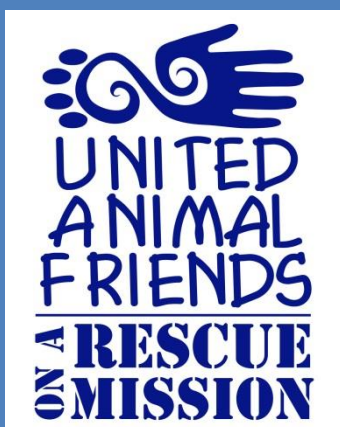


Congratulations on Your Adoption! Now What?

Your newly adopted dog is home, and probably feeling a bit confused and frightened. A calm, quiet, and loving atmosphere is what's needed right now. Here are some tips to help ensure a safe and happy transition for both of you.



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Safety First

Be sure to “dog proof” your home for safety. Walk your yard fencing looking for any gaps or holes and permanently repair them. Remove anything that can pose a hazard to your new pet, including poisonous products such as antifreeze, slug bait and any household products that can be ingested. Remove items that can pose a choking hazard from floors and low shelving that the dog can reach.

Dogs and Dogs

If you already have a dog at home, until you know how all pets will interact, remove anything that could cause a squabble. These items can be toys, food, chews, a favorite bed or even a favorite leash. Recruit a dog savvy friend to help you, and let him or her handle your “resident” dog while you handle the new arrival. Be sure to exude a feeling of confidence and control because your dog will sense any anxiety you show and will take it as a sign of danger.

Dog introductions work best on neutral territory, so have them meet in the street and just start walking together with the humans on the inside and the dogs on the outside. Let them look at each other but not touch just yet. Monitor body language for signs of aggression: showing teeth, growling, rigid and tense posturing, one dog trying to get his head over the other dog's neck and shoulders. Don't let them become too focused on each other.

If the dogs appear friendly and fairly relaxed, allow the dogs to sniff each other on slack leashes. Tight leashes convey fear and can cause a fight. Be calm and let the dogs circle each other if they want, but make sure the leashes to not become tangled. Do not allow one dog to mount the other or try to place their head, a leg or a paw on the other's back. This is showing dominance and can lead to a fight.

Once they have met and seem to be getting along, you can proceed into the house together. Keep the leashes on for a while in case you need to intervene.

Baby gates may work well for keeping dogs apart while letting them sniff and get acquainted slowly. Short, positive interactions are the key to successful meet and greets. Never leave your pets alone unsupervised until you are completely sure that they are all pals and there is no danger of a fight breaking out.

If a fight does break out, the best way to break it up is by first calling for help and then using something other than your hands to get between the animals. Use a hose on full blast or shove a trash can lid or other object between their faces. Once apart, use your body or the object to direct the aggressor away. The dog will be excited and may try to bite you if handled.

Children and Dogs

Small children need to understand the difference between stuffed animals and live ones. Don't leave small children and dogs together unsupervised until you know your dog is OK around children. Teach your children how to interact with dogs. Instruct the child to put a hand out and let the dog come to them. Don't look the dog directly in the eye, but look off to the side. Speak softly and quietly and make no fast movements. When petting, pet the chest and below the head, but never approach from above or pet the top of the dog's head.

Teach your children not to go near the food bowl when the dog is eating. Teach them not to take a toy out of the dog's mouth or to pinch, pull tail or ears, and not to tease the dog or throw things at it. Help them understand that sudden movements, jumping, running, and squealing can startle and frighten a dog and cause them to bite. Also, waking a dog suddenly from a nap, or rushing at them for a hug or a kiss is a no-no. Many dogs will interpret a hug as dominance or feel trapped, so chest petting is the best way to go.

Cats and Dogs

Cats and dogs can become the best of friends. When introducing them, keep the dog on a leash and allow the cat freedom to approach or run. Always have an escape route for kitty. If your dog is fixated on the cat and refuses to be distracted, the dog's prey drive may be strong and your kitty is in danger. If the dog just appears curious and will break focus on the kitty with treats or other activity, it's a good sign that they may become pals.

Until you are comfortable with them in the same room, don't let them interact freely or unsupervised. Have a squirt bottle handy in case the dog gets too enthusiastic, and correct unwanted behavior with the "Leave it!" command.

