

Settling in your rescue dog

Here are some tips to help you settle in your new family member(s):

The first few days in a new home can be very difficult for any new dog as he or she gets used to you, your home and your routine. For a dog that's lived in a different home and a rescue centre this can be more stressful than usual – so take things gently and don't expect too much.



- When you arrive home, take your dog straight to the area where you will be happy for him or her to go to the toilet. Keep them there until they go, praise them afterwards then take them back into the house. Dogs are creatures of habit and will return to the same place to go to the toilet.
- Consistency will be very important to your new dog so decide on house rules, such as where the dog is and isn't allowed and make sure everyone sticks to them.
- Keep your daily routine the same from day one. It may be tempting to shower your rescue dog with relaxed rules and spontaneous gestures but you will end up with an unsettled dog.
- In the same vein, don't fall into the trap of feeding your dog on demand. His or her appetite may be erratic initially but it will settle faster with a regular routine.
- For the first few days, stick to the diet given to you by the rescue home (a change in diet can cause an upset stomach or even a small amount of blood in stools). You can change it slowly over time by gradually weaning from old food to new food over 5-7 days.
- Don't let your dog off the lead in any open spaces until you've had a chance to practice recall in secure areas. Recall is an important part of the bonding process. For further information, read our article on recall. Your dog will need a few days to get used to your household so don't introduce any new people until they're ready.
- For the same reason, if you have a cat, do not introduce them immediately. Try swapping their scents so that both your cat and dog are familiar with each other before they're fully introduced.
- After seven days or so, take your dog along to your local vet to register them and discuss any future veterinary treatment. Remember to take your vaccination certificate with you.

READ ON FOR LOTS MORE DETAILED INFORMATION.

Basic Preparation:

- ✓ Your garden was prepared for your home-check but make sure your family know not to leave doors and windows open.
- ✓ Make sure chemicals are put away and things like bowls of grapes or boxes of chocolates are not on display as these are lethal for dogs and can be fatal.
- ✓ If you intend to buy a stair gate make sure it's a dog gate and not a child gate, the latter will be too low.
- ✓ Worth removing rugs for a few days until you know your dog's housetraining has kicked in.
- ✓ Don't use chemicals to take the accidents away, male dogs leave their scent and this is important to them so just wipe it with a wet cloth and in a few days when you do a deeper clean his urge will not be as important.
- ✓ Once established this urge will fade.
- ✓ With a few dogs who know about lever handles you may need to change to knob type handles.

Equipment:

- ✓ Buy the best food you can afford - dogs don't eat that much and it will help to keep them in good health.
- ✓ Dogs enjoy variety despite the myth to keep them on the same monotonous diet everyday of their lives!
- ✓ Minimum Treats colorant free and use sparingly. Don't over treat a new dog else their bowels will not get a rhythm and they are more likely to have mishaps in the home.
- ✓ Buy a good sized stoneware water bowl. A food bowl, toys and a brush.
- ✓ We recommend the 'H' type harness with back loop NOT the figure of eight shoulder fastened one as dogs get free in a second.
- ✓ A good quality collar, double ended lead or longer length extender lead.
- ✓ Training lines are very useful too.
- ✓ You can start off with a folded single duvet and buy a bed later once you know what size and preference they will have to be.
- ✓ It's good for a dog to be able to stretch out.
- ✓ You are now ready for short lead walks around the streets and extender lead walks in open spaces.

Identity Tag:

- ✓ Get an identification tag straight away.
- ✓ Do not put your pet's name on the tag, only your address, mobile and landline numbers.
- ✓ The microchip will be changed over and takes a while for information to be transferred. We always leave it two weeks before beginning the process.

Sharing and Existing Dogs:

- ✓ If you have a resident dog it is advised to remove toys and chews in your home for a few weeks or until you are sure they are comfortable sharing.
- ✓ These act as triggers for arguments while they are getting to know each other. Arguments are likely to be caused by: jealousy/attention, possessiveness of toys or guarding of food or space.
- ✓ We always advise you to give extra special attention to your resident dog and allow the new dog to find their own way.
- ✓ If they are feeling left out and come to you while you are stroking your new arrival be sure to switch your attention to the resident dog.

- ✓ Let the new dog appreciate it is principally the resident's territory foremost.
- ✓ Make sure their feeding bowls are placed well apart with you present and marshal until trust is there, some dogs like separate rooms so they have their own space to eat in.
- ✓ Treat sharing sessions will help each dog respect the others space. So have them sit and call your original dog's name and give them a treat making sure the other doesn't rush forwards, insist they sit down. Then their name and a treat.

