

Adopting a Rescue Dog

The First Seven Days



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United States of America

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Chapter 1

A Month Before: Should You Get a Rescue Dog?

There are so many good things about owning a dog: companionship, protection and unconditional love. Dogs are also good for our health, with research indicating that people who own dogs have lower blood pressure and lower levels of stress hormones in their blood. But, owning a dog is also a tremendous responsibility.

If you're considering sharing your life with a dog, it's important that you stop and think before you leap into this commitment. A dog should never be an impulse buy, even though it's hard to resist those soft brown eyes and wet nose, you are adding a living being to your family, a family member that relies on you for their every need. The average lifespan for an American dog is 12 years, and you will need to meet your dog's every physical, mental and emotional need for his entire life.

Use the month before adoption to consider what you can comfortably offer a dog that joins your life. Spending a bit of time to

figure out what kind of lifestyle commitments you can make will help you decide whether a dog is right for you at this time of your life, and will help you make better decisions on what type of dogs make sense for your family.

Time Commitment

The first step in deciding whether or not you can care for a dog is to review your time commitments. Do you have very young children, elderly parents, a needy boss, or some combination therein that take up your every living moment? If so, perhaps it would be better to wait until you have a little more time that you can devote to caring for a dog before you take on the extra responsibility.

You need a minimum of an hour a day to provide basic care for a dog. That's an hour every day, not just on weekends! And remember that figure is a minimum, some dogs will require much more time.

Exercise – there is truth in the old adage, a tired dog is a good dog. A dog with too much energy and not enough to do will find things to do and these will typically not be things that you want them to do. A medium energy dog will need at least a half hour brisk walk once a day. Higher energy dogs will need longer and more frequent exercise to stay happy.

Training - one of the most common reasons for dogs being euthanized is a “behavior problem”. Most behavior problems can be prevented by appropriate socialization and training, under the guidance of a qualified trainer. This takes a heavy investment of time, particularly if you own a puppy. You cannot let your dog raise himself, be proactive and teach him how you'd like him to behave, and he's much less likely to develop behavior problems

that are difficult to resolve. Training also helps you establish leadership with your dog and gives your dog the mental exercise that they need to thrive. Plan on training a puppy for at least half an hour each day, once you have established the basics you can reduce the amount of time spent training or move on to more advanced exercises.

Grooming – the beautiful coat on many long hair dogs requires extensive and regular grooming to avoid knotting and to keep clean. As well as frequent visits to the groomer, you will need to establish a daily routine of brushing your dog’s coat to keep it shiny and tangle free. In some breeds this can take a full hour every day.

Socializing – dogs are social creatures and need interaction to thrive. For most dogs a few moments throughout the day where you share a pat and a few kind words, plus a few longer sessions where you give the dog some serious attention, and a few hours spent just laying at your feet are crucial to create a deep bond with your dog. Be prepared to spend a lot more time with the dog in the first few weeks as you establish a relationship.

Lifestyle Commitment

If it looks like time is not going to be a problem, think about whether a dog complements your current lifestyle. Think about what you are willing to compromise and what changes would not work with your lifestyle.

Home - is your home one that can accommodate a dog? You will need to understand your neighborhood’s rules regarding the type of dogs you are permitted to keep. If you rent, look through your rental agreement, many leases specifically forbid pets and

having to keep your dog hidden away like is no fun and can be stressful. If the dog is going to spend time outside, you are also going to want to make sure you have a yard that is securely fenced.

Allergies - do you have any family members who suffer from allergies? A dog may make them itch, sneeze or worse! Consult with your physician to find out if you can comfortably have any breed of dog, and to get some recommendation on the types of dog that are least likely to trigger your allergies.

Routine – dogs need to be exercised, and fed every day. That means you need to think about whether your family's routine is conducive to having a dog. Can someone get home every day in time to feed and exercise the dog?

Activity – all dogs need exercise, some more so than others. Are you a marathon runner or a channel surfer? Think about what kind of activity level makes sense for your family. Many people get a dog hoping that they will become more active. While this is a good aspiration, it is generally more advisable to become more active before getting the dog!

Keep in mind that your lifestyle may change over the years. You may move to a different home, a different state, or a different country that might make it difficult for you to have a dog. You may have a family. Every dog deserves a forever home, so plan ahead for such changes, so you can be sure that you are able to keep your dog no matter what happens.

Cost of Owning a Dog

Rescuing a dog from a shelter is a wonderful thing to do for

you, your family and the dog. But, one big misconception is that adopting a shelter dog is cheap.

Most shelters charge a modest fee for adoption. This fee covers only a small percentage of their costs for food healthcare, facilities, rehabilitation, and care giving. Adoption fees also help shelters find new owners that are more responsible and prepared for the commitment of adopting a dog. The dogs that are in animal shelters have been examined to make sure they're in good health before being made available for adoption. The dogs are usually vaccinated, wormed and neutered. In many cases, their temperament has been assessed so that staff can make sure they're a good fit for a prospective new owner. I know of no breeder in the country that does all that! All that is routine and for a fraction of the price you would expect to pay a reputable breeder.

But, the cost of adoption is only a small fraction of the total cost of dog ownership. According to a 2008 survey by the APPA the average dog owner spent \$2,185 per year on dog related expenses. Here are some of the most significant costs:

Food and Treats (\$323) – you will want to feed your dog a good quality dog food in a quantity appropriate for their size and activity level. Costs are of course lower for smaller dogs and higher for larger dogs. In addition you will want to supplement their food with bones, rawhide, and the occasional treat.

Travel and Boarding (\$495) – when you vacation you are either going to want to take your dog with you or have someone take care of them for you. If you don't have the luxury of having a trusted friend or family member nearby that will take care of your dog, a good boarding facility will be a godsend. But, costs add up

quickly with daily rates running from \$30-60 per night.

Medications (\$137) – most dogs are on medication to protect them against internal and external parasites like worms and fleas. Most of these products are usually dosed according to your dog's bodyweight and will be more expensive for bigger dogs.

Routine Veterinary (\$225) – a yearly checkup along with vaccinations are important preventative care measures to ensure your dog stays healthy and to catch small problems before they become big.

Non-routine Veterinary (\$532) – the biggest surprise in these statistics for most dog owners is the cost of non-routine procedures. When illness or accidents strike the costs can add up very quickly. A few x-rays and treatment for a broken leg or your dog swallowing an object can quickly surpass \$1,000. You won't get these costs every year but when these costs strike they can be very sizeable. Non-routine veterinary costs tend to be higher for older dogs. A good dog health insurance policy will help you absorb some of those expenses, but all policies have caps and deductibles so you still need an emergency fund for health care.

Grooming (\$87) – costs associated with caring for your dog's coat vary significantly by breed. Some short hair dogs need nothing more than an occasional brushing, while some long hair breeds need a standing appointment with the groomer.

Non Consumables (\$370) – your dog needs a few basics like a leash, collar, crate, bed, and two bowls. But, are you going to be one of those dog owners that needs to splurge on their dog. This is definitely one place where dog owners could save. An old

comforter is just as good as a \$200 memory foam mattress from the dog's perspective. But, if your reality is going to be that buying your dog a new winter coat every season brings you happiness, then budget it in.

Training (\$35) – this is one place where we think most new dog owners would be a lot happier if they spent a little more time and money. Especially if you are a first time dog owner, having someone with a bit more experience help you work through the trouble spots will make life together a whole lot more fun.

Rescue Dog Considerations

Finally think about whether you want a rescue dog. Taking a dog from an animal shelter saves a life. Adopting a dog that is a little older and trained will be easier to transition to your home than a new puppy. But, there are some disadvantages that you should be aware of:

First, adopted dogs can come with behavioral problems. A good shelter will do their best to identify dogs with problems, but sometimes they will only be apparent when you bring the dog home. For example, a somewhat common problem among abused dogs is a fear of men. Working with your dog to overcome these problems is rewarding, but very challenging.

Second, some dogs will have physical problems. Again the shelter will identify most problems, but often they will be latent and you will only discover them when you take the dog home or even several years later when the condition becomes visible.

Finally, expect the unexpected. A purebred puppy from a reputable breeder will show variation but will tend to have a body and

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temperament that are true to type. Shelter dogs have a lot more variation. As a veterinarian, I have observed that shelter puppies like nothing more than to mock the predictions of both owners and veterinarians. That little puppy that everyone thought was going to be 30 pounds will be 50. Even grown dogs will surprise you, acting in a very different way once they get settled in at home than they did in the shelter. That shy little lab mix can come out of her shell and become a fiercely protective dog once she establishes her own territory.

So take these few weeks before you make the decision to adopt to think through whether a dog fits with your situation. If you have room in your life for a dog, do consider adopting a dog from your local shelter. You'll have a loyal companion for life, and you will



One place to avoid getting a dog is at a pet store. Some pet stores obtain their pups from puppy mills, where dogs are basically farmed, to obtain pups for sale. In many cases, the dogs are kept in poor conditions and don't receive adequate veterinary care. Dogs are also often bred with less care to avoid genetic abnormalities that may manifest later in life such as hip dysplasia, a painful condition that occurs in larger dog breeds.

feel good, knowing you may have saved his life.

Finnegan's Story

We searched on PetFinder.com when we were ready to adopt a shelter dog. Because my husband had never owned a dog, I researched what I thought to be solid, even-tempered, midsized, short haired dogs. That led us to a beagle at a NJ county animal shelter almost an hour from our home.

Long story short: No attraction between us and beagle - or any of their other dogs in our "category." But while we were there, we found the love of our life in an almost 50-lb., 1.5-year-old, long haired, neutered male border collie (turns out he's an English Setter mix)! His shelter info said he was "very good with children," and we later learned that nothing could be farther from the truth. Luckily, we don't have our own kids, but we are in a neighborhood full of them, and we have a young niece. We've had to learn how to adapt, as well as to try to train him effectively, to deal with it. He was already crate-trained, and trained to fetch and return balls and Frisbees. We actually kept the name he had at the shelter - Finnegan - because we thought that a name change could possibly cause more stress to him - as if the shelter experience wasn't stressful enough!

We are amazed at how many people tell us how gorgeous he is, only to add that "it must be such a chore to clean up his long hair," suggesting to us that this factor could possibly have kept him - and others with same feature - from being adopted at all. What a heartbreaking thought! Believe me, it's not that bad, and we gladly maintain his beautiful coat and

our home without complaint. It is an additional step in cleaning, but we think we're lucky to have him, so it's worth it.

We wanted a dog that we could walk - only to find that our guy needs two lengthy, vigorous walks per day, plus play time indoors or in the yard, to keep him sufficiently exercised.

Again, it was more than we bargained for, but it's worth it. We've also met many more, and become friendly with, our neighbors in the process. This guy has become the greatest thing in the world to a childless couple.

