

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 for you and your pet to adjust to each other.

The following tips can help ensure 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. We also recommend a crate. And don't forget to order an identification tag right away.

### **Health Care**

Watch your new pet for signs of illness, nasal discharge, cough, vomiting or persistent diarrhea. Inevitably, despite our best efforts, viruses can be spread and may occasionally go home with adopted animals.

### **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." Let your pet know from the start who is the boss. A new adult dog in your household is going to "test the waters" to see if just maybe, he can be the boss. From the start, it needs to be clear that YOU are the boss. Children can help, but the dogs know children are not leaders and the dog may attempt to dominate them unless the boss (you) makes it clear that bossy behavior on the part of the dog is unacceptable. Becoming an effective leader may take a bit of time with a new dog, but here are some tips to facilitate your leadership position.

- Food – feed your dog AFTER your dog sees you eat. The leader eats first. Also, feed at scheduled times and do NOT use self feeding food dispensers to feed a dog. This allows the dog to control when it eats and the leader should do that.

- The hunt – Otherwise known as a walk. Dogs need exercise and from a dog’s perspective, going for a walk is the hunt. The leader leads the hunt. A daily walk is a powerful bonding tool between owner and dog and the benefits go far beyond exercise.
- Love – The leader provides lots of love, attention and playtime. Others in the pack can do this too, and should. But if the leader leaves this to others exclusively, it sends mixed messages to the dog about who is the leader.
- Discipline - When you catch him doing something he shouldn't, don't lose your cool. Stay calm, and let him know immediately, in a loud and disapproving voice, that he has misbehaved. Leaders set boundaries. NO, should be a loud, sharp and distinct command that means NO. Reward him with praise when he does well, too! GOOD DOG should be in an elevated friendly tone.
- Sleeping - Ideally dogs should not sleep in your bed. In the dog world the most comfortable place to sleep is reserved for the higher members of the pack. If a dog is allowed to sleep on the bed, the dog must be invited up and should sleep at the foot of the bed to reinforce who is the boss.
- Consistency – Dogs are creatures of habit and are easier to train when they know what to expect and when. Be consistent with feeding, going out, play time, bed time and discipline.

You can find additional training 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/)

### **Puppy Housebreaking**

It helps to understand that housebreaking from a dog’s perspective happens as follows:

- Puppies are encouraged and taught by their mother to not mess in their bed. This is the foundation for housebreaking. You just need to teach the puppy/dog that your entire inside house is their “bed” and the place to go and relieve themselves is outside.
- Puppies figure out quickly once they are old enough to go outside that it’s a good and fun place to relieve themselves and it coincides with their understanding not to mess their immediate living area. Take advantage of this when housebreaking by consistently taking puppy out after eating and napping.
- If puppy doesn’t relieve himself outside, return him to his bed/crate. Wait a half hour and try again. He’ll begin to figure it out. Offer lots of praise for a job well done.
- If a puppy does mess in the house, give negative vocal feedback to the puppy and take it outside. It may not go at that point, but if it does, it offers the

opportunity for you to contrast the negative feedback that puppy got in the house, with positive feedback outside for a job well done.

- If there is an accident, never let puppy see you clean up. They are accustomed to seeing their mother clean up after them and once they see you cleaning up, the association may make housebreaking more difficult.

A puppy will be housebroken in a progressive manner of maturing, being able to control when they relieve themselves and realizing (with your help and encouragement) that ALL the areas of the house are their immediate living area. Plus, they'll discover that going outside is more fun anyway.

### **Adult Dog Housebreaking**

We will not claim an adult dog to be housebroken, unless we have had the dog in our own home and verified that it is indeed housebroken. However, even after doing that we can't predict if when any dog goes into YOUR home that they'll immediately recognize it as their living area and as a place NOT to relieve itself. Some do, some don't. Their behavior while at a shelter in a cage is not an accurate indicator of how they'll do in a home.

- An adult dog (both male or female) may urinate in a new home in order to "claim" it and then never do it again, although negative feedback is necessary to let the dog know that it shouldn't happen again.
- In another scenario, the adult dog may go into a basement or another room that they don't spend a lot of time in (like a dining room) and relieve itself there, thinking that's not their immediate living area. You need to point out, again with negative feedback that these areas are their immediate living area as well as yours.
- Some adult dogs are extremely modest and will not poop while being walked on a leash. If you have a problem with the dog pooping in the house after walking on a leash, you may need to investigate ways to allow him or her in a fenced yard or on a staked leash to be outside without you there.
- A dog that persistently relieves itself in the house needs to be checked for any medical problems and if none found, a trainer can give you directions on how to correct the problem. It is correctable, but the dog won't figure it out on his own.

The good news is that adults can learn very quickly if properly directed, and given adequate opportunities to go out. Remember, they are hard wired to not mess their immediate living area, you have to help them learn that the inside of your house IS their immediate living area.

## **Crates**

A crate may look to you like the canine equivalent of a jail cell, but to your dog, who instinctively likens it to a 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 too much, or he will consider it a jail cell. Just a few, regular hours a day should be sufficient. The crate should be roomy enough to allow your dog to stand up, turn around, and sit comfortably in normal posture.