Settling:

- ✓ During the transition period, the new dog will need time to adjust to the rules and routine – do not assume that they will know what to do. They need your leadership!
- ✓ A dog is a pack animal looking for guidance and it is up to you to teach them good, acceptable behaviours. If the human does not take charge, the dogs will need to.
- ✓ Let your new dog know from the start who is the 'kind and fair' boss. When you catch them doing something they shouldn't, stay calm, distract or attract with voice and lead them into the good approved and the good dog! Ignore the other.
- ✓ Praise when they get it right and shape their behaviour accordingly.
- ✓ A dog can take anything from a few days to a few months to settle into the routine in a new home, especially if they have come from a kennel environment.
- ✓ Others settle so quickly you won't remember when they weren't a part of your life.

Games:

Don't play tug-of-war, rough & tumble or engage in other combative play. These teach your dog to challenge and be wilful. Balls and playing 'Fetch', Frisbees and Hide n Seek with treats, work well and teach deference and ensure power balance in your relationship based on approval.

Vets:

Ask around dog owners in the area, you will soon get to know the best vet practice even if it's a little further. Register your new dog with a veterinary practice as soon as possible. WAW can also recommend a vet if required.

Grooming:

Brushing your new dog daily will help to develop your bond. If dogs are not used to this expand the trusted areas with time.

Security:

- ✓ Keep the dog on a lead when outdoors in unfenced areas, as your dog could suddenly obey instinct and chases a squirrel into the street ... tussles with another dog or runs after a cat Your new dog has no bond with you and recall is fragile until trust has been built-up and they know the area.
- ✓ Note: Unless we tell you otherwise, Terriers will always have to be walked on extender leads and should not be allowed to run free because of their chase/prey instincts. If unsure please check with us.
- ✓ Your new dog should also be supervised when out in the garden initially. If there is a way to escape, most dogs will find it – over, under or through!
- ✓ Only time and experience will tell if they can be trusted!

Dog's name:

- ✓ A dog can learn a new name quickly if you use it consistently.
- ✓ Start by linking it with the previous name, but only change their name after fully adopted.
- ✓ We keep a dog's name which they came to us with unless it is inappropriate.

Training/Socialising:

Consider signing for a local dog obedience/training class and you'll learn so much and meet many local owners.

Introducing New People:

- ✓ Restrict the number of visitors to the absolute minimum for the first few days.
- ✓ A new dog feels bewildered and stressed by all of the changes, so delay introductions to friends and neighbours until the dog has had a chance to settle.
- ✓ You need to control a dog's energy. Don't allow visitors to 'whip' a dog's excitement levels up as these will get beyond their own control.
- ✓ Calm the energy down with a slow calm voice on meetings.
- ✓ Have treats handy to befriend.
- ✓ You may want to have the dog on lead so you can 'check' immediately as needed.
- ✓ Make sure visitors are relaxed and that you convey confidence.
- ✓ The dog may want to sniff the visitor first.
- ✓ Beware: If the guest is tense, the dog may sense this as a direct challenge so set the tone with your actions and attitude – wait until you're happy and relaxed.
- ✓ Read cues from your dog: How comfortable do they appear? Many dogs love new people while others feel overwhelmed.

Expect your new dog to engage in behaviours you'll need to understand and may need to correct, such as growling or jumping up at people. Allowing a dog to jump up at people is a common mistake; teach your dog "off" from the start.

Introducing dogs to each other:

Prep:

- ✓ Just before you go to collect your new dog, take your resident dog for a nice long walk to burn off some of their energy.
- ✓ Prior to the introduction, lead walk the new dog outside on neutral ground then bring the other dog to the same area on a lead.
- ✓ Make sure you are relaxed so you don't transmit anxiety through the lead – relax those shoulders!
- ✓ Avoid keeping the collars pulled tight since "restraint frustration" elevates tension.
- ✓ The dogs will be more relaxed knowing they have some room to manoeuvre.
- ✓ Watch carefully so you can make a lead correction (a quick pull on the lead and release, but not punishing) and tell them "No" to disrupt the action if necessary.

Intros:

- ✓ Make the meeting casual with a walk and praise (timed to reward good, relaxed behaviour). Introduce them gradually over time, making sure the dogs are calm.
- ✓ Avoid head to head, join from behind and move to side walking. Reassure the dog if nervous, but act normally. If it's not OK, suspend introductions and resume a solo walk.
- ✓ Be careful to reward only good behaviour.