Patrick & Elise

Hamilton, New Jersey



Chapter 2

Two Weeks Before: What Kind of Rescue Dog?

When you have reached the decision that yes, you are going to adopt a dog, you need to think about what type of dog would be best for your family. By taking time to work out a list of preferences, you'll reduce the risk of choosing the wrong dog for you. If you adopt a dog that isn't a good fit for your lifestyle, both you and your dog will be miserable.

The factor to consider is age. Many people adopt a puppy, and enjoy the challenge of raising him to be a well behaved, well adjusted adult. They need more frequent meals than an adult dog, they need to be toilet trained and they also need to learn basic obedience commands. This does take time and patience, and if your day is already full, a puppy may not be for you.

You may be better off adopting a young adult. Although you don't know what sort of training they have had, they are usually not as high maintenance as a pup. Don't think that there's no work involved with an adult dog; he will still have to learn to fit in

with your family's lifestyle, and he'll still need feeding, grooming and exercise.

There are often many "golden oldies" available for adoption. These are dogs who are elderly, and would just love someone to care for them in their senior years. They can still offer affection and companionship, but they may only be with you for a short while. Don't forget that older dogs may have more medical expenses, for example pain relief for arthritis, so if you do adopt one of these old souls, make sure you can afford to keep them comfortable.



Can't stress this enough - listen to your "gut", your "inner voice", whatever you want to call it. Don't let the cute doggy face over-ride that "uh-oh" feeling when adopting. You should feel very comfortable and confident in working with the people at the shelter. Don't be upset or annoyed with a shelter that spends a lot of time working with you before the adoption. Also, a good shelter should have a "return" policy. If there comes a time when you can no longer care for your dog, they should be willing to take the dog back. This is not the case with some, if not all, pounds. So you must be very sure about adopting the right dog for you if you adopt from one.

Linda

Cheshire, Connecticut

Here are some other factors to consider when you're choosing the type of dog you'd like to adopt.

How much yard space do you have? If you live in an apartment, it makes sense to choose a smaller breed. Certainly large breeds may be happy in a smaller home, particularly if they get the exercise they need, but they will take up a lot of space. It can be hard to maneuver around a Great Dane all the time if you live in a one bedroom apartment!

How much can you afford to spend on a dog? As we've mentioned, large dogs cost more than small dogs. They eat more, and they cost more in worming tablets and flea control products. They're also more expensive to neuter. Choose a dog that you know you can afford to take care of, for the rest of his life.

Do you have children, and how old are they? Children can love a dog to death, and can often hurt them by poking eyes and pulling tails. Most breeds will get on well with children, particularly if they've been raised with them from puppyhood. However, some breeds are more protective, and others like to herd and will chase running children. Although these dogs can live happily enough with children, it takes extra commitment and training on your part. You may be better off with a more relaxed dog while your children are young. While we're on the subject of children and dogs, don't ever leave a child unsupervised with a dog, and don't let your child tease or torment an animal. It can lead to tragedy.

How much time do you want to spend grooming your dog? A busy household is much better off with a dog with a short, low maintenance coat. However, there's no reason not to choose a

dog that has a longer coat, providing you're prepared to invest the time and money into looking after it. A long coat that isn't cared for can become matted and knotted, and this can be painful. Short coated dogs are also easier to check for ticks and fleas, quicker to brush, and dry faster after a bath.

Are you an active person? Some dogs are real couch potatoes, and only need a short walk every day. Other dogs will run for 10 miles with you, then want to play ball. Be realistic about how much time you have to exercise a dog, and choose an appropriate breed. A high energy dog that doesn't have the opportunity to burn off that energy will be bored, and that's when you'll have problems with him digging, barking and even escaping from your yard.

What about temperament and intelligence? Smart dogs, such as those in the herding group, need more than just physical exercise. They also need something to do with their minds, or they can develop behavior problems. Don't take on one of these breeds unless you can commit to training him, and perhaps participating in a dog sport such as agility. He will be very unhappy, and so will you. A mixed breed which is part herding dog is likely to be just as high maintenance as a purebred.

Pure breed or crossbreed? Either will make a great pet. The advantage of adopting a purebred dog is that you'll have a better idea of his temperament, trainability and size as an adult. If you're considering a crossbreed, try and work out what breeds may be in his family tree. That may help give you an idea of what he will grow into, but you may still get a surprise when he grows up.

Male or a female dog? If you're adopting a shelter dog, he will probably already be neutered, so it doesn't really matter what sex you choose. Both male and female dogs make great companions.

Just as you didn't rush into the decision to adopt a dog, don't hurry through these questions. Take your time, there really is no rush. The right dog is out there for you, and by thinking seriously

Dutch's Story

Dutch is a Chow/Lab mix and I believe most people were concerned about the Chow. Misconception, she is the most loyal, wonderful dog I have ever known.

I went right to Dutch's cage and told Chad to get an employee. I bent down to her and she put her paw on the cage by my hand. We "purchased her right away". She was approximately 25 lbs, malnourished and very scared. I mentioned about the crawling to me. I spent a lot of time on the floor with her. I understand about the Alpha dog theory but for a rescue animal establishing love and trust is key.

Six years ago we had triplet girls. Honestly when we came home Dutch got as little sleep as I did. Every time one of the babies cried she would run down the stairs to check out what was going on.

I feel like she knows she is my dog. To this day she will not get up in the morning until I get up. Chad will call for her to go outside and she stays with me until I get up, even if I were to sleep in.

When I walk Dutch, and she feels another person is getting too close, she gets right in front of me and starts with the hair up. Very protective. I have had 6 dogs in my life and the most wonderful have been the 2 from animal rescue.

If a person is considering adopting, I recommend trying to spend as much time as possible with the dog. With your dog on a leash walk past the other cages, and determine how the dog reacts.

Nicki

Twinsburg, Ohio



Chapter 3

One Week Before: Preparing Your Home

If you have never owned a dog before, or it has been some time since you had a dog in your life, you may need to make some modifications to your home and yard to keep your new pet safe. You may also need to buy a few items so you have everything your new family member needs, before he arrives.

Modifying Your Home

Dogs are great company, and it's lovely to have them relaxing in your home with you. But, it can be stressful in those early days and weeks until your new dog becomes familiar with his new environment and learns the ropes. Until then you want to be especially careful to make the house as safe as possible for your dog. The process is very similar to childproofing your home. You want to carefully examine your home for potential hazards for your dog. To make things easier for both of you, here are some guidelines you may wish to follow:

Window Coverings. Look at your window coverings, and take stock of any potential hazards. Long cords may be a strangulation risk, and I know from personal experience that dogs can get tangled in vertical blinds. Those ornate tassels that look so good on your curtains are just asking to be played with!

Furniture. If your dog is going to be welcome on the furniture, you may want to use a throw or slipcover to protect the fabric. Make sure the throw is made of a washable fabric so it's easy to launder. Long toenails can scratch leather or vinyl furniture, so keep your dog's nails well manicured. On the other hand, if your dog won't be allowed on the couch with you, give him a soft bed that he can call his own. It too should be machine washable.

Floor Coverings. Give some thought to purchasing some inexpensive rugs for the floor until your new dog is toilet trained. They may not match your decor, but they can protect your carpet from soiling. You can throw the rugs away when you don't need them.

Children. If you have young children, keep their toys well out of reach of your dog. Small toys can cause intestinal obstructions if they are swallowed. I have known many teddy bears that have lost an eye when left within reach of an enthusiastic dog. Start reminding your children that they need to be tidy, for the sake of the dog and their toys.

Chemicals. Make sure any household chemicals such as cleaning products, fertilizers, and mouse baits are well out of reach. Some dogs like to chew, and if they decide to chew on these, they may become very sick. Also beware that some foods such as chocolate can be dangerous to dogs, so you want to remove all those candy

bowls you have around the house. Your dog and your waist line will thank you.

Preparing Your Yard

Even indoor dogs enjoy a romp in the yard, and the most important thing to check is that your fence is secure. The fence should be high enough so that your new dog won't be able to jump over it. Make sure that you also walk around the fence and repair any spots where a dog may dig underneath and escape. It's a good idea to put some chicken wire around the bottom of your fence, and bury the edge inwards. This can help prevent any attempts at escape. If possible also secure the front yard, some dogs have a tendency to bolt whenever that front door is opened.

Gather Your Supplies

There are some things your dog can't do without, and it's important that you plan ahead and have these ready for him when he comes home. Here are the essentials you should purchase for your new dog.

Leash. A six foot leash is a good size. It should be soft and flexible, and comfortable in your hand. Make sure the clip is secure and easy for you to open and close. Don't get me started on flexi-leashes, if you don't understand why it is a bad idea you may want to think about adopting a gold fish.

Collar and ID Tag. You won't be able to purchase a collar and tag for your dog until you have chosen your new pet. However, do plan on buying both before you pick him up from the shelter.

Bowls for Food and Water. Metal bowls and plastic bowls are

the most popular, and are very durable. Ceramic bowls are available in many designs and are often more attractive. The drawbacks are that they are usually more expensive, and they break easily.

Bed. There are so many options when it comes to choosing a bed for your dog. If your dog lives indoors, you may prefer a soft comfortable beanbag or a fluffy cushion for his bed. Outdoor beds need to be more weatherproof, so they may not be as luxurious. A metal frame bed with vinyl will last better in sunshine and rain, and still keep your dog off the hard ground.

Crate. Crate training is a great way to create a secure spot for you dogs and ease them into home life. Their crate will become the dog's den, a place where he can have a break from the hustle and bustle of a busy household. It's also very helpful in toilet training him. When you choose a crate, make sure it's not too heavy, so you can easily move it to clean underneath. Also, the tray in the bottom should be removable for the same reason. It should be large enough so your dog can comfortably stand up, turn around and lie down. Put a soft bed in the crate so your dog is comfortable.

Brush and shampoo. How much grooming your dog will need depends on the length of his coat. Even the shortest coat will look better after being brushed. At the very least, buy a brush that will remove any loose or dead hair. If your dog has a longer coat, you may need a coat stripper as well. Choose a shampoo that is mild and soap free, so it doesn't strip the oils from your dog's coat.

Food. You may have a preferred food you'd like to feed your

dog, but make sure you also have the same food that he is being fed in the shelter. Initially, feed him just the shelter food and each day, reduce the amount of shelter food in his bowl and increase



I brought Maddy to the shelter's outdoor run space while my husband got Hunter out of the car so they could meet. They did their brief introductions and then Maddy burned some energy running around, glad to be out of her kennel. Their meeting was uneventful and indicated to us that we would have no problem introducing Maddy into our household. We took her home with us that night.

I'm convinced that introducing Hunter and Maddy on neutral territory helped with the transition; if we had simply walked in one night with Maddy, Hunter would have been less accepting of her and more prone to defend her territory. In fact, when friends have visited with new dogs of their own, we take our dogs out front to meet them before letting them come inside and it has worked out really well.

