

Tips for Bringing a Shy-Timid Dog Home

Congratulations on adopting your new family member!

Below are some helpful tips and recommendations that we hope will help integrate him into your home and family.



Tips for Bringing a Shy Dog Home

Making a plan.

- ***Is your home secure?*** Look around, are there any windows he might escape from or lever doors he can open. Many shy dogs are skilled escape artists.
- ***Is your yard secure?*** Most dogs 25 lbs. and over can jump anything less than a 6 ft fence. Of your yard is not fenced or has a low fence, you should probably fit him with a sturdy collar & attach a leash or rope when going outside. Always supervise your dog the first time out in the yard and we strongly recommend supervising any outing into the yard unless your yard security rivals Fort Knox.
- ***Take a picture*** of your dog as soon as you can; should the dog escape you will have something to put on the lost dog poster.
- ***Avoid taking him out of the house*** (and yard) before he establishes your house as his new home and you as his family. At minimum, give him 2 or 3 days before taking him on a walk and much longer before going on a hike or somewhere unfamiliar far from home.
- ***Give him something that smells like you.*** Dogs are very odor oriented and giving him an old worn t-shirt to have when you need to leave him or to sleep with if he does not sleep in your room can help him associate your scent with comfort. Just don't give him something that you are afraid he will destroy!

Tips for Living with a Timid Dog

Making a plan.

- ***Hand feed daily;*** try mixing his dry food with canned food, baby food or chicken and feeding at least 1 meal a day by hand. This will help him establish a bond. If your dog won't take the food from your hand, toss some extra tasty treats on the ground between you and him and let him eat them up while you are present. Do not approach the dog, but rather let him approach you at his own pace.
- ***Pet him*** only when it is safe to do so and the dog is not growling, freezing, showing teeth or eye-whites. Also pushing too far too fast can result in the dog retreating even further. Also when you do pet him, avoid startling or reaching over him or her, especially their head. Pet under the chin or neck first. Don't grab.

- **Avoid strong punishment.** Your dog is prone to choosing fearful escape behavior in a threatening situation.
- **Find him a buddy.** Many shy dogs tend to do best with other dogs they can attach to as buddies. If you don't have another dog, consider setting up play-dates with friends or neighbors dogs.
- **Have patience,** shy dogs take a bit of time to come out of their shells; some a few weeks and others several months depending on age, prior experience with humans, genetics, and other factors. However if you are patient & let them progress at their own pace, they can ultimately turn out to be very loving & loyal dogs! Do however, keep expectations realistic, your dog may never be a social butterfly.
- **Don't smother the dog with affection.** Often the best way to get a dog to come around is to play it cool; hang out with the dog, but don't pay much attention to him or her. Perhaps read a book and talk softly once in a while. Try to sit in a chair or on the ground with your body sideways from him to look less threatening. If the dog does approach, no reaching or grabbing! Talk softly instead and if you have them, offer treats.
- **Training** is another great way to build and enhance the bond with your new dog. Even if you only teach him basic commands or a trick or two, training enhances communication & builds confidence. Look around in your area, some trainers even offer shy dog or "wallflower" classes. If the dog won't even approach, work on rewarding the dog for looking at you or showing more confident or curious body postures.
- **If things aren't getting better, get help!** Don't be afraid to call the behavior helpline should an unexpected situation arise and the dog's behavior is not improving or getting worse, or the dog escapes and you need help recovering him or her. **505-983-4309 x1251**

For more information, check out these resources:

- Help for Your Shy Dog: Turning Your Terrified Dog into a Terrific Pet, By Deborah Wood
- The Cautious Canine-How to Help Dogs Conquer Their Fears , By Patricia McConnell Ph.D.
- Help for Your Fearful Dog: A Step-by-Step Guide to Helping Your Dog Conquer His Fears, By Nicole Wilde

****The information presented here is for supportive and informative purposes only; it is not intended to diagnose treat or cure any behavioral issue and is not a substitute for professional help. With any behavior problem that persists or worsens, please seek help from a qualified behavior professional.***