



Tips for Bringing a Shy or Timid Dog Home

Congratulations on adopting your new family member! Below are some helpful tips and recommendations that we hope will help integrate them into your home and family.

Tips for Bringing a Shy Dog Home

Is your home secure? Look around! Are there any windows they might escape from or lever doors they could 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. If your yard is not fenced, or has a low fence, try fitting your dog with a sturdy collar & attach a leash or rope when going outside. Make sure to always supervise your dog the first time out in the yard.

Take a picture of your dog as soon as you can! If your dog does escape you will have something current to put on a lost dog poster.

Avoid taking them out of the house (and yard) before they establish your house as their new home and you as their family. At minimum, give them 2 or 3 days before taking them on a walk and much longer before going on a hike or somewhere unfamiliar and far from home.

Give them something that smells like you. Dogs are very odor oriented and giving a dog an old worn t-shirt to have when you need to leave them, or to sleep with, if they do not sleep in your room, can help them associate your scent with comfort. Just don't give them something that you are afraid they will destroy!

Tips for Living with a Timid Dog

Hand feed daily! Try mixing their dry food with canned food, baby food, or chicken and feeding them at least 1 meal a day by hand. This will help your dog establish a bond with you. If your dog won't take food from your hand, toss some extra tasty treats on the ground between you and them and let them eat while you are present. Do not approach the dog, but rather let them approach you at their own pace.

Pet them 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. When you pet your shy dog, avoid startling or reaching over them, especially over their head. Pet under the chin, neck, or shoulder areas 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 neighbor 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. If you are patient and let them progress at their own pace, they can turn out to be very loving and 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 them. 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 them to look less threatening. If the dog does approach, refrain from reaching or grabbing, instead, talk softly and if you have them, offer treats. If the dog won't even approach, work on rewarding the dog for looking at you or showing more confident or curious body postures.

Training is another great way to build and enhance the bond with your shy dog. Even if you only teach them basic commands or a trick or two, training enhances communication and builds confidence. Look around in your area, some trainers will offer shy dog or "wallflower" classes.

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.***