Cheryl

Danvers, Massachusetts

the amount of the new food. It should take a week or so to completely change his diet. This will help prevent diarrhea associated with suddenly feeding him a different food.

Toys. Whether it be tug toys, balls or squeaky animals, dogs love to play with toys. Choose a variety, because until you have him home, you won't know his preferences. Make sure the toys you choose are strong enough to resist being played with; your choice will depend on the size and strength of your new dog. Also take a look at some puzzle-type toys that will mentally engage your dog. A toy that will exercise his brain is a great distraction if you need to leave the dog alone at home unsupervised for extended periods of time.

Health Care

If you don't already take your pets to a veterinary clinic, spend some time choosing a veterinarian for your dog. Ask for referrals from friends and neighbors, and make arrangements to go and meet the staff. Remember, this is the person you are trusting with the care of your best friend, and you have to be totally comfortable with your choice.

Make an appointment for your new dog to visit your veterinarian within a week of him coming home. She will make sure that your dog is in good health, and discuss any needed vaccinations, flea medications or worm treatment. Take this opportunity to ask any questions you may have about dog care.

Learn the route to your vet and the nearest 24 hour emergency clinic. Program both numbers and addresses into your cell phone, and your GPS. If you are ever unfortunate enough to have an

emergency you will be glad that all that information is available at your fingertips. Make sure all family member have this information.

Care and Training

Dogs learn best by repetition and consistency. They need to know their boundaries, it makes them feel secure. Sit down with your family before you bring your dog home, and lay out the ground rules. You must agree on whether any parts of the house are out of bounds, if your dog is allowed on the furniture, and if he can be given food scraps from the table. If he's not allowed on the couch, but Mom sneaks him up when nobody is looking, he will end up feeling confused.

Work out who is responsible for feeding, bathing and exercising your new dog. Find out where and when the local obedience classes are, so you can start training your new dog as soon as he has settled in. You're much more likely to enjoy your dog if he's well mannered, and regular training is the best way to achieve this.

It will be a busy and exciting time when your new dog comes home for the first time. If you are well prepared, you can fully enjoy his arrival, knowing he will have everything he needs to be healthy and happy.

Lissa's Story

My dog was a 5 year old lab mix, just a little over 100 pounds. Don't know if you know this, but statistically, black dogs are under-adopted from shelters, and when they're bigger and older, it's extra strikes against them. So while I didn't necessarily go looking for a big dog, I did go intending to adopt a black dog and wanted one a bit more mature as I was in an apartment. Lissa had been found, initially reunited with her family, and then they brought her back to the shelter a couple of weeks later saying they were moving and couldn't keep her. That was a little over a year before I came to the shelter, and the shelter owner said she went into a depression as soon as she saw the family was leaving her there. So what I found at the shelter was a very depressed, sad, extremely shy 100+ pound dog. My initial thought was 'nobody's going to pick you, you need to come home with me'. So the main issue I had was in getting her to understand that she had a 'forever home'. When I first adopted her, she did have dental issues that required four teeth pulled, and ear infections that required antibiotics. Beyond that, the issues were emotional. It really took 2-3 months before she moved from what seemed to be 'shock', to quiet obedience. She slowly went from looking at me each day as 'oh, it's you again' to slowly registering 'oh, it's YOU again!'. I spent most of the first year trying to read her clues: it became apparent that she had been abused. She flinched greatly at loud noises, became easily frightened and did not like being around any other people, in particular men. That first year was a slow progression to get her to trust

me enough to stay around other people. It was in fact almost 7 months in before I even heard her bark. There was a time when I would welcome any 'dog' behavior, even if it wasn't a good thing, just to see her following her own nature.

Lori

Asheville, North Carolina



Chapter 4

Adoption Day: Selecting Your Dog

It's time!

After the hard work of considering whether or not you can care for a dog, and preparing for his arrival, it's now time to go to the shelter to choose your new dog.

Before you go, remind yourself of the decisions you've made regarding your new dog's breed, size and grooming needs. Animal shelters are full of dogs with soft brown eyes and wagging tails who would absolutely love to come home with you. It's important to avoid being swayed by emotion when you see them. Remember, the lifespan of the average American dog is 12 years. That's a long time to live with a dog that just doesn't fit your family, and the last thing you want to do is to take him back to the shelter where he came from.

Go to the shelter when you're not in a hurry, so you can take as long as you need to find your new family member. If possible,

take your family with you. If you're not very experienced with dogs, you may want to take a friend who is more knowledgeable, so they can offer advice.

Your first port of call on arriving at the shelter is to meet the staff. Chat with them about your lifestyle, and what you're looking for in a dog. The staff at good shelters will be pleased you've taken the time to do this homework, and will gladly help you choose the right dog for you. After all, they don't want to see dogs returned to them because they didn't fit in with their adoptive family.

Meeting the Dogs

Walk around the shelter with the staff member, and watch how the dogs react to you. Take note of the ones that meet your criteria. Don't consider any dog that shows signs of aggression; these dogs need a handler with experience in dog behavior and training. Similarly, very timid dogs take a lot of work, and should only be adopted by knowledgeable people with lots of time to invest in them. Ideally, look for a dog that readily approaches you and appears friendly and outgoing.

Ask the staff member for their opinion on which dogs may suit your family. They have been caring for these dogs, and will have an understanding of their personality. They can give you insights that may affect your choices. Check back through your list of desired criteria and eliminate any dogs from consideration that do not meet these criteria, now is not the time to decide that you have different needs! Narrow down your selection to two or three dogs that seem like they'd be a good match for you.

Spend some time individually with each shortlisted dog, and see how you relate to each other. Ask the dog to sit, to see if he

knows any basic obedience commands. If possible take the dog out of the shelter for a walk. The shelter is a very unnatural environment with all the excitement created by all those other dogs in close conditions. Once outside the shelter pet the dog and see how he responds to your touch. Get the dog excited with a ball or another dog and see how quickly he calms down once the stimulus is removed. And see how well he gets on with other members of your family. You aren't going to be able to tell a huge amount from these interactions, they are very artificial and will not perfectly represent how the dog will behave once they get settled at home, but they may give you some clue of future behavior.



One key piece of advice: for those owners who already have a dog at home, bring that dog to the shelter with you so you can see how he/she gets along with the prospective adoptee on neutral territory; don't simply pick out a dog and bring it home to the existing pet's "turf."

Beth

Danvers, Massachusetts

Questions to Ask

Try to find out about the backgrounds of the dogs you are interested in. Ask lots of questions, so you can learn as much about the dogs as possible before you take one of them home.

How long has the dog been there?

How did this dog arrive at the shelter? Was he a stray, or was he given to them by an owner who could no longer care for him?

If the owner took the dog to the shelter, why did she have to do this? Keep in mind that some owners may not be completely honest about this; they may not be comfortable sharing the real reasons with the shelter staff.

Did the dog appear to be abused? Were there any unexplained scars, or was he extremely timid?

Has he already been adopted and brought back to the shelter because he didn't fit in? If so, do they know why?

Have the shelter staff noticed any behavior problems, such as aggression to other animals or being over protective of his food?

Has the dog met any children, and how does he react to them? What about cats? How does he get on with other dogs?

How is his health? When was his last checkup and were any problems found? What is his vaccination status, is he on heartworm prevention and has he been neutered?

The answers to these questions may narrow down your choice, so it's easier to pick the right dog for your family and at the least you want to make an informed choice. Sometimes more than one dog or none of the dogs is perfect for you, and under these circumstances, it's a good idea to go home for the night and think it through. It's quite okay not to take a dog on your first visit to the shelter, and it may even take several visits before you feel confident you've made the right choice.

This all seems like a lot of effort, but it's critical that you do this to make sure both you and your dog end up happy with each other. It is much easier to spend a little extra time finding the right dog for your situation, than spending a lot of time trying to retrain the "wrong" dog so they fit into your situation.

Choosing Your Dog

The hard work has been done, and you're now the proud owner of a dog who is a great match for your family and lifestyle.

There will be a fee associated with his adoption; this is to help cover his feeding and medical care while he was in the shelter. You should receive a pile of paperwork: vaccination records, neutering certificate if he has been neutered, adoption agreement, and microchip records. If you're not clear about any of the paperwork, ask the shelter staff to explain it to you.

After this has been done, it's time to take him home!

Many people who adopt a dog from a shelter make their decision based on emotion and cuteness, rather than on research and forethought. This is fraught with danger. Do your homework, take your time and you'll end up owning the very best dog for you.

Buddy's Story

Here's something for all those people who think you don't want to adopt a dog with "other people's troubles." We just adopted a shelter dog who is the most wonderful creature. We were walking past a pet shop and my husband said, "I miss having a pet so much I can't stand it." I had no idea he felt the same way I did! We started thinking about a small dog. Neither of our adult children have pets and perhaps they could take the dog while we are in South Africa. That night I was on the SPCA website for Northern Virginia. And there was Buddy. An 8 year-old Pomeranian mix who basically likes to watch TV on the sofa and ride in the car. BINGO. We figured he could come to NJ with us and visit my parents, who truly miss having their own dog but could not care for one right now. Buddy was the pet of an older couple who could not take him with them when they moved to a retirement home. We were thrilled to hear that the SPCA lets you take a dog for a 2-week trial period. We picked Buddy up hoping he was going to be as easy-going as he appeared to be. Two potential deal-breakers: he would bark a lot, particularly at night; he would damage the boxes of books that are all over our house which we are collecting for a library in our school in South Africa.

What we discovered was Buddy is everything promised and more. He is loving, loyal (won't leave our sides), and sweet. He does not scratch or bite anything and is completely house broken. The only time he barks is when he is excited as we

put on his leash to go outside which we were able to quickly curb. We initially gated him in the laundry room when we had to leave for a few hours, but quickly saw he was just fine with the run of the house. He was used to sleeping in his owners' bed, but was trained very quickly to sleep on a sofa in our bedroom. He sleeps through the night and waits for us to get up before he comes over to the bed. He then sits calmly while we shower and waits for us to go downstairs to take him outside.

We can't wait to take him to see my parents, and they can't wait either. We got the lucky end of this deal - a well-trained, loving and trusting dog who is so happy to again have owners who can love him back.

Eileen

Springfield, Virginia



Chapter 5

Going Home: Introducing Your Dog to the Home

When you bring your new dog home from the shelter, it's a day for celebration. However, look at things from your dog's point of view. He has left a busy, noisy environment 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 on a weekend, or at a time when you can spend a day or two with him. Don't bring him home then go off to work the next day. 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 there to welcome him. It may be quite overwhelming, so ask your friends and neighbors to give him a few days to settle in before they come visiting.

Before you actually take your dog 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.

