



PACK INTRODUCTION: INTRODUCING A NEW DOG INTO YOUR PACK

There is absolutely NO REASON to rush dog to dog introductions or integration into your home. Take your time and get it right. Go slower, much slower, than you think is necessary. Because when you get it wrong, it's even harder to fix. You have plenty of time.

A dog just pulled from the shelter or dropped off by their owner is in a state of confusion. A dog that has left yet another foster home doesn't understand you want to take him to his forever home. Even without visible behaviors, they are very likely to be highly stressed. They may be fearful. Every dog has the potential to be reactive. Every dog has the potential to bite. They may not trust you fully – assume that they don't.

It's important to keep some basic training thoughts in mind when you bring in a new dog to your home. In some cases it's simply a lack of basic training. Assume they have had no leadership. Even if they have been in a foster home prior to your home, they may not have received the structure, leadership and training necessary to create a well-balanced dog. Besides, every change is an opportunity to unravel them a bit. Change and transitions are hard on dogs.

Some dogs will be effortless to fit in your family, while others may be more of a challenge. You are doing an in-home evaluation of the unknown. Their behavior at the shelter may not be what you experience. Their behavior day 1 may not be the same as some point in the future when the honeymoon is over. Make no assumptions about the dog, even if you have been told by someone else they have been "fine" – they may not be under new circumstances.

Your own dogs may also respond in ways you have not predicted depending on their level of training, the energy of your pack and the energy presented by the new dog, and



how you respond to it all. You must assume the role of leader. Period.

Foster programs not only provides love, shelter and medical care for a rescued dog, the foster will need to provide some basic training, discipline and boundaries.. We may or may not know the truth of their previous background. It's up to you to manage introductions, start training, and above all keep everyone in your home safe.

We all want to love these rescues and give them a better life. Spoiling them rotten or letting them get away with everything because they have never been loved will NOT help these dogs. You will show your love for them more if you

create boundaries and discipline along with lots of TLC as you prepare them for a new home.

The things you do beginning Day 1, will create the foundation for success. You have to create the bond of trust & authority (this is not about dominance). If new issues begin to arise, the sooner you address them the better. If you are uncertain about a behavior – please seek assistance.

Be patient and realize training and evaluations take time & effort. Puppies can more quickly overcome poor manners, but an adult dog might actually take many months of training, reconditioning & positive reinforcement to master these skills, and much of the success will depend on you as the handler and the environment you create. Every positive experience you create for them today, and every negative one you prevent helps set them up for success.

Now, get out the treats and start rewarding all the positive things you want to reinforce and keep him doing. And correct the issues that are not acceptable.

Phase I — at least 48 hours

Transitions are hard on dogs. Bringing a new dog into your home also be difficult on your own dog.

- Have a quiet place for your new foster to rest and relax on their own. Preferably this is a crate, x-pen or behind a baby gate. You want them to be able to see you and your family/pack, but not to interact directly or nose to nose.
- Correct any negative responses from your foster or your pack.
- Feed them in their crate.
- Consider a relaxation cocktail: Chamomile tea, Rescue Remedy, Meletonin, and Lavender Oils for their bedding, collar, etc. (Consult with a vet as needed or if your dog is on any other medications)
- Interact with them only to provide food, water, and take for a walk to potty several times, and ideally a long walk to just be present with them. Literally be aloof in the first few days.
- Do not attempt to greet the other dogs yet. They will all know each other is present. But they should not be allowed to greet.
- **All outings should be on a leash, especially for shy or fearful dogs, or you may be chasing them for hours. This also helps prevent any escapes from gates, fence jumping, etc.**

- It is as important to train children (and some adults) about respecting the dog, his personal space, his resources (toys & food), his size, etc as it is for you to train the dog about respecting the kids. Take this time to begin teaching your children and family about interacting with dogs and the safety measure needed for bite prevention. Use This Document as a Teaching tool for your Kids

Phase II — at least 48 hours

Introduce them to your pack slowly one at a time and on neutral turf such as the front yard with everyone on leash. Don't just open the front door or the fence gate and let them go running. This may take you a few days to manage introductions & have safe boundaries for everyone to sniff and smell before they greet directly.

I'm often asked why this is different than at doggie day care. The primary reason is a) the new rescue dog is an unknown being at this time. We really have no idea how they may respond. And b) it's on your dog's home turf, and not leaving any time soon.

