

RESCUE INC.

REBELS FOR THE PAWS

THE FIRST 24

The FIRST 24 hours is a critical time for your new pup. REDUCING STRESS + AVOIDING TRIGGERS will be the name of the game, especially if your new family member is not a puppy. Remember, EVERYTHING IS NEW - as humans, we have the ability to verbally communicate during change and transition, but your new pup does not and will need your support. It is your job to keep them emotionally balanced and safe. Following this read, please find our DECOMPRESSION - KEEP 'EM SAFE - DOGLANGUAGE documents found on our Adoption Resources page on our site. Dogs are amazingly forgiving and resilient creatures and these best practices will set everyone up for success!

We love the series on adoption prep through This K9 Of Mine - for some additional thoughts on the below and other great reads, explore their [site](#).

PUP PROOFING YOUR HOME

Most of our puppies and dogs were originally stray, or came from substandard environments. Pups are clever and in an effort to survive, many have become resourceful and are skilled at gaining access to things they shouldn't, and some are excellent at "counter surfing" too. "Pet Proofing" your home is really very simple - look around your home, if a toddler is due to visit, what would you keep out of reach? Dogs and puppies often explore with their mouths too.

As a start, here is a short list:

- MEDS belong in a medicine cabinet
- Keep dog food off the floor - in a closet and off the ground is best
- Secure your trash - "dumpster diving" is a competitive sport for some pups!
- Keep purses / bags / backpacks / sugarless GUM and candy out of reach
- Shoes can be delicious chew toys - put 'em away!
- Keep any human foods off counters - you will be surprised how far a pup can reach
- Kids toys are a big culprit
- Keep an eye on objects that your pup is oddly drawn to, those should be out of reach too

PREPPING YOUR CHILDREN

Kids and pups can be a match made in heaven until it's not. Every family member should watch [Stop the 77](#) together, and read our frank thoughts on dogs and bites in our DOGLANGUAGE document. We take our advisement on kids and children very seriously as their life depends on it.

GROUND RULES FOR KIDDOS:

- Provide space during introductions and allow the pup to initiate contact
- NO HUGGING, ever
- Do not leave kids and dogs unsupervised
- Teach your children that when a dog is on their bed or in a crate, it's their alone time - no exceptions
- Always supervise play and watch dog body language
- Calm play = safe play, no roughhousing
- Taking bones or toys away is off-limits, along with feeding time
- Teach them to pet the pup gently, on the back, and in direction the hair grows

CAR RIDE HOME

RULE #1 - Do not bring your resident dog with you and after pick up, **GO STRAIGHT HOME!**

Do not be tempted to stop at a dog store en route. We understand you're excited to show your pup to the world, but this is the OPPOSITE of "reducing stress and triggers"!

The transport north, or the short ride from a shelter to the foster home, was the last time your pup was most likely in a vehicle. Though there are exceptions, most of our pups have limited car experience and may think this is scary. If you have an SUV, the safest place for your new pup is in a crate. If you have a car, please plan on picking up your pup with another family member or friend, and have them prepared to ride home in the back seat with them. LEAVE THE LEASH ON.

Once in the car, continue to give your dog small bits of treats throughout the ride. If your dog is stressed, they might not eat. Just keep offering. When they do finally accept a nibble, you know they are finally decompressing.

We see increased instances of missing dogs during these initial transitions. Once you arrive home, DO NOT open your back hatch, or door, without a human holding the end of their leash. Dogs that are afraid, will have a flight response. Losing your pup upon arrival home can have devastating consequences. If you do not know what to do if they escape, we provide immediate steps in our Keep 'Em Safe document.

ARRIVAL

It's essential to read through our DOGLANGUAGE document before pick up day. Understanding your pup's state of mind by reading their body language is critical to keeping them safe and your family too.

Once out of the car, let the dog or puppy initiate walking - if they're hesitant, pulling a dog is NOT a solution. In fact, pulling a dog could pull them right out of their collar or harness if they choose to hit the brakes. Time is your friend here especially with adults, and if a puppy gets too squirrely, you can scoop them up and carry them to your yard or walking area.

Allow your pup some time to sniff around. Making some slow loops around the perimeter of your property with praise and some treats in-between. Ideally, your pup should relax enough to relieve themselves. Save longer walks around the neighborhood for after the initial adjustment period and preferably the next day at a minimum.