Introducing Your Dog To Your Home

Your dog should be treated as a member of your family, so 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 realize 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, make sure they have lots of delicious treats. Your dog's first impression of your family and friends should be positive. Allow the dog to make the first approach, and give him a treat. Don't try and pat him straight away, allow him to sniff you and explore you, all the while treating him generously.

Introducing Your New Dog to Your Old 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.



Don't be afraid of adopting a special needs pet; just make sure you have the extra money, patience and time necessary to help him turn into a loved family member. If you don't have those, do yourselves (and the dog) a favor, and choose a different dog.

Ilene

Grayling, Michigan

If your old dog is well socialized and has had some obedience training, there's not likely to be a problem. However, follow these steps to make the introduction go as smoothly as possible:

1. Try to introduce the dogs on neutral territory. Go to a dog park or a neighbor's yard, so there is no territorial behavior to get in the way, however make sure it is fenced. 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, should there be a problem.
-

2. Have both dogs on a secure collar (not a choke collar or a prong collar) for the introduction. A Gentle Leader or other head halter is a better idea still; you'll have much more head control than with a collar.
 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. Allow one dog at a time to walk over to the other, and let them approach the other dog in his own time. You can expect them to sniff each other's bottom when they meet; try to avoid tangling their leashes so you still have control over their heads. If there is any hostility, tell the cranky dog to "Settle down" in a calm, firm voice.
 5. Most dogs are quite happy to have a new friend, but some may want to squabble. If there is a fight, don't pull the dogs apart by the leash. The leashes will probably get tangled up, and pulling them won't have much effect, except perhaps to pull the dogs closer! Each person should grab one dog by the hind legs and pull them apart. If there is going to be hostility, you may need professional help to teach your dogs to live in harmony.
 6. When your dogs begin to relax around each other, let go of the leashes, but don't take them off yet. That way you can still grab them if you need to. At this point, take them home, but keep the leashes on. You may find that there are tensions that did not arise while at the neutral territory.
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7. 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.

Dogs are pack animals, and enjoy having a canine playmate. By carefully introducing them, both dogs will 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.

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

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, and most dog bites to children are inflicted by their own usually loving family pet.

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 your dog for a walk.

Possible Problems

Even a housebroken dog can make mistakes, particularly when they're 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.

Shelter 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 behavior, 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 aggressive when he arrives at your home, don't molly coddle him to make it all okay. This is inadvertently rewarding this behavior, and you'll be making him more likely to continue to be frightened or cranky. If this behavior 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 also 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 behavior, 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.

Poncho's story

Any time an animal - human or non-human makes changes in his or her life, there is going to be an adaptation period. Dogs that are adopted from shelters and rescue groups are no different. For some, it could be minimal - meaning, he or she adapts immediately and welcomes his or her new environment. For others, it can take a bit longer - especially if there are other added stressors including different people or other pets, or just a different lifestyle. We found with our own dog Poncho, there was a “honeymoon” period. He was lively and energetic, enjoyed playing and being with us. But looking back we realized he was a little more “skittish” with unfamiliar noises. Once he became used to our environment (home and neighborhood) he settled in, started to ignore or “recover” more quickly if he heard something new. I would suggest that for those adopting shelter animals, wait for them to settle in before “labeling” with behavior traits. Sometimes true personalities don't appear for a little while, after settling in and confidence building. Similar to humans when they first start dating.

Joan

Certified Professional Dog Trainer

Ventura, California



Chapter 6

First Night: Settling Down for Bed Time

You and your new dog have survived your first day together, and it's now time for you both to go to bed. You can expect your dog to be a little unsettled during his first night in his new home.

Where should your dog sleep? It's a good idea to allow him to sleep in your bedroom, so you are close to him should he need you during the night. You can either make him a comfortable bed in his crate, or tether him to the one spot in your room. That way he's not allowed to wander the house at night, which can lead to toileting accidents or destruction of shoes and other belongings. Don't allow him to sleep in your bed in these early days, until he is well aware of his position in the household pack.

As an alternative, you may wish to put his crate in another part of the house, or confine him to a separate room such as the laundry. Whatever you do, don't leave him to his own devices in your home.

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

It's not uncommon for dogs to cry at night if they're a bit afraid or uncertain. This will stop as he becomes more comfortable in his new environment. Also, if your dog is young, he may not have a very big bladder, and he may need to go outside for the toilet.

If your dog is crying for attention, you can reach over and calm him briefly with a quick pat. However, don't overdo it, or he will keep on whimpering. If the noise continues, you can tell him to "Be quiet" in a firm but gentle tone. You may have to ignore any further crying, so he learns that whimpering doesn't get him the attention he wants.

Make sure you are consistent with your reaction to his whimpering. There's no point in patting him when he cries one night, then ignoring him the next. That will only confuse him, and he'll take longer to learn what you expect from him at night time.

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.



Our main issue with Enrique has been his absolute fear of everything - he was so skittish when we got him that he would not go in the living room if the TV was on, and he'd jump every time we'd turn a light on or off. We live in the city and he used to be scared to death when a bus would pass us. Basically, we're just being patient with him and trying to show him that he's safe now. He has overcome most of his fears.

Liza

Boston, Massachusetts

Advice from Molly's Dad

Adopting a dog is one of the most rewarding things you can do if you are prepared for the commitment. After volunteering at a local animal shelter and adopting a golden retriever mix along the way, here is my advice:

Be honest with yourself. Adopting any animal is a commitment; you will have a living organism depending on you to survive. Beyond the staples of food, water and shelter your pet needs love, attention and exercise. If you have commitments or health issues that limit your ability to provide any of the above, do you and your potential pooch a favor, buy a fish instead.

Do some research. Different breeds have different temperaments and tendencies. Figure out what breeds match what you're able to offer and start narrowing down which kind of dog makes sense for you. Some breeds are high maintenance and need tons of exercise. Others are fiercely independent. Bigger breeds can clear off your table with a couple wags of the tail and knock over small children if excited. Many shelter dogs may be mixed breeds, but research can at least give you an idea of what to expect.

Mentally prepare yourself for the shelter experience. Shelters provide a great community service for displaced animals, but aren't four star accommodations. While it depends on the shelter, most will have a couple dogs per cage and a number of cages in a concrete-walled room. This means it will be

loud. While the staff and volunteers clean cages at regular intervals, there can be poop or pee in the cages. Keep in mind most dogs there have been abandoned or lost so they are all a little confused and scared by the environment and their recent experience. They may be entirely different outside of the cage. Spending time alone with them may mean a world of difference.

Learn the layout and ask questions. At the shelter where I volunteered, the staff fills out a card for each dog that indicates the basics - when the dog arrived, sex, breed(s), whether they like kids/other animals, and other information about demeanor and temperament. While you won't ever know the full history of a dog, this can at least provide a solid background. Ask anyone on staff what they know about a dog and follow all rules to get to know your potential pet – don't just open the cage. Finally, learn what the dog needs before they can go home with you, including shots at the shelter and the type of food and environment that works best for them. Learn what type of follow-up services the shelter offers.

Be patient. Every adopted pet has a history you may never know. Many dogs might be nervous about being abandoned again, as ours is five years after being adopted. Most issues can be worked out with training and patience as long as the other essentials noted above are in place. Like many things, you get what you give. The more love and attention your pet gets the happier you both will be.

Chad

Boise, Idaho



Chapter 7

Day Two:

Feeding and Toileting Routines

Dogs are creatures of habit, and are happiest when they have a familiar schedule or routine to follow. This needn't be cast in stone, but in general, they should be fed and walked at a similar time each day.

There are two main areas in which you should establish routines for your dog: feeding and toileting.

Feeding

Frequency of meals: How often should you feed your dog? In the early stages, you should feed him as often as the staff did in the shelter. That may be once a day, or twice a day. By doing this, you reduce the chance of diarrhea associated with a change in feeding regimen.

Most people prefer to feed their dogs twice a day. Your dog may already be on this schedule, or you may want to change from a once daily meal to feeding him twice daily. If so, for the first few

days divide his meal so that he gets most of his food at the usual time, and only a small amount for his second meal. Over the course of seven to ten days, gradually even out the amount he is being fed so that eventually, he is having two meals a day.

Give your dog only ten minutes to finish his meal, and remove any leftovers. If he doesn't want it, he has been given too much. Overfeeding him will lead to obesity and its associated health problems: arthritis, heart disease and diabetes.

Similarly, don't leave food out for your dog to have an all you can eat doggie buffet. This too will lead to excessive weight gain.

Young puppies may need three meals a day, until they are three to four months old.

What to feed your dog: Again, feed your dog the same food he was given in the shelter, to avoid diarrhea. Gradually transition to your preferred food over the course of seven to ten days, by increasing the amount of his new food and reducing the amount of his old food each day.

When it comes to dog food, you get what you pay for. Cheap foods have a higher cereal content, whereas more expensive foods have higher quality ingredients with more meat content. The more pricey foods are also highly digestible so you need to feed them less, and they produce less feces. You don't need to buy the most expensive food, a kibble that is middle of the range is fine. You may have to experiment a bit to find one you like.

After meals, let your dog rest for an hour or so. Don't run around with him, or take him for a walk. Dogs, particularly those with a deep chest, are at risk of bloat if they exercise too soon after a

meal, and this can be life threatening.

How much to feed your dog: The feeding guide on the bag of dog food is a good starting point when it comes to working out how much to feed your dog. However, it is only a guide. Watch your dog, and adjust how much you feed him based on his body condition.

You should be able to feel your dog's ribs as you run your hands over his body. Also, his abdomen should be tucked up. If he's a bit curvaceous, cut back on the amount you are feeding him.



I noticed very quickly that JoJo was afraid of children and skateboarders. I finally accepted his fears like mine of snakes and focused on safety. We work basic commands every day: “sit”, “stay”, “JoJo, come”, “JoJo, let’s go!” and “JoJo, heel!” (always rewarded with a small treat) and walk a lot. I think the combination of exercise and consistent training gives us both the confidence to walk safely past his fears.

Johanna

Southampton, New York

Treats

Many people associate treats with love - they give their dogs a yummy snack to show them how much they care. This can be killing them with kindness, as many dog treats are high in fat. Instead

of showing your affection with food, why not give him some extra attention or play time? He'll appreciate that just as much.

If you want to give your dog a treat, keep them for when you want to train him. Your dog will quickly learn to sit, drop and stay if there is a delicious reward in it for him.

Toileting

In America, over 90% of dogs live inside the home with their family. This means that if you rescue a dog, you'll have to go through the same toilet training procedures that you would if you had a puppy. This will ensure he learns exactly where you want him to go to the toilet.

Most dogs are fully toilet trained within a matter of weeks, however it can take longer if he has developed bad habits in the past. Having a regular feeding schedule will allow you to better predict when your dog needs to go outside, and will reduce the risk of accidents.

For quickest results, follow these simple rules for toilet training your dog.