- Watch for and learn the signals the dog is giving you — and he will in most cases give you an indication of his stress, fear, or attitude. Knowing those signals can help you solve many problems before they escalate. And remember, not all indicators are bad. In fact, it's better to be warned, than not be warned at all and a fight or bite occurs. What is their response to each other? Play? Cautious? Fear? Aggression? These answers will dictate the steps you need to take moving forward and determine your pace.
- Go for a long walk with just you and the foster. It's important that they learn to trust you and you learn to read them before a full integration in your pack.
- Continue separation from your pack within the home
- Continue quiet time each day in their crate/x-pen, with time to come out and play/train with you. Play can be training too. Have time that your own dogs are out with you alone without the new foster/adoptee. Just take it slow and give everyone some time and attention to acclimate.

Phase III

Begin to take time each day to do some basic training. 10 – 15 minutes a few times a day goes a long way.

- Work with a leash and lots of treats on Sit, Come, Heel and Wait (for doors, food etc). Down is much harder and

often stressful for the dog, so get the others mastered first even if it takes you several weeks to master them one at a time. A dog with trust issues or fear may be much harder to teach — so go slower with these dogs.

- Implement key structure skills — such as sit and wait for food, sit and wait to exit the crate, sit and wait for leash, sit and wait to exit any doorway, including the car, etc.
- Success on your walk starts with calm leadership at home. Keep working on your daily walks.
- Continue daily quiet time.
- Always be careful reaching for their collar as a correction, or to move them from the couch (which he shouldn't be on yet anyway). Consider a leash vs direct hand to collar corrections until you are confident in his behavior. Remember – when he gives you the behavior you do want – give a small treat and lots praise. Over time phase out the treats and emphasize the praise and physical touch! Treats should be used only randomly over time.

Phase IV

- When you do give them time out of the crate in the house, supervise at all times. Consider having them drag a leash behind them in case you need to correct them. Supervise Children with your dog at all time. Eyes On, Adult Awake Supervision.
- Don't let them on the furniture right away. They may begin to guard it and you. Give them a nice cozy, safe place of their own. If they are guarding you or the kids, from others – a sharp correction, and temporary removal from the presence of the person or thing he's guarding is a good start. Note: Dogs who have a tendency to display aggression should NEVER be allowed on the furniture or bed.
- Begin early teaching that food from the table or during meal preparation is not going to happen. It just reinforces counter surfing and begging. Send them to their "place" or crate during meal times. Once they are more trustworthy, begin setting boundaries to keep them out of the kitchen or dining room during meal time. This may also mean the kids can't eat on the coffee table, unless

he's very well trained to stay in place while they eat.

- Avoid allowing resource guarding — teach them to wait for their food, and do some hand-feeding. If you feel comfortable, see if you can remove the bowl and give them something of greater value while you do so. He's not going to understand if you just take his bowl mid-meal.
- If he is showing any signs of food aggression –seek help if you are inexperienced in handling these issues.
- Work on the "leave it" command, by asking them to give up some toy or bone by giving them a much greater value treat or toy, then giving the object back. They need to learn that it's ok to give up something they like when you ask. It just might be your shoe or your kids favorite toy.
- Don't entertain guests or take them on outings (events, Petsmart, etc) for the first 2-3 weeks. We know you want to show them off, but you need to bond, and gain some experience with the new pack member. When you do take them out or have people over — do not leave them unsupervised. Manage their environment, the energy present, and the greetings by others (human and dogs, and especially kids). If any indications of fear are present, give him some space & distance from the greeter. Teach your guests and your family to respect boundaries with the new dog.
- Visitors may not be as savvy as your own family, so never leave them unsupervised. If necessary, put the dog in his crate during play-dates with visiting children or dinner parties.
- When you finally do have guest over, have the dog leashed. Ask them to give your dog a treat or two. Begin by having them gently toss the treat in his direction and not approaching him directly. Do this every time they come over (for a few months) – it teaches them visitors mean I get some yummy treats! You may need to have him crated for the first few visits, sit quietly by the door, on a "place" in the living room away from the door, before they enter, etc.

There are generally 3 transition phases in the home — 3 days, 3 weeks and 3 months. Keep your leadership level consistent at all times, but be alert to the time-frames and watch for possible changes in your dog. If necessary go back to the basics and reclaim your role as leader.