The first few hours of your dog's arrival should focus on relaxing. Introduce them to the rest of the house and their sleeping area - walk them around your home on a loose leash while letting them sniff and explore. After the initial tour, allow them to explore on their own, while dragging their leash, and with you close behind. We recommend having your new pup drag their leash (supervised only) for the first few days. The "why" is addressed in our Keep 'Em Safe document.

Once everyone is relaxed, you can try some play - introduce some toys and increase play intensity based on how receptive your pup is. If you have a fenced yard, this is a great place for play but still have a dragging leash or training lead (clipped on a harness is best) until you know they can't clear a fence or find an unknown escape route. Balance affection with play time and allow for some decompression time too. Your pup's journey through the rescue process has been a long one.

If you have a RESIDENT DOG to introduce follow best practices for introductions [here](#) BEFORE bringing your new pup into the home. We cannot emphasize enough, that parallel walking together is the secret sauce in introduction success. TAKE IT SLOW. It's hard to undo the emotional damage between dogs if an introduction goes awry. Be careful with toys and multiple dogs - these can be prized items and this will help avoid any canine miscommunication and potential scuffles.

HOUSE TRAINING ROUTINE

House trained in a foster home does not equal house trained in your home - FREQUENCY IS YOUR FRIEND. You and your new pup are learning to speak the same language and until you are each fluent, you need to set a routine for house training from the moment they arrive home. It is not their job to tell you - it's your job to provide the opportunity.

If you adopted a puppy - read through puppy house training protocols [here](#). If you adopted an adolescent or adult dog, still follow the same protocols as you would for a new puppy initially.

Until your dog is comfortable, "holding it" may be their go-to. Continue to provide frequent opportunities for them to relieve themselves especially during the initial transition and DO NOT leave a puppy or dog unattended in a new space if they have not yet gone to the bathroom. They WILL use this quiet opportunity, inside your home, to find a spot they perceive as safe. NEVER SCOLD OR PUNISH if you catch your pup in the act - INSTEAD quickly redirect with an "OUTSIDE" and scoop them up or lead them right outside. If they finish their business - give lots of PRAISE, always. Going potty should be a party!

CRATES + COLLARS

The importance of crate usage is addressed in our Decompression document and collar safety is included in our Keep 'Em Safe document - both are critical to review and always found on the Adoption Resources page on our website.

Many pups are new to crates - please do not have the expectation that on their first night home, closing them in a crate will be successful. Read the link about crate training on our website and use some of those training tools to help them learn that their crate is a great place to be. ALWAYS REMOVE COLLARS before crating, PLEASE do not be a strangulation statistic.

TUMMY TROUBLES

Stress in dogs can manifest through their stomach. It will not be unusual for you pup to have a rumble in their tummy or loose stool due to food transitions. Ahead of pick-up, we recommend you whip up some bland diet to mix in with their kibble, or temporarily feed as a standalone. Link to ratios and proportions is [here](#). Pumpkin (100% pumpkin with no additives) is a help here too - though not every pup enjoys it so we recommend a taste test first to ensure it's an additive they will eat.

If you are transitioning your pup onto a new food, do so slowly over a period of about 7-10 days, mixing an increasing amount of new food with old food each day:

- start with 75% old food mixed with 25% new food for approximately 3 days
- then mix 50% old with 50% new for approximately 3 days
- followed by 25% old with 75% new for approximately 3 days
- now you are ready to feed 100% with the new food

THE FIRST + LONGEST NIGHT

You've taken your pup out for their last potty break and y'all are ready for bed - it's been a long day! But this first night may be hard for you both. At first, you're grateful as everyone appears to be settling in, but it is likely that this first sleep in a new home may have your new pup feeling a little out of sorts.

- Your new pup's sleeping space should be set up with a Kong (or other special but non-destructible or digestible chew item), maybe an old sweatshirt of yours, and be cozy for sleeping. You can try setting up a crate in your bedroom initially. Or, if the sleeping area is not a crate, we recommend gating in a general sleeping area, or using an X Pen to surround a bed. The sleeping rules you establish on the first night, will be the rules that your new pup will expect on the following nights so choose wisely before you invite a pup into your bed. We do not recommend co-sleeping until you have an established relationship through training. And, DO expect your resident dog to be proprietary about their space on your bed. Waking to a dog scuffle in the middle of the night is awful for all involved.
- Crying, it's gonna happen. Expect varying degrees of whining on night one which will try your patience and have you wondering if you've just made a huge mistake. Muster up a healthy dose of understanding, and try to ride it out. Responding to that whining teaches that crying is how they get let out of the crate. Tough it out - it might suck! But the next night, the crying many reduce to just a few minutes. And on the third night, it could mean right to bed and your patience has paid off.
- Plan late night potty breaks. If your pup is under a year old, plan on doing a late-night potty run. And with puppies, even two or more depending on their age. Puppies can hold their bladder for their months of age, in hours. In other words, a four month old puppy should be able to "hold it" about four hours.
- Make these potty breaks mind-numbingly boring during the night so they don't learn this is playtime. Take them out on leash, go outside, and stand still. If they don't go within a few minutes, take them back in and give a cookie in the crate and walk away. If they do go, quietly praise, give a treat, and quietly back to crate / bed. Don't turn the late-night potty breaks into late-night parties with tons of treats, praise, or play. If you make this too fun, they'll associate the late night trips with play and soon you'll be running canine raves at 2am and that'll be a hard cycle to break.