1. Never punish him if you catch him going to the toilet in the wrong place. This will only teach him that he mustn't be caught, and he will become more secretive in his toileting habits.
 2. Don't punish him if you come home and find an accident. He won't connect your anger with his toileting, and it won't teach him anything. Not only that, it will teach him that you are someone to be feared.
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3. Never leave your dog unattended inside. Keep him on a leash and bring him with you wherever you go. If you see him sniffing or looking like he needs to go to the toilet, take him outside to his toilet area, and praise him enthusiastically when he goes.
4. If you can't watch your dog, confine him in his crate. Dogs don't usually soil their den, so he's not likely to go to the toilet there. Make sure you take him outside regularly and praise him for toileting in the right place.
5. If you live in an apartment, you may prefer to use pre-treated toileting pads which encourage your dog to go to the toilet on them. If so, the training technique is the same.
6. When your dog is reliably toileting in the right spot, you can start to add a verbal command to this behavior. As he goes to the toilet, tell him to "Do your business" or "Potty". It won't take long for him to associate the word with going to the toilet, and you can then use the word when you need him to go in a hurry, such as before bed time.
7. Make sure you take him outside to go to the toilet even if it's raining. He needs to know that he must go outside to toilet, whether or not the weather is bad.

Dogs feel most secure when they can predict their daily routine. Initially, work out a schedule and be prepared to adjust it in those first few weeks with a new dog. It won't take long until you have a routine that suits both you and your dog.

Sunny's Story

On February 11, 2005 Holiday was 'delivered' to my home, bathed, and wearing a new green collar. And there we were. I decided to change her name to Sunny...she reminded me of a ray of sunshine. Since, Sunny has lived up to what her name implies but we sure went through difficult times together.

Sunny suffered from severe separation anxiety. This manifested in some destructive behavior (chewing door knobs and door frames, barking incessantly when left alone at night, urinating indoors when left alone at any time of the day) and apprehension when meeting strangers, be they human, canine, feline, or other. She also managed to escape several crates, much to my amazement. All recommended advice seemed to fail. I had studied everything I could get my hands on about separation anxiety and how to combat it and tried it all, including medication (Clomicalm, a product similar to Prozac). Our progress was slow, and at times, hardly noticeable to me and those (humans) around me.

If I had to give advice to someone facing a similar situation with a shelter dog, it would consist of three words: love, patience, and time. Today, after five years of togetherness, bonding, and consistent training with the positive reinforcement approach and a clicker, Sunny is a changed dog. She works as a certified therapy dog at a day care facility for senior citizens in my neighborhood. She has also visited schools and hospitals. She stays home alone for up to seven hours with

no ‘accidents.’ She loves her crate and sleeps in it every night with the door wide open. No more barking, just snoring! She attends doggie day care on a regular basis and has become a favorite with the staff and other canines. She meets new people with curiosity and openness. She wants to sniff every dog we meet on our walks, and exhibits patience and playfulness with all of them, even young pups who will jump all over her. She is obedient yet delightfully mischievous. And while we still have a ways to go (she is overly protective of me, especially when I have visitors in my home; she will chase squirrels, and run away from sprinklers and big trucks), Sunny is a wonderful companion.

How exactly did the change occur? I had to be very patient, and creative. I used a spray to deter her from chewing the door knob and door frame in the kitchen, where she stays when I leave for work and errands or go to bed at night (Bitter Apple). When Sunny barked for hours every single night, I waited until she finally stopped. Only then would I go to her and reward her for being silent. When I came home to an ‘accident’ in the house (which happened daily for a long, long time), I took her outside right away and praised her for ‘doing her business.’ Then, I would quietly clean up the mess. I took treats with me on all our walks. When meeting strangers (of all ages!), I asked them to assist me in training Sunny, and to please give her a treat. It did not take all too long and Sunny began to approach people with more interest and less skepticism. I introduced her to as many canines (of all sizes!) as possible and stayed calm and relaxed when they sniffed each

other (I had read that any tension in the handler goes right through the leash into the dog to create anxiety and potential aggression). Soon, Sunny started to look forward to such encounters. Once I had figured out that we needed a molded crate (she escaped various wire crates), I motivated her to go inside with her very favorite treats and closed the door. I left the door closed for a brief while only, then let Sunny out again. Each time, I let a bit more time pass before opening the door again. I never used the crate to punish, or for 'time outs' (which dogs do not understand).

I am convinced that with love, patience, and time, almost any dog can become a woman's best friend and fit in with different life situations. Commitment, some creativity, and staying power are crucial elements in this process. Many shelter dogs can be adopted with ease...but in case a dog exhibits difficult behavior, or will not adjust quickly to its new life, there is hope!

Katrin

Los Angeles, California



Chapter 8

Day Three:

Exercising Your Dog

If you take home a rescue dog, you are committed to meeting all his needs. That includes his need for exercise.

Lack of exercise can lead to obesity, heart disease and poor muscle tone. It can also lead to behavioral problems because your dog hasn't expended its excess energy, and is bored. A dog who gets enough exercise is more likely to be calm while at home, and tends not to be anxious when he's left on his own.

If you spend time exercising your dog, you'll have a lot of fun together and improve your relationship with him.

Before you start any exercise program with your dog, have him checked by your veterinarian to make sure there's no reason you can't increase his activity level. He may need to lose a little weight first, or he may be too young to do too much physical activity. Keep an eye on the weather - dogs don't sweat like we do, and can suffer from heat stress in warm conditions.

How Much Exercise Does Your Dog Need?

Don't think for a minute that owning a big backyard will mean your dog will get enough exercise. Dogs tend not to exercise themselves, and will lie around waiting for you to play with him. This means that you need to make the time to be active with him.

Different breeds, and in fact different individual dogs, have different exercise needs. Some dogs are happy with a walk every day. Others, especially the working breeds, need a lot more exercise to be satisfied. Aim to give your dog at least one exercise session a day, and target the type and amount of exercise to his individual needs.

Your dog is telling you he's had enough when he is panting heavily, and no longer actively participating in the activity. He may no longer bring back a ball, or he may lie down under a shady tree during your run. Be watchful for these signals because over-exercising him when he's tired may lead to injury.

Methods of Exercising Your Dog

There are many ways of exercising your dog, and you're sure to find one that you also enjoy.

Walking. Keep your dog on a leash as you walk, for his own safety. Walking is a healthy activity for both of you, and is a great way to unwind at the end of a busy day. You may find, depending on your dog, that you can't walk far enough to tire him out. If that's the case, you may need to take up running or biking with him, or play with him when you get home.

Running. You don't need to run long distances to use up your dog's energy. Again, keep him on a leash and when you are start-

ing, stick to grass, sand and other soft surfaces until his pads toughen. Dogs are like people in that they need to build up to a distance, so use a walk/run program such as the Couch to 5k (www.c25k.com) with him, until he is fit enough to go further.



Since these dogs have already been given away, it's really important to ask the shelter what behavioral/health problems each of the potential pets might be experiencing. Also, if the pets are leash trained, potty trained, etc. Decide before-hand if you want a puppy, or an older dog and how you want to go! Get as much background info as possible. From there, families REALLY need to discuss and think about medical, obedience costs that might be required and if they are willing to put forth the effort to work with the dog and ultimately keep him/her. Giving away the pet shouldn't be considered an option. Good shelters should be helpful and honest and there are plenty around if a family doesn't get "warm fuzzies" with one.

Illene

Palatine, Illinois

Cycling. You can purchase accessories for your bicycle that hold your dog's leash as you ride. This allows you to run your dog longer distances than you may be able to go on foot. Your dog will need some time to get used to being close to your bike, so spend a

few days just riding up and down your sidewalk before you venture further afield. This is an advanced skill so take your time.

Swimming. This is particularly good for dogs with sore legs, because they can exercise without putting any weight on them. Your dog can swim in the ocean or a pool, and it will also keep him cool as he works out.

Retrieving. Playing fetch is a great option if you prefer not to exercise yourself, or if your dog needs to burn up a bit more energy after a walk. Your dog can fetch a ball or other toy, for as long as he wants or as long as you're prepared to throw it for him. You can teach your dog to play Frisbee with you, and this is a great party trick for when you go to the beach. Whatever you play with, keep your throws low and don't allow your dog to leap in the air to catch his toy, particular on hard surfaces. This is a recipe for knee injuries.

Dog Sports. Dog agility, lure coursing and flyball are fast sports that keep a dog physically and mentally in great condition. There are clubs all over the country, and both you and your dog will have a lot of fun training and competing in these sports. They are particularly good for improving your mental connection with your dog, and a great way to build your relationship.

Exercising Your Dog's Mind

Dogs are intelligent creatures, and need mental stimulation to avoid boredom related behavioral problems. You can play some fun games with him to keep him thinking; alternatively consider purchasing toys such as the Buster Cube. You can put his kibble into this cube, and he will spend hours working out how to get it out.

Other fun games include:

Find it - take one of your dog's favorite treats, and hide it in a room. Tell your dog to "Seek" and encourage him to search for his treat. You can also hide his favorite toy, but make sure you let your dog play with the toy before you hide it again. This will keep him interested in it for next time.

Tunnel game - make a tunnel out of large cardboard boxes and encourage your dog to go through it.

Find your dinner - hide the kibble for your dog's dinner in your backyard and help him scrounge around until he finds it. This can keep him busy for quite a while.

Pick a bowl - put a treat under one of three bowls and see if your dog can sniff it out. Watch him try and turn the bowl over to get at the treat.

It does take time and effort to exercise your dog's body and mind, but it's worth it. A tired dog is a happy dog, and is much less likely to get into mischief.

Millie's Story

My mom had dementia so the dog got taken on quite a few walks every day. The neighbors told me if my mom took more than 2 walks a day (that was mom's social time to visit everyone in the neighborhood, and walks lasted about 2 hours) Millie would get to the first stop sign down the street, and would just stop walking and sit down, mom would have to turn around and go home. Millie trained mom pretty quick that 2 walks a day was enough.

My mother passed away in 2008, and we brought the dog to our home immediately. We couldn't bear the thought of her being somewhere without our family because she had changed so much in 2 years. At least she had familiar people, even though it was a new environment. We are way more social than my mom, so she went through a lot of changes again.

1. We tried to minimize too much noise, and too many people around her for the first few months, because it was really stressful for her, she would actually throw up if she got too stressed.
2. Millie needed a new bed so I took her to Pet's Mart, and couldn't believe all she wanted to do was get in the dog crates.

So a new lesson was learned by us. In hindsight, because we didn't know her background, we should have offered her a crate. We just didn't think of it, once we did she was so much

happier, and her stress level went way down.

She loves her crate, it's become her safe place. If things get too crazy, or loud she puts herself to bed, she stays there while we cook and eat, so food stealing has been kept to a few incidences in the last 2 years.

3. Men's voices in general, even on the TV, and men trying to touch her was a huge issue, she would threaten to bite if she couldn't get away from them. You could see the fear in her eyes (we never allowed her to be put in that position after we saw her reaction).

