



8 Ways to Welcome Home Your New Dog

Congratulations! You have just begun a relationship that's bound to be filled with joy, challenges, victories, and learning experiences. By starting off on the right foot, you can cut short that rocky adjustment period most new relationships go through. Here are a few suggestions to help integrate your adopted dog into your family and household.

- ❖ **Your dog needs a crate.** A crate will not only give the dog a safe space to go to, but also come in handy for housebreaking, problem prevention, and travel. House training is made much easier and faster with the use of a crate, and works well no matter the age of the dog. Once the dog has learned how to stay in a crate by himself, you can also use it to contain him and keep him out of trouble for a few hours during the day when you need to leave him alone at home. An untrained, anxious dog can ruin your house if left loose unattended. Crating an unmonitored dog can prevent expensive, heartbreaking, needless destruction. Most importantly, every dog needs his own "room", a safe place he can retreat to when he is feeling overwhelmed and needs some time to himself. When the dog does go to his crate to get away, respect his need for down-time and leave him be.

- ❖ **Your dog needs to spend time with you.** Make time for your new dog; include the dog when cooking, watching TV, or doing yard work. Dogs are naturally social animals and spending time with a family is very important to their mental well-being. Spending time with your dog will help both of you to connect and form a relationship with each other. Like any relationship, clear expectations and boundaries, mixed with patience, love, and good communication help to set a solid foundation on which to build. Enrolling in a good "Basic Manners Dog Training" class taught by a qualified trainer is a great way to help you and your dog build that foundation. A good dog training class will not just teach you how to get your dog to sit when you ask, but help you understand your dog better and teach you how to communicate with your dog so that he understands what you want of him. Just like any other activity, the more time, work and energy you put into training, the more you and your dog will get out of it.

- ❖ **Your dog needs a sensible, balanced diet of dog food.** The pet supply stores have a dizzying array of all manner of pet foods these days. Look for something that is complete and balanced, and nutritionally designed for your dog's age, needs, and lifestyle. Dry kibble is usually the most practical choice, as it is easy to feed, stores well, and generally the most cost effective. However, there are many different types of diets that are nutritionally sound and healthful that you can choose depending on your personal preference and budget. Decide on one that meets your needs and stick with it; dogs can easily get upset stomachs when their diet is changed too often. Most dogs, especially large ones, appreciate two meals a day.

- ❖ **Your dog needs grooming.** Regular brushing of the dog's coat helps keep him healthy by spreading his natural oils through his fur, removing tangles and sticks that might irritate him or cause sores, and helping him to shed his winter coat so he isn't so hot in the summer.

Keeping the dog's nails trimmed will prevent foot injuries and save your floors at the same time. Plus a dog that is clean, soft, and handsomely groomed is a much greater pleasure to pet!

- ❖ **Your dog needs things to do.** If you don't give your dog toys to play with or a place to play, he will get bored and play with things you don't want him to. Dogs like things that stimulate their senses. Toys that have different shapes, smells, flavors and textures give the dog variety. Every dog should have at least one toy specifically for chewing, especially if the dog is young. Toys that have food inside can be especially helpful for keeping him busy for longer periods of time. Having a place for the dog to play such as a yard, or for small dogs, a room where it is ok to run, roll, dig and let loose is just as important as having toys to play with.
- ❖ **Your dog needs to learn how to be alone.** This may seem odd, but some dogs want to be around others all the time so much that they can actually panic when they are left by themselves. It is important to teach your dog that it is ok to be by himself, by not letting him follow you constantly, practicing short absences, and not making a big deal about leaving or returning home. You can also give him an extra special toy that he only gets when you are gone to help him feel better about being by himself.
- ❖ **Your dog needs regular walks.** Walks are not only important exercise and a good way to burn off some energy, but they are exciting for a dog that spends most of his day at home. As a bonus, they help strengthen your relationship with him as an activity you do together. When you go on a walk, use a leash that is comfortable to handle and can hold the weight of your dog without breaking. Also, make sure your dog is wearing a well-fitting harness and/or a fitted collar with up to date identification, in case something unexpected should happen.
- ❖ **Your dog needs to meet new people, animals and things.** After you and your dog are comfortable with each other, your dog needs to experience new situations and meet new people so he is not afraid of new things. Children, other animals, bicycles, cars, men with beards, and people in uniforms are all things that commonly scare dogs who never saw them as puppies. It is very important, however, that when the dog does come across something new that the experience be as good as possible for him. Treats and praise can help him feel good when he sees and sniffs something new for the first time. Introducing your dog to new things on a regular basis helps create a well-balanced, flexible animal who can take all kinds of surprises in stride.

The rehabilitation of a rescue dog can take a bit of time. You are bringing a dog with an unknown past into a new home that is different from anything he has ever known before to live with humans that he has just barely met. Expect some pitfalls and frustrating moments along the way. If you reach a point where you feel like you are stuck or are unsure of what to do next, **don't hesitate to call the Shelter's Help Line at 505-983-4309 x1251 for advice**, or get professional help if you feel the situation needs it. Any dog can turn out to be a trustworthy friend and loving companion for someone committed to giving the dog what he needs to be happy and healthy.