

HELPING YOUR NEW TO SETTLE

GOING HOME

This is a wonderful day for you and your dog but the sudden change can be a little stressful. Look at things from your dog's point of view. He has left his previous home and family or the busy, noisy environment of a shelter or pound and is traveling in a car with people he doesn't know to a place he doesn't know. It's no surprise that he may be a little scared and anxious.

Plan to bring him home at a time when he can be with you for a day or two. He'll need you there to make him feel secure in those first few days. It's also not a good idea to have too many people to welcome him. That may be quite overwhelming, so ask your friends and neighbours to give him a few days to settle in before they come visiting.

If your dog is confident and comfortable walking on the street before taking him inside your home, go for a long walk with him to relieve some of his excitement and nervous energy. This will make his introduction to his home and family a little calmer. If you have adopted a puppy make sure it is fully vaccinated before leaving your property.

INTRODUCING YOUR DOG TO YOUR NEW HOME

Your dog should be treated as a member of your family, so ideally bring him inside to live with you. Don't leave him outside without anyone to keep an eye on him. It will take a little while for him to realise this is his home, and until then, he may try to escape.

Don't give him the opportunity to destroy things around the home. Make sure you tidy up and pick up anything that a dog may want to chew. Stay with him as he explores his home, and don't leave him to wander unattended.

Give him some time to get used to his new environment and the people in it. You may find that, until he relaxes with you, he may be a bit reserved. However, once he settles in he'll become much more outgoing. He may actually go too far, just to test his boundaries. This is when you need to be firm, gentle and consistent so he learns the rules of your household.

Give your new dog the opportunity to have some time out if he's looking a little overwhelmed. Allow him to retreat to a place where he feels safe, and ask your family members to leave him alone. He might just need a little time to regroup and he'll be back to play again very quickly.

When you are introducing your dog to new people ask your visitors to follow the 'no look, no touch, no talk' rule. When the dog has lost interest in the new person they can then call him over and give him affection or a treat. For nervous dogs, always allow the dog to make the first approach ('no look, no touch, no talk' while waiting), don't try and pat him straight away, allow him to sniff you and explore you and when he seems comfortable give him a treat. Less is always best, ask visitors not to over excite your new dog, otherwise he will expect this from everyone who visits.

'NO LOOK, NO TOUCH, NO TALK' Rule

This rule can be applied in situations where the dog is displaying assertive and hyper-aroused behaviour (jumping, squirming, mouthing) as well as fearful and timid behaviour.

It is an excellent approach to use when meeting new or unknown dogs and also when coming back into contact with your own dog after a period of absence.

No look, no touch, no talk simply means ignoring the dog and giving no attention until he is in a calm state, then you can quietly praise him for behaving nicely.

By completely withholding your attention you are removing any pressure a timid or fearful dog may feel by your presence and you are not rewarding any unwanted behaviour such as over excitement or dominant/demanding behaviour.

This technique is particularly effective for dogs that are 'people focused' and highly motivated by their owners attention.



INTRODUCING YOUR NEW DOG TO YOUR OTHER DOG

Dogs can be quite territorial so you need to handle this introduction carefully. Your old dog may see your new dog as a threat and feel the need to defend his home turf. Make sure you pick up any bones and toys from around your home and yard to reduce the likelihood your existing dog will want to guard his things.

Follow these steps to make the introduction go as smoothly as possible:

1. Always try to introduce the dogs on neutral territory. In most cases this should have been carried out at Dogwatch with our staff to assist you, otherwise, go to a local park or dog park so there is no territorial behaviour to get in the way, however make sure it is fenced or you are well away from any roads. If possible, allow them to initially sniff each other through a chain wire fence to gauge their reaction to each other. Make sure you have a helper to manage one of the dogs.
2. Have both dogs on a lead for the introduction.
3. Relax. Dogs are very good at picking up on your mood, and if you're nervous, they'll think there is something to be nervous about. This can make them tense and increases the risk of hostility when they meet.
4. Go for a walk on lead together for 5-10 minutes as this helps to relieve excess energy or stress.
5. Let them approach each other in their own time. You can expect them to sniff each other's bottom when they meet; try to avoid tangling their leads so you still have control over their heads. If there is any hostility, cease the introduction and contact Dogwatch for advice.
6. It's important to feed your dogs separately, at least for the first few weeks until you can ascertain that they're not going to be protective of their food and give the dogs their own sleeping space - a place where they can get time out.

Dogs are pack animals and enjoy having a canine playmate. Be sure to supervise your dogs until they are used to each other - by carefully introducing them, both dogs should happily share your home with each other.

INTRODUCING YOUR DOG TO YOUR CHILDREN

Dogs and children make the best companions. In fact, your children may have played a large part in your decision to get a dog. They can also help to take care of him, and this will encourage a close bond between them.

Involvement: Children are quite capable of helping to take care of your dog. It gives them a sense of responsibility and it relieves you of some of the workload. Make sure you give your child a chore that's appropriate for their age and ability. For example, a younger child is able to brush your dog, but it isn't safe to allow them to take the dog for a walk.