It took treats (food issue turned into a training lesson) and spending time with my husband, the treat giver, as well as male house guests, treat givers also, to have her become fairly comfortable, and 2 years to be happy to greet them.

4. She hates when we leave, I think she has abandonment issues, she's much better when we leave if we put her in her crate with a treat. She's in her safe spot, and knows we will return.

Extra time (years), patience, gentleness, and consistency is what made her come out of her shell. Introducing anything new with supervision, speaking softly, holding her, made transitions go well most of the time.

I would definitely adopt again, and recommend it to others, doing research really helped us be aware of the challenges we

were going to face, we didn't get everything right but we were aware of many of the issues that come with adopting a rescue or shelter animal.

Gayle

Denver, Colorado



Chapter 9

Day Four: Training Your Dog

When you adopt a new dog, you must start training him immediately so he begins to learn what is and isn't acceptable in your home. There are several training methods you can use, but one of the most powerful methods is positive reinforcement.

Most dogs love food. Grab a particularly delicious treat, and use this to reward your dog for doing the right thing. If you own a dog who is a fussy eater, he may prefer praise or a game of ball when he does what you ask of him. The theory behind positive reinforcement training is that any behavior that is rewarded is likely to be repeated. One common example is when your dog jumps up. If you give him a hug every time he jumps on you, he is being rewarded for doing it, so he'll continue jumping up on you.

Basic Guidelines for Dog Training

Timing. Whatever your dog is doing at the time you give him the reward is the behavior that he is going to repeat. So, if you

ask your dog to sit, and he obeys, give him a treat. But, if he gets excited and jumps on you to get the treat, make sure he sits again before he is rewarded. Otherwise you're training him to jump.

You can use a clicker to mark the exact behavior you want, and this is often easier than trying to get a treat into the right position at the right time. Your dog can learn that the click means a treat is coming, and you can be much more accurate with your timing.

Location. Start training a new behavior in a location that is not very exciting, such as your backyard. This reduces the opportunity for your dog to get distracted. As he becomes more reliable, gradually move to a more distractable areas, so he learns to obey you even if there's something interesting happening nearby.

Short sessions. Several five minute sessions a day are much more beneficial than a single one hour session when it comes to training your dog, and it usually is easier to fit into your lifestyle.

Be careful with commands. Use a short, easy to remember command, rather than a multi-word phrase for each behavior you would like to teach him. For example, tell your dog to "sit", rather than "sit down right now". Also, to a dog, "sit" is a completely different command than "sit, sit, sit!". Choose one word for each behavior, and stick with it.

Consistency. Be clear in your mind what you are trying to teach your dog each time you train him. That way you'll get the most out of each session, and he won't become confused. Make sure all members of the family use the same command for the same behavior. You may want to create a list of the commands that your dog is learning and pin it to the wall, so everyone can be-

come familiar and re-read them as needed.

Use shaping. Sometimes your dog won't learn the right behavior straight away. It's fine to reward a behavior close to what you want him to do, so he gets the general idea. From there, you can then only reward behaviors that are closer to what you want him to do.



Remember that training your dog starts from when they get to their new home. Dogs like to know their boundaries. It is important to give those upfront and to be consistent. Have a game plan on how you would like to train your new family member.

Keith

Fort Worth, Texas

There are dog training clubs in most regions that would only be too happy to help you train your dog. If you're having trouble with training, do contact them before things become too bad.

Leash Training

In many areas, the law requires you to walk your dog on a leash. Leash training should start straight away when you bring your dog home. Depending on their background, older dogs may take a longer time to become used to wearing a leash, but all dogs can learn to behave nicely while they are being walked.

Dogs are like people in that some learn faster than others. Don't

be frustrated if your dog takes a little while to learn to walk on a leash, just continue your training and he will get there. Never hit or yell at your dog while he is learning, and don't jerk on the leash; it won't help him learn any quicker.

There are many different types of leash and collar combinations available. Most dog trainers recommend a flat fabric leash which is comfortable to hold, and one that is four to six feet in length. Use a flat collar on your dog when you are training him; choke chains or prong collars can be harmful in the hands of inexperienced trainers.

If you own a particularly boisterous dog, you may want to try a head halter. These have a combined loop around your dog's muzzle and collar around his neck, and will gently control his head as you train him. It's similar to a halter that is used to walk a horse.

There are five main steps to getting your dog used to being on a leash.

1. Put the leash and collar on him, and give him his meal. The leash is unlikely to bother him as he eats, and he'll also start to associate the leash with something enjoyable.
 2. Let him walk around the house with the leash attached, so he gets used to feeling a little weight on him. Take him outside into your yard as the grass will offer more resistance as he pulls the leash around.
 3. As your dog walks around dragging the leash, occasionally pick it up and walk beside him, so he gets used to you being near him. Keep it positive, with praise and treats as he walks.
-

4. When your dog is comfortable having the leash on, use a treat to encourage him to walk with you. Most trainers teach their dog to walk on their left side. This is just convention, and there's no reason not to walk your dog on your right side if it's more comfortable for you.

5. As your dog becomes more familiar with you walking with him on leash, he may try to surge ahead. If he does this, do a quick clockwise turn, encouraging him around with you and rewarding him when he is again beside you. Again, short but frequent sessions are most productive, and your dog will soon learn that he needs to walk next to you to earn a reward.

Training your rescue dog is an investment in your future together. It means that you'll avoid the stress of a badly behaved dog, and he'll have the security of knowing what's expected of him. Training is also a good opportunity to give your dog the kind of mental exercise he needs to thrive. Best of all, training is a natural bonding opportunity, where you can demonstrate leadership and your dog can learn to become comfortable following your lead.

Doc's Story

We knew that we wanted to adopt a dog that was good for people with allergies, so we researched a lot on the internet to find breeds that were best for that. We found that dogs with wiry, coarse or curly hair would be the way to go; we also both work full time so we wanted a dog that wasn't high energy or needed a lot of running around and exercise. We ideally wanted to adopt a wheaten terrier, finding one in a shelter was very difficult so we found a rescue online, but unfortunately they didn't have any dogs that would work for our lifestyle and schedule.

It was very frustrating for us at first because it seemed like every time we found a dog that we thought would work, someone else would adopt them right before we were able to. We also found that some rescues didn't get back to us right away or had little information about the dog, or they were 3 hours away so we couldn't go till the weekend. Our patience did pay off, we expanded our search to other breeds and we found a terrier mix two hours away. He was five years old and had bounced around in shelters for some time. We contacted the rescue and were able to go down and pick him up the next weekend. We have had him for three months and we have had very few problems since we adopted him, and we are so happy to have him in our lives.

I think my biggest advice would be to be patient and be sure you are adopting the right dog for you, had we wanted to

adopt a lab or pit bull or boxer we would have been able to go to a shelter and come home with one almost the same day, but then the dog wouldn't have been right for us and in the long run the situation wouldn't have been best for the dog or us.

Jessica

Nottingham, Maryland



Chapter 10

Day Five: Establishing Leadership

Although we may not like rules and regulations, we often find it easier to get things done when there are guidelines to follow. The same goes for our dogs. They appreciate knowing where the boundaries are, and in fact are less stressed when they have a leader to follow.

Dogs are pack animals. Your dog's pack consists of you and your family. Each member of the pack has their own place in the hierarchy, with the alpha at the head. It's important that you establish yourself as the alpha member in your pack.

Dogs are happier and less stressed when they have a leader to follow. Many behavioral problems that occur in dogs are due to the lack of a strong leader. Problems also occur when a dog is taken from his litter too early and then not properly socialized during puppyhood. These dogs often don't understand doggie communication, and can have issues with leadership as adults.

Many people are hesitant to be assertive with their rescue dog because they feel that he has had a rough life, and they should be gentle with him. They are reluctant to be firm, because they don't want to stress him. The truth is, your dog wants guidance. He wants to know that you're his leader, it helps him feel secure.

Establishing Yourself as Pack Leader

If you don't adopt the role of your dog's pack leader, you'll find that he will take over that position for himself. This can lead to behavioral problems such as aggression, and also higher levels of anxiety.

Being pack leader doesn't mean you have to be loud and harsh to your dog. It means being fair, even tempered and consistent. It is a leader's job to set your dog's boundaries, protect your pack and control resources like food and toys.

When you bring home a rescue dog, you must start as you mean to go on. Although you can expect a few teething problems, don't make allowances for the fact he's new to your family. Start teaching him straight away what the rules are. Use positive training methods, and repeat your training sessions regularly, and he'll quickly learn what he can and can't do.

You can set physical boundaries, such as having certain rooms that your dog isn't allowed in, or not permitting him into your kitchen. You can also set mental rules, such as teaching him that he's not allowed to bark for attention. Both are an important part of teaching your dog where he fits in to your pack.

Alpha Exercises

There is a school of thought that suggests that bad behavior in our dogs is due to them trying to dominate us. Some dog owners believe that to be an effective leader, you have to show dominance over your dog with techniques such as the “alpha roll”. To do an alpha roll, you physically force your dog onto his back and hold him there until he relaxes.



Sammy didn't need much training. She was a very placid girl, the hardest thing was getting her to come inside (must have been an outside girl) but she eventually did come in and decided she liked the couch a lot!! She was a very gentle girl who never had any problems with other dogs, loved people and was happy to go for walks and sleep on the couch.

Baifra

New South Wales, Australia

Other alpha exercises include scruffing and shaking your dog, growling at your dog, or forcing him onto his side and not letting him get up.

Many people believe that when your dog relaxes in an alpha roll, it indicates that he has submitted to you, and recognizes you as leader. This dominance theory is no longer accepted by many professionals. In fact, techniques such as the alpha roll may actually lead to your dog being aggressive towards you because he is frightened.

The American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior suggests that dogs don't behave badly because they are trying to dominate their owners. Instead they feel that dogs are naughty for two reasons. Firstly, they haven't been consistently taught right from wrong, and secondly, they are afraid or anxious and that leads to bad behavior such as aggression. Research has shown that if you are aggressive to your dog, he is more likely to be aggressive.

There's no need to perform alpha exercises on your dog. They are scary, they don't teach your dog anything and they may result in you getting bitten.

Teaching Your Dog Who Is In Charge

There are many ways that you can show your dog that you are in charge, and they don't involve getting physical with him, or causing him any fear at all. You'll end up with a better mannered dog, and a much more enjoyable relationship with him. After all, who wants to have their dog afraid of them?

