

Congratulations on your new puppy or dog!

This handout will give you some framework on how to integrate your new dog into your life. We often don't know what a dog has been through before we adopt them, and it's important to remember how stressful being moved from home to home and/or being in a shelter can be for them. All dogs are emotional and sensitive, and they all need time to adapt to their new lives. Your new family member can get overwhelmed very easily.

It can take a dog four to six months to settle in fully to a new home. During this time, your dog will learn about the house schedule, where to eliminate, about the members of his/her new family (including other animals), learn some training and what resources are available to them, and start to get a picture of how they fit into the new family group. You may start to see behaviors develop that are unexpected during this time; some of them can be pleasant, others may need some intervention. You may even need a little behavioral help. We are always here to guide you in this journey. Please call the free Behavior Line (831) 264-5422.

Bringing Your New Dog Home

- Plan to take some time off from work, or have someone home working with your new dog. Your dog needs to start the bonding process with you, and it is not the best idea to just put them in a crate, free in the house, or in the backyard while you are gone for the day. At minimum, arrange for someone to come into your home to visit, feed, and take your dog out to eliminate every few hours.
- Keep your dog on leash when outside, and use a harness or a martingale (limited slip) collar, not just a flat collar! Remember your pup may have little to no training and is not bonded to you yet. If she/he were to get loose, you have no way to get her/him back.
- If you have other animals at home, take your time with introductions. If you have other dogs at home and you have adopted a mature dog, a nice neighborhood walk or an introduction in a neutral place would be best for both your resident dog and your new adoptee. If you have a cat, segregate the cat to a part of the house where your dog will not generally be allowed access. Over time, allow the animals to see each other through a baby gate. Make sure your cat has high places to jump to if they share some space together. Keep your new dog on leash until you feel the all animals are more comfortable with each other. It might take months before they can mingle, so proceed slowly. Everyone should feel safe! If you need help please call the Behavior Line (831) 264-5422.
- Puppy and dog proof your home! Make sure cables are hidden or not accessible. Remove or relocate things like trash cans, cat litter pans, cat food, remotes, books, magazines, extra pillows, phones, eyeglasses, or anything you value! Close doors to non-dog rooms (dogs love dirty clothes hampers and shoes). Use baby gates or exercise pens to direct your dog to dog safe areas in your home. Make sure your backyard is secure, and that your new friend cannot breach the fence by climbing out, digging under, or squeezing through fencing.
- Do not take your dog to the store, dog park, beach, or long walks for the first few weeks, and possibly longer. If your puppy is under five months old, there are special protocols for socializing which you can learn about in one of the SPCA's puppy classes or private trainings.

- Keep a strict schedule with your new dog. Domestic animals function best when they can predict what their daily activities will be, and a solid, predictable structure will help your dog feel calm and confident that all her/his needs are being met.
- Make sure your dog feels safe. This is especially important if you have a dog that is shy or fearful. She/he might feel most confident or safest in one room of your home. Experiment with your window blinds open or closed, music or TV on/off, the presence or absence of people and other animals in your home, the location of her/his bed, play pen or crate. What is most relaxing for your new house mate?
- It is crucial your new dog begins to associate your home and her/his new space as their safe spot. All future behaviors will hinge on this. Fortunately this is easy as most dogs adapt very quickly and easily.
- Be aware of how your dog likes to interact with you. Many dogs are particular about handling. You may find that they do not want to be hugged, cuddled, dressed in clothing, or even petted. You may notice they get mouthy as you try to handle them. This is an indication they might not want that handling at the moment. As they relax in the home, they may become more tolerant and even learn to love cuddling.
- Allow your dog time to decompress! They need sleep, good food, sunshine, free time to play, sniff, and just be a dog. Do not disturb them while they sleep. If you have children in the household, this must be a rule. Your new dog should be able to have a choice about interacting or not with you.

The First Month

If you have a new puppy, get started on house training (see below). Sign up for a puppy class!

For an older dog, housetraining might be necessary-just follow the puppy rules below. Let them settle in for a month or two and then sign up for a class. If you need extra help arrange for a private training with one of our behavior specialists.

