

# Bringing Your New Dog Home

So you've taken the plunge and adopted a dog of your own. Congratulations! But what do you do now? No doubt you're excited and looking forward to forging a lifelong friendship with your new buddy. But try to keep in mind the confusion he is feeling right now. Whatever his past history, coming home with you is a new experience. He is likely to be a little disoriented, wondering where he is and who all these new people are.

The key to helping your new dog make a successful adjustment to your home is being *prepared* and being *patient*. It can take anywhere from two days to two months or longer for you and your pet to adjust to each other.

The following tips can help for a smooth transition:



## Supplies

Prepare the things your dog will need in advance. You'll need a collar and leash, food and water bowls, food, and, of course, some toys. And don't forget to order an identification tag right away. Some shelters will give you home with ID tags as well.

## Welcome Home

Try to arrange the arrival of your new dog for a weekend or when you can be home for a few days. Get to know each other and spend some quality time together. Don't forget the jealousy factor—make sure you don't neglect other pets and people in your household!

## Health Care

Animal shelters take in animals with widely varying backgrounds, some of whom have not been previously vaccinated. Inevitably, despite the best efforts of shelter workers, viruses can be spread and may occasionally go home with adopted animals. If you already have dogs or cats at home, make sure they are up-to-date on their shots and in good general health before introducing your new pet.

Take your new dog to the veterinarian within a week after adoption. There, he will receive a health check and any additional needed vaccinations. If your dog has not been spayed or neutered, make that appointment! There are already far too many homeless puppies and dogs; don't let your new pet add to the problem. Most likely, the shelter will require that you have your pet spayed or neutered prior to final adoption anyway. If you need more information about why it is so important to spay or neuter your dog, read the information on spaying and neutering.

## House Rules

Work out your dog-care regimen in advance among the human members of your household. Who will walk the dog first thing in the morning? Who will feed him at night? Will Fido be allowed on the couch, or won't he? Where will he rest at night? Are there any rooms in the house that are off-limits?

## Training and Discipline

Dogs need order. Remember, they are pack animals, so make yourself the "pack leader." When you catch him doing something he shouldn't, don't lose your cool. Stay calm, and let him know immediately, what the correct behavior is (if he chews on the couch, give him HIS bone instead to chew on!). Reward him with praise when he does well! Sign up for a local dog (positive reinforcement only) obedience class, and you'll learn what a joy it is to have a well-trained dog.

## **Housetraining**

Assume your new dog is not housetrained, and work from there. Read over the housetraining information given to you at the time of adoption. Be consistent, and maintain a routine. A little extra effort on your part to come home straight from work each day will pay off in easier, faster housetraining.

## **Crating**

A crate may look to you like the canine equivalent of a jail cell, but to your dog, who instinctively likes to den, it's a room of his own. It makes housetraining and obedience-training easier and saves your dog from the headache of being yelled at unnecessarily for problem behavior. Of course, you won't want to crate your dog all day or all night, or he *will* consider it a jail cell. Just a few, regular hours a day (but no more than four hours at a time) should be sufficient. The crate should not contain wire where his collar or paws can get caught, and should be roomy enough to allow your dog to stand up, turn around, and sit comfortably in normal posture. NEVER use the crate for punishment! See the crate training information sheet.

Of course a dog ideally should not have to live in a crate for any part of their lives, but some may need to until properly behaved when alone. You may also consider some sort of confinement to a dog-proofed part of your home. A portion of the kitchen or family room can serve the purpose very well. (A baby gate works perfectly.)

## **Let the Games Begin**

Dogs need an active life. That means you should plan plenty of exercise and game time for your pet. Enjoy jogging or Frisbee? You can bet your dog will, too. If running around the park is too energetic for your taste, try throwing a ball or a stick, or just going for a long walk together. When you take a drive in the country or visit family and friends, bring your dog and a leash along. Remember, a dog may burn off the energy playing fetch with a ball that they may use chewing furniture while you are away. Dogs need exercise to thrive, walking is not enough exercise for some dogs. Do not expect a well behaved dog if you cannot exercise them appropriately for their breed and energy level.

## **A Friend for Life**

Finally, *be reasonable in your expectations*. Life with you is a different experience for your new companion, so give him time to adjust. You'll soon find out that you've made a friend for life. No one will ever greet you with as much enthusiasm or provide you with as much unqualified love and loyalty as your dog will. Be patient, and you will be amply rewarded.

Feel Free to visit the Humane Society of the United States information sheets for additional helpful information at [http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet\\_care/our\\_pets\\_for\\_life\\_program/dog\\_behavior\\_tip\\_sheets/](http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet_care/our_pets_for_life_program/dog_behavior_tip_sheets/)

We would be happy to help you in any way we can. Please do not hesitate to contact us at 847-740-7788 for assistance.



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