Obedience Training

Your new pet won't understand what is expected of him or her until you teach them. Consistency and word repetition is the key to training, followed by positive reinforcement and treats. Everyone in the family should use the same word for the behavior, prefaced by "good" or "bad," for example, "Good chew!" or "Bad Chew!" Simply shouting "No!" or "Bad!" won't convey what behavior you are correcting. Use a low, firm, serious voice for corrections and a happy, lighter pitched voice for praise. Hitting, yelling and punishing will only create more problems and will not teach the dog what you want.

Basic obedience training makes for happy pets and happy families. A local class, or even applying lessons from a good book, is time well spent that will last a lifetime. And keeping a ready supply of treats in your pocket to immediately reward good behavior will go a long way in teaching your dog what you want.

Potty Training

Take your dog out to go potty often and do it in the same location each time. When the dog goes where you want it to, say "Good potty!" and reward with a treat. If he or she has an accident in the house, don't get upset and don't ever rub the dog's nose in it. Just say "Bad potty!" and take the dog to the appropriate spot outside and reinforce with a "Good potty!" It is always best to catch the dog in the act so you can reinforce immediately. Placing some feces or urine on a paper towel in the appropriate spot will help the dog understand that this is where you want him to go.

Dogs don't like to mess where they sleep. Don't give your new dog the run of the house and keep him or her confined when you are together. Using baby gates to block them in the kitchen or another uncarpeted room is best. Set up the bed, toys and water and make it a positive, happy place - not a punishment. Don't make a fuss before you walk away or when returning, as this just causes anxiety. Keep it matter of fact and give praise and greetings only once the dog is calm. Let the dog out to potty immediately after returning.

Crates

A large, roomy crate can also help in potty training, but it is only a training aid and not a substitute for training. The crate should be roomy and allow the dog to lie down and stretch out comfortably. Make the crate a happy place. Never use it for punishment. Start teaching the dog to go inside by tossing a few treats in the back while saying "Good crate!" Keep the door open, allowing for a quick exit. Once the dog is comfortable being inside, close the door for a minute or two before opening it, saying "Good crate!" Don't make a big fuss - just use the praise words and go outside for potty. Little by little you can increase the period of time you leave the dog in the crate.

When you are getting ready to leave, place some favorite chew toys, like a Kong toy with frozen peanut butter inside, in the crate. Having a special treat makes your departure much easier. Never make a fuss before leaving the house or when returning. Sad partings and grand reunions cause separation anxiety. Put on your coat and shoes and play with your keys at times when you are not leaving the house. Dogs are very good at reading signs and this will help alleviate separation anxiety.

Go to Your Place

You can add to crate training or going to a special room by teaching "Go to your place." When a visitor is coming who is afraid of dogs or when a workman arrives, you can stay in control by commanding your dog to go into the crate or room. Say this in a firm but non-scolding voice, then use a treat to get the dog to follow you to the crate or room. Once inside, give praise with "Good go to your place!" You can also secretly leave a surprise treat in the place so that when the dog arrives, there will be a treat magically waiting. Your dog will learn that hearing this command often means that there is a treat waiting at the place.

Chewing

Dogs chew, especially those who are teething. The trick is to teach them what's OK to chew, and that dad's expensive golf shoes are a no-no! This is done much the same as potty training, but saying "Bad chew!" Then, the key is to immediately substitute what is OK to chew, such as a Kong toy, and finish by praising with "Good chew!" and a pat or two. Rawhide bones, real bones and similar chews pose a choking hazard so if giving these, never leave the dog unsupervised with them.

For dangerous chewing, such as on electrical cords, or damaging chewing, such as the corner of your chair, Bitter Apple works wonders. This clear spray, which is available at pet supply stores, tastes awful and will prevent the pooch from chewing on these items.

Walking Well on Lead

It's no fun to walk around the block when you're being dragged behind a panting locomotive. The best solution is a properly fitted Easy Walk harness. Choke collars, prong collars and chains will teach the dog nothing. If using a collar instead of a harness, be sure that it is snug enough so the dog can't back out of it.

Begin with the dog at your left side, close to your leg. Start off with your left leg and give the "Heel" command while gently giving one inward tug on the leash. If he or she tries to charge ahead, stop walking and make the dog stop with you. Do not begin walking again until the leash is slack. If the dog is determined to take the lead, do the "crazy walk" by randomly changing directions while keeping the dog next to your leg so he has to pay attention to where you are going in order to keep up. Keep repeating this until the dog begins to understand that pulling does not get him where he wants to go. Only walking nicely ensures progress. Be sure to praise with "Good heel!" and a treat when the dog walks nicely.