Supervision: Never ever leave any child alone with a dog, no matter how much you trust them both. The best behaved dog is quite capable of snapping at your child if he is hurt, tired or elderly. Most dog bites to children are inflicted by their own usually loving family pet.

Education: Teach your children about how to safely interact with your dog. Show them how to stroke him gently. Teach them how to recognise when your dog is saying, "Leave me alone", and make sure they don't annoy him when he is in his crate, or den.

INTRODUCING YOUR DOG TO YOUR CAT

Your dog needs to learn from the start that the cat is part of the family and not to be chased. Every dog is different, so there is no one-way manual. When not sure, please seek professional advice.

The main goal is to get the cat and dog in the same room as often as possible in a controlled way. This is the only way your dog can learn that the cat is part of the pack.

If your dog is crate trained the crate can be used as safe place and time-out during training. Keep the dog on a lead, when the dog focusses on the cat; tell him to "leave" in a firm but calm way. As soon as the dog looks at you, reward. Repeat several times.

Do not set your dog up to fail. This means preventing the dog from being able to chase the cat. Check the garden before letting the dog out in the morning. Keep the dog on a lead if needed.

Feed the dog highly valued treats while the cat is in the same room. This way the dog will gradually focus less and less on the cat.

If the dog is highly reactive, seek professional advice.

POSSIBLE PROBLEMS

Even a housebroken dog can make mistakes, particularly when they are stressed. Don't get angry at your new dog if he has an accident, and certainly don't punish him. This will only make him afraid of you and this is no way to start your relationship. Take him outdoors regularly and praise him when he goes. It won't take long for him to learn where he can go to the restroom.

Some insecure dogs may crave attention and they may jump on you or nudge you for cuddles all the time. Don't give in or he will learn that this is an acceptable way to behave. Ignore this behaviour and he will ultimately give up. Having said that, he does need attention so make sure you give him cuddles but on your terms.

If your dog is a little fearful or reactive when he arrives at your home don't molly coddle him to make it all okay. This inadvertently rewards this behaviour, and you'll make him more likely to continue to be frightened or cranky; just quietly ignore him and let him settle down before rewarding him with affection. If this behaviour persists seek professional help.

Don't punish your dog if he misbehaves; he may not yet have learned what's expected of him. Punishment now will only make your dog afraid of you and is no way to build a close relationship with him. You will need to build up a little more trust before you can use a correction as part of your training. Instead try and redirect negative behaviour, showing the dog what they should be doing instead of focusing on what they should not be doing.

You must be committed to spending time to help your dog settle into your family life. You're setting the stage for your future together so teach him your rules, give him time to adjust and you'll have a best friend for life.

YOUR FIRST NIGHT - BED TIME

You can expect your dog to be a little unsettled during his first night in his new home

Where Should Your Dog Sleep?

If sleeping inside, it's a good idea to choose a sleeping area where you can hear him should he need you during the night. You can either make him a comfortable bed in his crate, or tether him to one spot with a lead so he can get into his bed comfortably. That way he's not allowed to wander the house at night which can lead to toileting accidents or any destructive behaviour. It should not take him long to learn where his bed is and sleep soundly through the night

Outside, make sure you put him to bed with something to keep him busy, a good bone or chew toy like a Kong with treats, Marmite or peanut butter inside it. Placing a hot water bottle or pet heat pad can help to make them feel cosy in the colder months.

Feed your dog a few hours before it's time to go to sleep so he doesn't have an uncomfortably full stomach. Just before bedtime take him for a walk or play ball with him so he is quite tired. That way he's more likely to sleep well, and will be less concerned about being in a strange place. Make sure he has been to the toilet so he's comfortable at bed time.

Night Time Whimpers

Whining is one of the first actions a puppy learns to tell its mother that it is hungry and it quickly learns that whining produces the results it wants. As the dog gets older it is conditioned to whine to communicate discomfort or distress as well as hunger. Your new dog will try to communicate with you in the same way. How you and your family react to your dog's whining is the key. You choose to either reinforce or discourage this behaviour.

You need to establish when whining is okay (rarely) and when it is not okay (most of the time). When your dog understands that he's less likely to whine.

If your dog is whining to go out and go to the bathroom be sure to comply. Go out, take care of business and come back in with no play.

In all other cases of night time whimpering be strong. Don't give in. Every time your dog gets what he wants when he whines you teach him that whining works. Like people, dogs do what works so he'll whine more and longer next time. Do it enough times and your dog will view whining as the best way to get what he wants. Also, avoid giving in after holding out for a long time. If your dog or new puppy whines when left alone for the night and you let him whine for three hours and then give in your dog will think that whining for three hours is the best way to get your attention (which is what your pup wanted in the first place).

THE NEXT MORNING

When you wake in the morning take your dog straight outside to his toilet area and praise him when he goes to the toilet. This will help him learn where his toilet area is and quickly teach him not to go inside the home.

Having a new dog in your home isn't a lot different than having a new baby. They both can be noisy at night and they both need patience and understanding. It won't take long before your dog is settled and you can again enjoy an unbroken night's sleep.

Ask for advice if you are not sure how to handle situations, this will prevent disillusion and frustration with your new pet.