- ✓ Aim to reintroduce the dogs "parallel walking", in the same direction apart and gradually moving together.
- ✓ When they are close, keep walking within sight of each other. Aim to neutralise their energy with their focus being on the walk not on each other, getting closer so they are aware of each other and not reacting.
- ✓ Finally close enough to smell each other. Introduce each resident dog to the newcomer, one at a time in this way.
- ✓ If the dogs are receptive to each other, praise each one to show that good things happen when they are together. If there is a negative reaction, move back to the distance at which neither reacted.
- ✓ Watch for warning signs such as fur raised on the back, staring or stiffening up, pre-empt behavioural display.
- ✓ If one dog reacts, don't punish; instead, take him into a neutral or less valued area to settle down and ignore him. If both dogs react, remove each to different, neutral areas and try again until they are walking together without reaction.
- ✓ Allow a good 20 mins – we have worked through from negative starts to 30 mins later playing together, it seemed a long 20 mins!

Intervention:

- ✓ When correcting unacceptable behaviour timing is critical.
- ✓ Do not wait for the lunge; at the first hint of tension e.g. a stare, correct with a firm "No" and a quick (but not punishing) lead correction, and redirect the dog's attention to you. You must keep control and show the dogs that YOU are the leader.
- ✓ Don't be alarmed if they don't warm up to each other immediately.
- ✓ Either dog may engage in posturing, barking, marking. It is essential to use a positive vocal tone with any meeting with another dog or person.
- ✓ People need to express happiness or enthusiasm, the dogs need to hear.
- ✓ They need to know their leaders are confident and happy.

Neutrality in territory:

- ✓ When walking in harmony together outside the home, move to your back garden.
- ✓ Be aware that they should be taken through gates and doorways separately to avoid a barging competition.
- ✓ Do not hold one back by grabbing the collar as this may build tension.
- ✓ Judge the situation from your 'gut instincts' – there is no prescriptive formulae. For example, in the garden, release the new dog from the lead and let that dog explore on its own.
- ✓ When the new dog has calmed down and is relaxed, release the resident dog. They will then explore each other from top to toe – quite normal!
- ✓ When they are both relaxed again you can proceed into the house with them back on their leads – your resident dog should enter the house first followed by the new dog.
- ✓ Remove toys for a while until they are relaxed, and use treats as timely distractions and sharing sessions.
- ✓ If introducing a second dog, do lots of extra walks together side by side at a brisk pace as this will help them to bond as a pack and neutralises energy.
- ✓ Sometimes we suggest you take your resident dog out for one to one walks so they can touch base with their special relationship with you.

Dogs and Children:

Never leave children alone with your new dog, children can do some quite nasty things to get a reaction from dogs (and other children).

Teach your own and visiting children:

- ✓ How to approach a dog i.e. not to rush up, scream at, or pester.
- ✓ Never harass or mistreat a dog.
- ✓ Don't jump on or rough and tumble with dogs.
- ✓ A dog tells you they are overexcited by nipping, this is just dog communication.
- ✓ If they are afraid they will growl, this is dog speak, this isn't aggressive!
- ✓ Do not allow a child to walk a dog alone – your dog may be OK, but how will they manage if the dog chases a cat across the road or meets an over zealous dog off the lead.

Dogs with a resident cat:

- ✓ This varies enormously on the skills of all concerned; chemistry, chase drive and pack acceptance.
- ✓ Allow your new dog to involve their nose. They will need to smell the scent of the cat, where it regularly sits etc., to begin to accept it as a presence in their pack.
- ✓ Don't take risks especially with terriers as cats are small furries & the dog's "prey instinct" may surface. They will need to win your trust.
- ✓ You need to discern between 'play' and 'prey' instincts.
- ✓ Be aware the dog is sometimes at a greater risk from cat swipes.
- ✓ Finally, the cat needs many easy escape routes to get high to safety or 'out and gone'! Use your voice, a short trailing lead and harness to orchestrate matters initially.
- ✓ A muzzle may help you to truly test the situation but remember, both animals can still get damaged even with a muzzle on.
- ✓ Don't let this write up put you off, we have homed many dogs (and terriers) in with cats successfully.

Finally:

- ✓ **Be reasonable in your expectations.**
- ✓ **Give your new dog time to adjust.**
- ✓ **Do not make strong judgments or statements.**
- ✓ **Only when you have had hundreds of dogs through your hands will you really be able to gauge.**
- ✓ **You may think in terms of hours or days – WAW think in terms of weeks and months.**
- ✓ **Be patient and you will be amply rewarded.**
- ✓ **BE THERE FOR THEM! You'll soon find out that you've made a true friend for life.**
- ✓ **No one will ever greet you with as much enthusiasm or provide you with as much unqualified love and loyalty as your dog.**

Our adoption contract states that if your new family member is not working out, to contact WAW and we will accept the dog back and start the rehoming procedure again. Do not rehome the dog yourself. **You can always contact us for advice (via Facebook messages, email info@warringtonanimalwelfare.org.uk or call 01925 748638.**