If a dog has never been on a leash before, they will often sit or lie down and refuse to budge. Never drag your dog, but coax them to come by using treats. Once they are up and moving forward, keep the momentum going and continue with the above methods and praise.

Sit

Sitting and treats go together like peanut butter and jelly. While holding a treat, move it over your dog's nose and back over the head while giving the "Sit" command. This naturally causes the dog's weight to move backward while he is following the treat and the sit position will follow naturally. When the dog sits, give the treat immediately, along with a "Good sit!"

Down

From a sitting position, hold a treat on the floor in front of the dog and slide it toward you and away from the dog. Give the "Down" command. Repeat the movement until the dog lies down, then reward immediately with the treat and a "Good down!"

Stay

Teaching your dog to stay is fun and rewarding, and may be one of the most important things you can teach your dog to ensure his safety. Teach this in a safe location, as you will be dropping the leash during the lesson.

Place your dog in a sit while standing in front of him. Give the "Stay" command while placing your right hand, palm facing the dog, just a few inches from his muzzle. Wait a few seconds, then give praise and a treat. Gradually increase the waiting time. If at any time the dog breaks the stay, return him to the sit position and begin again. As the dog gets the idea, take a step or two away while giving the command. Once you have mastered this, drop the lead and walk in a circle around your dog before treating and praising. Eventually you should be able to leave the dog's sight without him breaking the stay.

The stay command is vital when traveling in a car. Before opening your car door, give the "Stay" command before allowing the dog to exit the car with your permission.

Jumping

When your dog starts to jump up on you, keep your arms to your sides and turn away while using the “Off!” command. Do not use the “Down” command, as this will only confuse your dog. Do not push the dog away, as this is actually rewarding his behavior with the attention he is seeking. Give the “Sit” command and turn your attention and praise to the dog only when he or she is sitting calmly. Be sure that everyone who comes into your home follows this procedure.

Come

Coming when called, or “recall,” is vital to any dog’s safety. When your dog is already heading your way, say “Come!” and give him a treat and praise when he arrives. After he gets used to this idea, try it when he is not already moving in your direction. Always make coming to you a positive experience. Never scold the dog for taking too long.

Leave it

This is another important lesson. When you are on a walk and your dog moves toward something he should not have, give a firm tug on the leash away from the object, along with the “Leave it!” command. While you pass by the object, follow through with a “Good leave it!” If your dog already has the object in its mouth, give the command and remove the item. Always follow through with a “Good leave it!”

Quiet!

Dogs bark, and some barking should be allowed, but be a considerate pet owner and do not allow your dog to bark excessively. Dogs have different barks for different things. There are happy barks when a friend is spotted, bored repetitive barks, frustrated barks at the squirrel in the tree, angry barks at that darned kid on the scooter, and warning barks when a stranger approaches the house. Discover what your dog is trying to tell you so you can respond appropriately.

Some barks should be welcomed, like the stranger bark. For other annoying barks, use the “Quiet!” command, followed with something fun to distract your dog. If your dog refuses to quiet with the command, you can try a squirt bottle with water.

Digging

Some dogs are going to dig no matter what, so the best thing to do is set aside one place in your yard where you will allow it. Teach this by catching the dog in the act of digging and say “Bad dig!” Follow through by taking the dog to the digging spot and saying “Good dig!” as you dig a small hole and bury a treat while the dog is watching you. When the dog digs up the treat, repeat the “Good dig!” reinforcement. Bury several treats in the good area and praise your little genius each time he digs one up.

Fence Jumping

This is a very serious problem, so be sure to have your dog microchipped right away. Remove objects near the fence that dogs can use to get over it. To deter the dog from going near the fence, hide unseen and wait for the dog to approach the place where he is jumping, then blast an air horn. Your dog should soon associate the fence with a scary loud noise. If the problem persists, contact a professional dog trainer.

Hitting the Road

Pick up beds and dogs do not mix! Dogs deserve to enjoy that ride in the safety of the interior. Many dogs die on our roads each year from falling out of truck beds. Don’t do it!

Don't Give Up!

Some dogs are easier to train than others, but don't give up! Keep at it, be consistent, and have the entire family use the same words and techniques and it will happen. A bit of time and effort at the beginning will reward you with a pet that's a joy to be around for the rest of its life.