- You must eat your food before your dog has his meal. Pack leaders eat first.
 - You must go through a doorway before your dog does. Teach him to sit and wait, and not to follow you until he's told to.
 - If your dog is lying in the way, don't step over him, ask him to move. After all, you are the leader.
 - Teach your dog to sit and wait for his meal, and not to eat until you give him the command. Pack leaders control access to resources such as food.
-

- Until your dog recognizes you as leader, don't invite him to sit on the couch with you, or to sleep on your bed. When he fully understands that you are in charge, you can then invite him to join you if you wish.
- Don't reward your dog for jumping up, or other attention seeking behavior. Ask him to sit politely, and only then does he get a pat.
- Train your dog in basic obedience, and expect him to do as you ask him, when you ask him. Regular training will reinforce your position in the pack.

As you can imagine, these methods take more time and effort than physically scruffing your dog and rolling him on his back. However, they are more effective in showing your dog that you're in charge, and will result in your dog respecting you instead of fearing you.

There is a training method called "Nothing in life is free". Basically, this means that anything your dog wants, he has to earn. He wants to play? That's fine, but he has to sit before you throw the ball. He wants to eat? No worries, but don't give one piece of food until he's performed a sit-stay exercise.

It's not hard to show your dog that you're his pack leader, and you can do it without causing him any anxiety or fear. He will feel happier and more secure, knowing he has a leader that he can respect.

Truman's Story

As you probably know, Shelter dogs have a tendency toward separation anxiety. So, whenever we leave, still, he starts that bark that sounds like I'm killing him! Anyway, we started to leave him for a day with my in laws and he adapted very quickly and nicely. He really took to my father in law and now they are great pals. He's got his own routine and setup there ... his own dog bed, food, treats etc. So, it's like being at home there and now he's there all of the time. I was nervous about it at first, thinking that he would become neurotic, but my vet said that even dogs get bored so it's probably a good thing. And it is!

Dogs tend to bond with one person so at our house it's me, and at their house it's my father in law. They made sure to take him out often at first so he didn't mark the inside of the house. He did mark the house inside and they corrected him and he didn't do it anymore. At first, it's good to keep an eye out for clues to see if he needs to go outside until you get familiar with him.

When he first came home with me, he pooped a few times in the house. We didn't catch him though so it was too late to correct him but gradually we got to know each other and it's pretty clear to us when he needs to go outside. We tried to get him to go outside as often as possible until he figured out how to tell us.

We've only had our dog stay with one other person and that

was my mother. I brought him to their house with his crate, toys, rawhide bones, treats and supplies. I ended up staying overnight so that he could get used to my mom and her husband. We went out right away and took him for a walk so he could bond with them and also had her feed him instead of me. I think that the walk is key. It allows him to get used to them and see them as a way to get out and have fun and sniff around. Once he got over me leaving him, he got used to them pretty quickly and loved it there by all accounts. Of course, it doesn't hurt that they have big picture windows and lots of squirrels outside.

I've heard also that leaving an article of clothing with your scent helps dogs to feel more comfortable as well.

Kathleen

Chicago, Illinois



Chapter 11

Day Six: Socializing Your Dog

Socializing your dog involves teaching him the appropriate way to respond to the variety of things he may encounter during his day to day life. He needs to get used to people, other animals, cars and the many other sights, sounds and shapes of his neighborhood. If a dog is well socialized, he will be calm, confident and relaxed no matter what situation he finds himself in.

How a dog responds to his environment is a result of how he is raised. It's best to start socializing your dog while he is a puppy but if you have rescued an adult dog, that won't be possible. Even if your new dog is well out of the puppy stage, you can still help him learn to adapt to changes in the world around him by exposing him to a variety of people and places.

Socializing Your Puppy

One of the most important parts of socializing a pup is leaving him with his mom and littermates until he is eight weeks old. If

you take him away too early, he misses out on learning about dog communication and behavior from his doggy family, and is more likely to have difficulties interacting with other dogs later in life.

There is a specific period between the ages of four and twelve weeks of age when socialization is particularly important and effective for your pup. If you can expose him to as many pleasant experiences with other people and animals as you can during this period, he will grow up to be friendlier and less afraid of new experiences.

Puppy pre-school classes are an important part of socializing your pup. While these classes do teach him basic obedience exercises, they also allow him to play and interact with other young dogs in a safe environment.

Even if your pup is outgoing and relaxed, continue to work on socialization. Adolescent dogs can become cautious and nervous in new situations, even if their owners have done everything right when they were young. Take him to obedience classes, and introduce him to lots of people and other dogs, while making it a positive experience for him.

Socializing an Adult Dog

If you have rescued an adult dog, you may not know what his experiences have been as a puppy. It is therefore even more important that you start socializing him as soon as he's settled into your home.

You may find that he is particularly fearful of one group of people, such as children. If that's the case, invite a few sensible children to your home on a regular basis. Keep your dog on a leash,

and ask the children to throw a favorite treat to your dog. If he is comfortable with that, then ask the children to offer a treat on an open hand. Take it slowly and it won't be long before your dog is looking for children to say hello to, because they may give him a treat.



If there is already a pet in the family, ask the shelter if the potential dog has been socialized with other animals (dogs, cats) and children. Best to adopt a pet that is already probably going to be compatible with all members of its new family.

Illene

Palatine, Illinois

If he is nervous around other dogs, help him get used to them in a controlled way. You'll need help with this, so ask a friend with a friendly dog to come and visit. Have your dog on a leash and reward him with treats for staying calm when the other dog is nearby. Over a period of weeks, gradually bring the other dog closer, while giving your dog treats. Over time, he will learn to be relaxed when another dog comes close to him.

Steps to Socializing Your Dog

1. Take your dog to a dog obedience class that uses positive training methods such as food rewards or clicker training. He will meet other dogs and their owners and it will also strengthen his relationship with you. If he has confidence in you as his leader, he will feel less stressed in new situations because he will feel certain

that you are in control.

2. Grab a bag of treats, and go walking with your dog in a variety of environments. Keep him on leash so he stays safe, and walk past noisy schools and alongside busy roads. Reward him with treats for staying calm, and ignore any anxious behavior such as barking or pulling on the leash. Use the treats to keep his attention on you, and distract him from anything he is nervous about.

3. Introduce him to other dogs, and when he's comfortable with them, allow him to play with them off leash. This may mean starting out by having play dates in your backyard with dogs belonging to friends and family. You may, if he's comfortable, graduate to meeting unfamiliar dogs in off leash dog parks, but don't do this until he has met a lot of friendly dogs and hasn't shown any sign of fear or anxiety. You have no control over the dogs that run loose at a dog park, and an interaction with an aggressive dog can undo all your good work.

4. Invite your friends to visit, and ask them to bring their children. Make sure that the children are sensible around dogs; children who shriek and run are only going to startle him. By taking the time to introduce your dog to children, you'll reduce the risk of him becoming frightened by them when he bumps into them during his walks.

5. Take your dog with you as often as you can. Some cafes allow you to sit outside with your dog while you have a coffee. This is a great way to expose him to people, as many of them will stop to say hello to him.

If at any time you're concerned about your dog's socialization,

particularly if he is aggressive, seek professional help. In most cases, your dog can be helped by a specific training program and perhaps medication to help with any anxiety.

Although it sounds like a lot of work, socialization isn't that difficult. It is a vital part of being a responsible dog owner, and something that can make the world of difference to your dog's enjoyment of life.

Rex's Story

I adopted my four year old Siberian Husky Rex from a rescue group in So. Cal, who had pulled him from a shelter before he was euthanized. The rescue group had no backstory on him and knew almost nothing about him at all.

All I knew for sure when I applied to adopt him was that he had been fostered by somebody who runs a cat rescue, and that he appeared to be good with cats, which was one of the most important traits for me. I was approved for his adoption and I took him home on May 16th, 2009.

I feel that I have been supremely lucky with Rex. When I got him, he already had very good behavior around people and in fact loved everybody. He knew how to sit and do basic tricks, he was very gentle when taking treats from my hand, and he was not hyper, destructive or anything. He was fully house-broken and appeared to be very comfortable inside a house.

With no backstory, I am left to guess at why he was dumped at a shelter. Over the months I've had him, I've gotten to

know him pretty well and I've observed a few things that puzzle me. One thing is pretty clear, he must have lived in a house with people at some point. He is too well behaved indoors to assume anything else. He has very good manners with people and even with small children, and I didn't teach him that. However, he does have issues with other dogs.

He is not aggressive with people or other animals, but he is excited about other dogs to the point of frustration. After observing him for months, I've come to the conclusion that he doesn't know how to greet other dogs nicely, and that he appears to be oblivious to the warning signs other dogs give him. This leads me to believe he may have been taken from his mother too early, before he could learn the ins and outs of doggy communication.

So while he is not aggressive, he is excited and persistent around other dogs, to the point that they will start growling at him because he won't stop sniffing them and being a general nuisance. He also sniffs and marks everything in sight (outdoors – never in somebody's home), despite the fact that he's neutered. I think those two behaviors are probably connected.

Having said that, I can say that the dog greeting and interaction issues he has are his only flaws as far as I can tell. He is a wonderfully sweet dog, he is a joy to come home to every day, and I can't remember what my life was like before I adopted him.

Zak

Las Vegas, Nevada



Chapter 12

Day Seven: Healthcare for Your Dog

When you own a dog, it's essential that you have a veterinarian you can trust to help with any injuries and illnesses that may arise. This person is going to be your partner when it comes to keeping your dog healthy, so you must have absolute confidence in them.

If you don't have a vet, you'll need to find one, preferably before you bring your dog home from the shelter.

Where do you start looking?

The shelter where you obtained your dog may be able to offer some recommendations. Shelters often work with local veterinarians when they need treatment for the animals in their care, and may be able to point you in the right direction.

Alternatively, ask your pet owning neighbors for their suggestions.

Make a list of the names you have been given, and visit each one in turn. Take a note of how clean the clinic is, and whether or not

the staff are rushed, or if they have time to chat to you. Find out what services they offer, and ask for a fee schedule. One important thing you must ask is what their arrangements are for after hours emergencies. That way, should your dog have an accident outside office hours, you'll know exactly how to get help.

Make an appointment for your dog to have a checkup within a week or so of your taking him home from the shelter. This will give you the opportunity to make sure he's in good health, and chat to the vet about any preventative health care your dog needs.

Visiting Your Vet

Some dogs can become quite anxious when they visit their vet. The clinic has lots of smells that you and I can't detect, but your dog's sensitive nose will notice them very quickly.

When you need to visit your vet, there are some things you can do to make things easier for everyone, including your dog.

- At home, spend the time to get your dog used to having his ears, eyes mouth and feet examined. It's hard for your vet to do her job if your dog won't sit still and let her check his teeth.
 - Take your dog to the toilet before you enter the clinic. That makes it less likely that he'll urinate on the floor or walls when he gets inside.
 - If your dog is fearful or anxious, don't pat him and tell him it's alright. This is rewarding his behavior, so he'll continue to be afraid. Be very matter of fact, and only acknowledge your dog when he's doing the right thing.
-

- Allow the veterinary staff to hold your dog. They are trained to safely restrain even the largest dog, so there won't be any injury to you, the staff or your dog should he wriggle or jump away.
- If you're passing, call into the clinic for a social visit and a treat. This will teach your dog that not all visits mean an examination, and he'll be much happier to come in when he needs treatment.



