Always praise good behavior using a gentle voice. When they are doing something undesirable, don’t yell or say “no.” Rather, interrupt the behavior by getting their attention and asking them to do something desirable, like “sit.”
- During the first two weeks, avoid taking your dog for long walks, on car rides, or to pet stores or dog parks. This can be overwhelming for some pets.
 - If your dog is starting to adjust to your routine and signs of stress are decreasing at the two-week mark, begin slowly introducing these activities, keeping them short and positive. Your goal is to make sure, as their world increases, they are comfortable before moving onto the next new thing.

Meeting Your Family:

- It is a very exciting event to bring home a new pet, and you may be tempted to have all of your friends over to meet your new dog. However, during the settling-in time, it is best not to have company. Your pet is just learning to trust and bond with you. Too many new guests, even if the visit is short, can be too much stimulation. If you must have people over, place your new pet in their quiet space away from guests.
- If there are other pets in the home, allow the new pet to adjust to the home before you allow unlimited access to the other animals. This means monitoring and managing the time the pets are together for several days or weeks to be sure they are both comfortable.
- Be sure to speak in a soft voice and instruct everyone who interacts with your pet to do the same. You’re building a friendship with your new pet, so friendly words and tones are the way to go.

We (and your new dog!) appreciate your patience and know that, with time, your dog will give you all the love they have...and more!