YOUR FIRST FULL DAY TOGETHER

- It's best to arrange your schedule to be home on your first day, which is due to be full of adjustment and the need for establishing routine. Start the day by waking up early to take your pup outside. Remember to follow the house breaking protocol. For young puppies, best to carry them outside from the crate - moving legs make the bodily functions move faster so try to avoid an accident they can't hold on the way to outside.
- Next, it's time for breakfast. Watch to see if your pup would benefit from a slow feeder bowl or food puzzle to slow them down. Offer another potty break after breakfast and with a puppy, shortly again thereafter. We don't recommend "free feeding".
- Just like your first few hours together, your first full day together should be quiet. Aim to replicate your long-term routine in a watered-down way. Try to not spend every minute with your new pup - even if you're home, take some short term breaks where they are crated (after play) or gated in a kitchen or similar. This will help your pup not develop separation anxiety tendencies when it is time to resume a normal schedule. Make sure any space your pup is left in is "pup proofed"!
- Even if you're a weekend warrior, still limit walks to quiet ones around your neighborhood. Stick with your yard if your pup appears nervous of new things and noises. Don't head out to hike the mountains, walk the beach, or hang at the brewery just yet! Mimic your normal routine without adding too much activity - save this for after your first couple of weeks together.
- As the evening approaches, repeat your routine from the night before.

COMMON HICCUPS

Some dogs will have a harder time adjusting to your home and others will adjust swimmingly. Try to use treats to encourage better behavior, but don't punish or force your dog to stop using their coping mechanisms. Here are some behaviors you may see:

- Barking - your dog might bark at you, might bark at cars, or might not bark at all! If you have any issues with barking, remain patient and redirect your dog by providing them with something more appropriate to do, like playing a game or chewing a chew toy. This is not a reward her for barking – but you are providing something better to do instead!
- Fear - be patient. Watch their body language. Be gentle and consider reaching out to your placement coordinator if you are concerned or the trainer you have established a relationship with for help with the transition.
- Chewing - dogs chew and this is normal. They can be curious, topple trash cans, and and could do odd things like try to eat the edge of your favorite rug. But just like with barking, try to redirect your dog to doing something better. A TIRED DOG IS A GOOD DOG. If your pup is finding “jobs” to do - you may not be providing enough exercise or stimulation. If they are a super tough chewer, make sure to provide something appropriate to occupy them. Read our section on SAFE options for chewing in our Keep ‘Em Safe document.
- Accidents - we will mention it again, expect a few. The best thing to do is supervise and confine your dog when you can't keep eyes on them. Using indoor gates to limit access to the entire house or X Pens for puppies will make it harder for your pup to sneak off and find a potty spot in the house. Accidents are most often HUMAN ERROR. Watch for key signals that they have to go out like sniffing and circling. Always provide a potty break before and after inside play, and after meals and drinks. Don't always end your time outside after potty time - rewarding with play following is positive reinforcement too!

- “Aggression” - we use this word cautiously as most concerns with “aggression” that we see in our dogs is typically a fear-based behavior and is often misunderstood. Meaning - you probably missed some body language signals along the way that indicated that your pup was nervous or uncomfortable. If you heard a growl, take some steps back, remove the stressor to deescalate the situation, and assess. READ the DOGLANGUAGE document and use your trainer as a resource and our placement team too.

In closing, don't be too judgy right out of the gate! Our pups have been failed by humans and a very inadequate animal welfare system. The journey your pup has taken from Homeless to Home has been a long one and their acclimation could take time and will differ dog to dog. YOU are an extension of the rescue process and their lifeline to a fresh start. We are grateful for you as one of the amazing adopters that make our rescue work possible.

Thank you!