Having your new shelter dog's teeth cleaned when you get them is a good idea just in case they have a dental problem. A little prevention can avoid a lot of costly issues later.

Honorah

Bethel, Connecticut

Keeping Your Dog Healthy

Dogs need regular maintenance to keep things in perfect working order. By doing the basics, you can prevent many serious problems from developing. Here is a list of what every dog needs to stay well.

Nutrition. Whether your rescue dog is a puppy or an adult, you need to feed him well. This means a good quality food with meat protein listed as one of the top two or three ingredients on the packet. Premium foods are more expensive, but are also more concentrated so you can feed your dog less. Cheap foods are usually based on cereals, and your dog may not thrive if he eats them.

Parasite Control. This means internal and external parasites. Internal parasites include intestinal worms and heartworms. Intestinal worms can cause diarrhea, weight loss, a poor coat and even anemia, so you need to worm him regularly. Heartworm can cause heart failure and lung disease, and can be fatal. Your vet will be able to advise you on whether or not heartworm is prevalent in your region, and how to prevent it.

Ticks can cause serious illness in your dog, either by spreading disease such as lyme disease, or by causing paralysis. Fleas drink blood and have been known to make a dog so anemic, he dies. Shampoos aren't very effective in the long term control of external parasites, but both fleas and ticks can be controlled with topical treatments which are applied to your dog's clean dry coat.

Vaccinations. Vaccinating your dog is critical in preventing serious illness. There is a basic vaccination schedule which protects against distemper, hepatitis, parvovirus and the two components of canine cough, parainfluenza and bordetella. Depending on where you live, your vet may also recommend vaccinating against leptospirosis or lyme disease.

Dental care. Just like us, your dog needs his teeth cared for. Young dogs have a lot of changes happening in their mouth, as they lose their baby teeth and grow a set of much larger adult teeth. Adult dogs need regular teeth cleaning to prevent gum disease and tartar and the associated pain and bad breath.

Regular brushing with a soft toothbrush is the best way to keep your dog's teeth clean. If your dog's teeth need brushing, make it a regular part of his day, and his gums and teeth will stay clean and healthy.

Coat Care. Depending on your dog's coat length, he may or may not need much grooming. Some breeds such as Poodles are also traditionally clipped into a specific style. There's no reason why you can't learn to do this yourself.

Longer coats need regular brushing, to remove loose hair and prevent knots and tangles. Even short coats need an occasional brush but they are much lower maintenance.

How often should you bathe your dog? That varies. Some people bathe their dog as often as weekly, yet others don't wash their dog much at all. The more you bathe your dog, the more likely you are to remove the natural oils in his coat, and leave his fur dry and brittle. Whenever you wash your dog, use a mild soap free shampoo and rinse it thoroughly from his coat.

You may be surprised to learn that one of the biggest influences on your dog's coat condition is his diet. Feed him well, and you'll notice the difference, his coat will be soft, shiny and luxurious.

Spay and Neuter. Most shelters have their dogs spayed or neutered before they are rehomed, to avoid any chance of them contributing to the number of dogs in the world. There are health benefits to spaying your female dog. It can reduce their risk of breast cancer, and it completely prevents them developing pyometron, a potentially fatal infection of the uterus.

Male dogs are less likely to go wandering in search of a female if they are neutered, and they may also be less territorial.

Health Insurance. If your budget allows, do consider buying health insurance for your dog. It means that you'll be able to give him the best care should he become ill or injured, without wor-

rying about finances. There are many policies available, read the fine print carefully and choose one that meets your needs.

Caring for your dog's health is part and parcel of being a dog owner. If you don't take care of the basics, you run the risk of him becoming unwell. That isn't good for him, and his treatment may be expensive. Don't skimp on your best friend's health.

Kallie's Story

The best advice I would give to someone planning to adopt a shelter dog is to get the dog to the vet immediately upon adopting it. I would even suggest scheduling the vet appointment before actually visiting the shelter. Then you can go straight to the vet with your new dog.

A couple years ago, my husband and I adopted an eight-week old puppy from the local Animal Control. We had everything we needed like puppy food, toys, blankets, and a freshly newspaper-ed floor. We signed the papers, handed over the small fee for adopting a shelter dog, and started the drive home.

Almost immediately, the puppy started having problems. During the half-hour drive back home, we had to stop three times to let her out, and she had diarrhea each time. We were concerned but thought that it could just be the stress of the day. I called and made an appointment at our trusted vet's office for

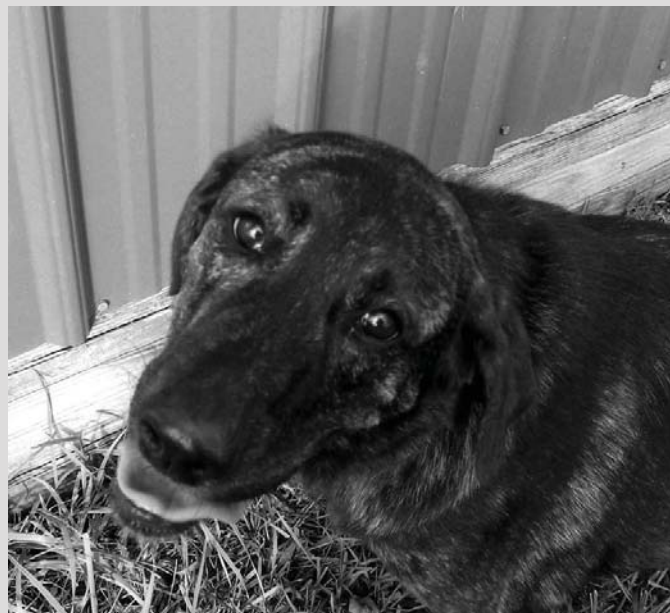
the next morning. Almost immediately, I regretted not having made the appointment for that same day, but by then it was too late to change it. Our new puppy threw up the food we gave her and continued to have diarrhea every hour or so. She was obviously very sick and my husband and I had a sleepless night worrying about her. We made frequent trips outside with her and tried to comfort her through her obvious distress.

Fortunately, tapeworms are easily treatable, and our vet administered the medicine, along with the other vaccinations that dogs need. The vet told us that if we had waited even one more day before coming in, our beautiful puppy would probably have been dead.

Our puppy, who was once so close to death, is now a happy, healthy and huge sixty-pound mutt who will be turning two years old in just a few weeks. She loves running and playing and chewing on everything (especially things she's not supposed to), and she still enjoys chasing her tail, though she usually can't catch it.

Alisa

Buchanan, Michigan



Chapter 13

Conclusion

Congratulations on rescuing a shelter dog. You're starting out together on a journey full of adventures and good times. Even though your dog is now a part of your family, don't take him for granted. It's part of your job description to make sure he's happy and enjoying life. And if you do that I'm sure he will return the favor tenfold!

There are several things you can do every day to show your dog that he's your best friend.

- Speak to him in a cheerful tone. He may not understand what you're saying, but he'll know how you feel by the way you say it. Tell him he's a good boy in a happy voice, and watch his tail wag! Even when you're cross, don't yell at him. Instead speak in a calm even tone so he's not afraid of you. You want him to respect your leadership, not be fearful.
 - Don't leave him on his own for long periods of time. Your dog
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loves to be with you, and the greatest gift you can give him is time. Whether you're playing ball in the backyard, going for a walk in your neighborhood or just snuggling together on the couch, he'll love spending time with you. The more time you spend with your dog, the better your relationship will be.

- Keep him physically and mentally challenged. Dogs are intelligent, and they do get bored. A bored dog can find his own entertainment, and dig holes or pull your laundry off the line. Take him for regular walks along the streets, go for a swim at the beach, or try a run through some forest trails. We've said it before, but it bears repeating, a tired dog is a happy dog. When it comes to keeping his mind active, why not teach him some tricks? He'll get to use his brain, and it will be great fun teaching him to roll over, play dead or take a bow.

Fun Things To Do With Your Dog

There are so many enjoyable activities you can share with your dog. They not only enhance your relationship, but they also improve your communication with him. Some of these activities can be done on your own; others are best taught with the support of a dog club. Try a few, or try them all. You're sure to find something that you both enjoy.

1. Dog agility. This fast paced sport is fun for spectators and participants alike. Dogs are taught to negotiate obstacles such as hurdles, ramps and tunnels, while trying to beat the clock. Any dog can have a go at agility, and it's particularly good for the fast working breeds - they are great at thinking on the move.

2. Flyball racing. Teams of four dogs run down a lane, grab a tennis ball and race back in a high speed relay race. Again, any

breed or mix can have a go at flyball racing, but because the dogs get very excited, your dog needs to be completely non-aggressive when he's fired up.

3. Lure coursing. This event was initially designed for sight hounds such as greyhounds and whippets. The dogs chase a lure, often a plastic bag, along a course at full speed. Great fun, and it's wonderful to watch dogs in full flight.

4. Obedience training and competition. Certainly you can take your dog to obedience classes, but did you know that you can actually compete in obedience trials with him? Dogs are given points for completing several obedience exercises, and even if you don't win, you can gain enough points to qualify for an obedience title.

5. Frisbee. You can play frisbee with your dog anywhere from the park to the beach. When you're playing frisbee, don't ask your dog to jump too high, or he may hurt himself.

6. Herding. If you have a working breed, you can encourage him to make use of his natural instincts by teaching him herding. It's great to see these dogs do what they were bred for, and this mental exercise can really tire them out. Dogs can start to learn to herd ducks, then move on to sheep and cattle when they have more experience.

7. Field trials. Hunting or Sporting dogs such as Labrador Retrievers and the Spaniel breeds enjoy field trials where they can flush out and retrieve game. Again, it allows them to exercise their instincts.

8. Schutzhund. This sport involves tracking, obedience and train-

ing the dog to search for, guard and hold a person. It requires a dog to have a very steady temperament, and tests a dog's ability to work, his strength and his courage. Initially developed for the German Shepherd Dog, the sport now welcomes many different breeds of dog.

9. Canine Musical Freestyle. This relatively new sport involves performing obedience routines to music. The routine has to be choreographed to fit the rhythm of the music that the trainer chooses, and both dog and handler can dress in costume to enhance their performance.

10. Pets as Therapy. If you own a calm dog who loves to meet people, you may want to investigate the pets as therapy program. You can take your dog to visit elderly residents of a nursing home, who may be lonely. Research has shown that visiting dogs can make a positive difference to the lives of these residents, with many of them looking forward to visits from their four legged friend.

There is a saying that the family that plays together, stays together. The same could be said of you and your dog. If you get involved in a sport with your dog, your future together will be very bright indeed.
