

Introducing A New Dog Into The Household

Imagine moving into a new home and you had no idea you were moving in the first place. And guess what? There is another person living in your new home! Imagine the chaos that could ensue – two complete strangers are suddenly sharing the same space that one used to have all to him/herself. Now imagine how it would feel for your new family member coming home for the first time. How do you think your new dog and your established dog will adjust to each other? Often this can be one of the most daunting tasks new families face when adopting a new pet.

With patience and some fore thought the adjustment can go well for all members of the family.



First here are some things to remember about newly adopted dogs and puppies

Your home may be the 3rd home your newly adopted dog/puppy has known- his/her original home, the shelter or foster home, and your home.

Rescue dogs have never had forewarning about anything – they have just been moved from place to place. This can create uncertainty in your dog until he/she gets used to you and your family.

Keep in mind that grabbing; hugging, and kissing are all human behaviors, not canine behaviors. Many dogs learn to tolerate and even enjoy these things once they are comfortable with a particular person (or people). Think how you would feel if a total stranger grabbed you and held you close!

Grabbing a dog by the collar can be perceived by a dog as very threatening and can provoke a bite. Grabbing any collar, especially a collar that will tighten around the dog's throat, affects the dog's ability to breathe and swallow. How would you feel if someone grabbed you around the throat?

In order for your dog to trust, familiarity and predictability are necessary.

To help with the transition here are some tips to help make the introductions go as smoothly as possible

Try to introduce your new dog to the current family dog on neutral territory so they have the opportunity to become acquainted before the new dog enters the established dog's territory.

Allow the new dog to investigate the new home several times a day when the established dog is outside or otherwise occupied. You may want to keep your newly adopted dog on a leash at first to prevent any avoidable mishaps. Do not force him/her into any area if there is resistance.

This time can be a pretty super charged experience for a rescue dog and the more the family can facilitate a successful exploration of the new household the easier things should go.

When your established dog is present, keep your new dog confined, but able to see, smell, and hear the established dog so they can communicate. Separation with a baby gate is often less threatening than placing him/her into a crate. This introduction time will give you and the family a chance to watch both your dog's interactions and observe how well they are adjusting to each other's presence. This is also an opportunity for the two dogs to become safely acquainted before the new dog enters the established dog's territory.

When both dogs look as if they want to interact, allow short playtime periods, gradually increasing the time until the dogs are not separated anymore.

Feed each dog in separate areas and pick up the food bowls/containers before the dogs are together again. This can help to prevent food guarding and possible fighting.

Toys that are food related or favorite toys of the established dog's should be removed before the dogs are allowed to interact.

Walk both dogs, using 2 people, having them walk in the same direction. This will allow them to get used to each other's presence on neutral territory and will help them become better acquainted.

This sheet is intended for general informational purposes only and is not, and should not be considered by you as a substitute for professional training and/or medical advice. If your animal appears sick or is exhibiting unusual or aggressive behavior, please seek medical attention immediately or contact a professional trainer in your area.

Never leave dogs unsupervised if they have not had enough time to become friendly with each other. This is especially important if you have adopted a new puppy. New puppies don't know canine manners and could be harmed by the established dog of the house.

Key Points

Use gates to keep your dogs safe you until you are certain that he/she is comfortable and behaves predictably in your home.

Use barriers such as doors or gates, or a leash, to prevent your dog from slipping out of any open doors.

It is best if the dog sleeps in the same area as family members, even if the dog is crated. This simulates natural pack behavior and promotes a feeling of safety and security. Pack animals always share a defined space while sleeping.

Ask visitors who come into your home to ignore your dog by not looking at, touching, or speaking to him/her until you are certain your dog is comfortable interacting with guests.

Recognize that protecting food and toys is normal canine behavior and is known as resource guarding. Choose a qualified animal behavior consultant/trainer to help reduce this behavior instead of trying to change it yourself.

Establish a routine for feeding, walking, exercising, etc., to help your dog get used to a predictable environment. Knowing what to expect is comforting to your dog and will help him/her adjust to their new home.

When walking your dog, if he/she becomes fearful or agitated by another dog, child, adult, or object, immediately turn around so the dog understands that you recognize the distress and that you are handling it. This may prevent your dog from developing unwanted behaviors as a response to things that may stress him/her.

Contact Life Is Better Rescue for a behavior consultant/trainer as soon as an undesirable behavior occurs. A behavior consultant can help your family manage the behavior in a constructive way.

Additional Tips

Never let your new pet and the established dog interact immediately. Ideally give them both at least 3 days to ensure both dogs will get along.

Feed them in separate rooms to start. Even after you can feed them in the same room, keep them on opposite sides of the room and YOU stay in the room while they eat. Never free feed.

In the beginning, monitor your dogs and never leave them alone together, not even for a minute.

Do not play interactive games with the new dog and the established dog together until you are confident they are adjusted to each other.

Do not teach your new dog any behaviors until he/she is acclimated to the new household.

Contain your new dog either in an exercise pen, behind a gate, or in a crate while you are out of the room.

Take your new dog out to potty very often, more than one time in an hour while he/she is learning how to behave in the new home.

And finally...

Patience, patience, patience... you could be at least the third or fourth home for your new pet. Realize this poor dog is new at all of this. With time and patience, your new companion will be the best companion ever...