Ten Tips for Dog Adopters
Thank you so much for adopting from the Santa Fe Animal Shelter and providing a home for an animal in need! Follow these tips to start off right with your new companion.

1. **You and your dog are partners.**
   - Dog behavior is complex, fluid, and driven by emotional needs.
   - There is no dominance hierarchy in dog social groups or between dogs and humans.
   - Reward the behaviors you like from your dog and ignore the behaviors you don’t.
   - Avoid punishing unwanted behaviors, as this can cause behavior problems later on.
   - Respect your dog’s space and communication.

2. **Set up your home for a successful transition.**
   - Dog-proof your home to keep your pets safe and protect your valuables.
   - Remove anything valuable your dog might chew on, and clear the counters!
   - Slowly introduce your dog to your home by keeping them in one room at first.
   - Over several days or weeks, open up other rooms to them if they are comfortable.
   - Give your dog a safe space with a comfy bed to retreat to if they are nervous.

3. **Expect an adjustment period for you and your dog.**
   - Your dog may exhibit problem behaviors while settling into their new environment.
   - The length of time it takes for a dog to adjust varies, but can span weeks to months.
   - Do not expect your dog to know training cues or basic manners.
   - Your new pet doesn’t know the rules of your house until you teach them.
   - Be patient and compassionate to yourself and your dog during this transition.

4. **Learn to read dog body language.**
   - Understanding goes both ways. It’s important to know what your dog is telling you.
   - Since dogs can’t speak, they use their body to communicate.
   - If your dog is stressed, give them space and a toy or treat to help them settle down.
   - Stress signals include yawning, turning away, a tucked tail, and a tense or stiff body.
   - Check out a [video](#) on dog body language to get a better idea of what to look for.

5. **You may need to house train your new dog, even if they are an adult.**
   - It is common for dogs to have accidents after a life change or move.
   - Prevent housetraining accidents in your home with consistent, frequent trips outside.
   - Reward your dog with treats and praise whenever they go to the bathroom outside.
   - Use an enzymatic cleaner on any indoor accidents to remove the odors your dog smells.
   - Avoid scolding or punishing your dog for indoor accidents; they are still learning!
6. **Provide enrichment for your dog.**
   - Enrichment is any activity that allows your dog to engage in natural dog behaviors.
   - A dog who receives daily enrichment will be a happier, better-behaved dog.
   - Boredom can lead to nuisance behaviors, so keep them occupied with enrichment!
   - Use food puzzles to satisfy your dog’s natural desire to forage and scent.
   - Play training games to activate your dog’s problem-solving skills and creativity.

7. **Use positive-reinforcement training to teach your dog.**
   - Make training time fun and happy! Learning is more efficient this way.
   - Use training games like “[The Name Game](#)” to teach your dog to pay attention to you.
   - Discover what treats your dog loves, and use those! Hot dogs are often a favorite.
   - Set your dog up for success by ensuring new situations are positive experiences.
   - Use tasty treats, fun toys, and praise to create a positive association for your dog.

8. **Be safe on walks.**
   - Use safe, properly-fitted, and comfortable walking equipment.
   - For dogs that pull, front-clip harnesses and fixed-length leashes are the best option.
   - Avoid prong collars, choke chains, e-collars, head halters, and retractable leashes.
   - Abide by local leash laws and do not let your dog off leash without a **reliable recall**!
   - Avoid leashed greetings between dogs, as they can be a source of conflict.

9. **Introduce your dog to other animals carefully.**
   - Dogs do better meeting new animals when they have freedom of movement.
   - Pay close attention to body language and separate animals that are stressed.
   - Keep introductions brief at first and slowly increase their amount of time together.
   - End interactions on a positive note while both animals are still happy.
   - Always supervise newly-introduced animals, even if they seem to be getting along.

10. **Don’t know the answer? Ask for help!**
    - The internet is **not** a reliable source for training information.
    - Reach out to us here at the shelter or seek help from certified training experts.
    - The earlier you reach out for help, the better!
    - Enroll in a group training class. We now offer [online training classes](#)!
    - Join SFAS Trainer Dana on [Training Tip Tuesday](#) for fun training demos online.

For more resources, check out [https://sfhumanesociety.org/behavior-library/](https://sfhumanesociety.org/behavior-library/)