For a very young puppy, the following is helpful.

- It may be 6 months before a healthy puppy can make it through the night without at least urinating. The crate should consist of ½ bed of towels. A puppy will rip up a bed with filling which can be dangerous. The other half of the crate should be newspapers. These are pretty small areas in a typical crate, but that's OK. Puppy will be reluctant to use the newspapers right next to his bed as he's been taught not to mess his bed by his mother. So when he uses the newspaper, it will be only because he has to.
- If puppy gets up and cries during the night, DO NOT take him out. He needs to learn to hold it, or use the newspapers in his crate, which he will stop doing as soon as he is physically able and gives him an incentive to work on control. Taking him out at night when he cries teaches him that he can control you, delays housebreaking and will wear you out. The first thing when you get up, and you may find yourself getting up pretty early for the first couple months, he needs to go outside immediately. In the long run the crate helps with housebreaking.

Crates perform two purposes.

- First, crates assist with housebreaking.
- Second, a crate confines your dog (puppy or adult) when you are not home and eliminate the possibility of the dog tearing your house up, something a dog will do out of boredom or frustration at being separated from their pack. This may be especially true of an adult dog that lost his first pack when he was brought to a shelter. Now he has a new pack and when you leave the house he becomes fearful that he has lost his pack AGAIN and can react in a destructive way.

Once a dog is fully housebroken and behaves well around the house, you may opt to not put him or her in the crate at night. Also, as the dog matures and becomes accustomed to when you come and go, you may experiment with leaving him home outside of the crate for short periods while you're gone and see how he does on his own.

There may come a time when you no longer need the crate, but some dogs never reach the point where they can be trusted to be home alone and not confined. It is not cruel to crate a dog as long as it isn't in the crate all the time. Don't be one of those people who tell us that it's mean to crate a dog, but want to get rid of the dog because he tears up the house.... like getting rid of a dog isn't mean?

### **Puppy Bed Time**

Puppies cry. They're babies. In order to develop a peaceful coexistence with puppy at bedtime, the following is helpful:

- Try to keep puppy from napping for a few hours before bed.
- Take puppy out to relieve himself and put him in the crate about an hour before you want to go to bed.
- Let puppy cry his heart out for that hour. Don't let him out of the crate or even go to see him. He's GOT to get tired eventually.
- After the hour, if puppy hasn't tired himself out and gone to sleep on his own, go to the puppy and clap your hands or make a loud noise that gives puppy a start. One thing that works well is to wave a plastic grocery bag through the air, catch the air and make it pop as loud as you can. This will startle the puppy and when startled, a puppy will instinctually become quiet and lay down. This quieting down frequently leads to sleep because remember, he's been crying for over an hour. If it doesn't work, wait 15 minutes and try again.
- After a few nights of this, he'll still cry, but eventually he'll quit on his own and go to sleep. Once he masters that, puppy can stay up until you go to bed.
- If he cries during the night, ignore him. Do not take him out. The CRATES section addresses the issue of him relieving himself at night. If he persists in crying, get the plastic grocery bag.
- Consistency and developing a routine is key in making this work.

### **Children and Dogs**

Puppies are not and cannot be vicious, but they can be active and lack manners. A puppy will try to play with you or your children or you like they played with their siblings, which is rough and involves biting. Training and socialization from the leader of the pack and others in the family will wean a puppy from this behavior, but it won't happen overnight and children cannot do this on their own. A dog jumping on children is their attempt to dominate them and a child needs to know how to discourage that behavior with a firm "No" or "Down". When a child cries or screams and runs from a dog, it encourages the dog to continue and increase the behavior.

- Do not allow children to hug the dog or put their face anywhere near the dogs face. Kids think they are showing the dog affection, but in dog language it's a threat and could lead to an aggressive response.
- Do not allow young children to walk or sit around a dog with food in their hands or chewing food. Puppies and adult dogs can bite at a child's mouth (face) if they smell food on their breath or try to take food in their hands resulting in a bite.
- NEVER bother a dog while it is eating or startle it when sleeping.
- Do not allow children to approach, touch or interact with your dog while it's eating.
- Do not chase, tease, taunt, hit, kick, or run away from a dog.
- Do not pet or grab at a dog without letting him see and sniff you first.
- Never leave babies or young children alone with dogs.
- Never allow children to play tug o war with a dog and his/her toy. Dogs don't understand the concept of where the toy ends and a hand begins.
- Screaming or uncontrolled behavior can scare a dog, putting a child at risk.
- Playtime between dogs and young children must be supervised by an adult.

### **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.

### **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.

Humans are smarter than dogs and in order to be the leader of your dog's pack, you must be smarter than the dog and be the dog's leader. This means that if your dog is outsmarting you and behaving badly as he/she attempts to be YOUR leader, get help from a trainer. Don't allow a dysfunctional dog/human relationship ruin your dog, make your life miserable and put your dog at risk of losing his home.