Basic Socialization Protocol – The **No Big Deal! Lessons**

Much has been written about socializing our pups, and all that information can be overwhelming. There is an important “window” of time (8-20 weeks) where we should introduce our pup to people, other animals, the veterinary hospital, walking in neighborhoods, etc. When you are trying to do a socializing activity, whether it’s an older dog or a young puppy, keep these things in mind:

- **Your dog HAS to be having a good time.**
 - Exposure to things that are different, unique, and novel must happen, as this is life, and we can gauge how our puppy feels about it by simply watching him. Is he content, happily engaged with you or others (puppy says this is **No Big Deal!**), or is he looking at you with wide open eyes, hiding behind you, tail tucked, not eating treats, or laying down non-responsive (shut down)? This is a fearful response, and is not helping your dog. Just get out of the situation, and take puppy back to where she feels safe! If meeting something new, allow puppy to initiate the contact if she

wants to meet. If she does not want to meet, that's ok! Speak softly and smile at your pup – this is reassurance that everything is ok, and that she has choices ❤️

- **Have great treats with you when exposing them to things!**
 - Pairing a delicious treat with something puppy is not sure about can make the difference between fear and confidence. For instance, during handling exercises, give your puppy something tasty while your neighbor meets her for the first time. Make that experience wonderful! The appearance of my new neighbor is the predictor of chicken! Yay!
- **Make the exposures very short and sweet!**
 - Lots of small, short exposures are much better for your dog than longer, overwhelming exposures.
- **More advanced socializing means exposures to different places.**
 - If your puppy is having a good time with his puppy friends in class, it doesn't mean he will be comfortable on the street or in the mall meeting strange dogs. It takes lots of little exposures and time to build her **No Big Deal!** response!
- If your puppy is not taking treats, you must get him to a safe zone and stop what you are doing. Something about your routine is too much for your pup right now! Look at your steps, and perhaps do less exposure. **This is not a race.**
- We also do not need to do training during these exposures (no sits, downs). All we want puppy to do is look around, get treated, and go back into his safe zone inside for some rest time afterward. If the front of your house is very busy or noisy, plan to do this socialization when it's quieter out front. You can slowly get puppy used to the busier times as she becomes familiar and comfortable with the routine.
- Your dog should not be forced to sit while a dog, human, stroller, bike, skateboard, noisy truck or motorcycle passes by. Simply move away from the surprising, scary, or exciting trigger, and reward your dog for coming with you and being engaged with you.



Biting in Young Puppies

- When baby pup bites hard, try to quickly substitute an appropriate toy in your pup's mouth. You can say **No bite!** softly while substituting. Remember they are just learning, and try not to be angry. Use **Bitter Apple** spray on your hands and arms to reinforce the idea that mouthing/biting skin is not worth it. If your pup is a nipping crazy shark, the best tactic is to withdraw your attention for a few minutes. Let puppy rest with some toys. It takes about 2 weeks of this kind of work with everyone who plays with your pup to see results.
- Make sure your pup has access to chewing items. Bully sticks, hard chews, vegetable based "rawhide" chews are all good choices. Observe your puppy while they are chewing to make sure s/he is not swallowing pieces that are too big. Puppies have to learn to chew properly sized pieces. Remove a chew item if it gets too small. We don't want puppy to choke on it. Puppy can find relaxation, and relief from the pain of losing and growing teeth by chewing.
- Remember your puppy is just a tiny baby mentally, even if they weigh 25 pounds at 8 weeks. They need lots of rest time. Play gently with your puppies, but let them rest after 20-30 minutes of activity. Just like children, they might get over-stimulated when tired, and that's when you might start to see behaviors you do not like, like chasing the kids, biting too

much, or barking at nothing. Program puppy naps into your schedule frequently! Puppy might need to sleep 18-20 hours a day...!

- If you are experiencing mouthing from an older puppy, look at what starts the behavior. If rough housing starts it, stop rough housing. Walk away, or put a door between you and your adolescent if they continue the inappropriate behavior. Give her/him a minute or two, then try presenting a toy or chew so she/he refocuses. Try **Bitter Apple** spray on your hands, arms, pant legs, slippers to keep the mouthing from happening. If you feel the mouthiness is out of control, please call the Behavior Line (831) 264-5422.

Elimination Houstraining

Houstraining is a matter of scheduling, geography, and consistency no matter the age of the dog. Limit the “geography” or the amount of space in the house the dog has free access to until houstraining becomes more consistent. It can be very tempting to eliminate down the back hallway when no one is looking! As your dog or puppy becomes more reliable, they can have more of the house.

Times we want to take them outside are:

- Within 10 minutes after your pup eats
- As soon as they wake from sleep or a nap
- A few minutes after they start playing (activity will get the “juices” flowing),
- Every 2 hours on a schedule, minimum
- Just before bedtime

Take them out, and ask for a **“Hurry Up!”**, **“Potty!”**, or **“Do Your Business!”**, and praise them when they do pee or poop. A treat is often not necessary, but lots of praise is important just **after** that pee or poop.

Puppy Houstraining

The “rule” for holding it overnight is the puppy’s age in months, plus 1, equals the amount of time a puppy can hold elimination in hours. For a 2.5 month old puppy example:

$$2.5 + 1 = 3.5$$

Puppy can hold it overnight 3.5 hours realistically. This can be handled by one of two methods: (1) puppy pee pads in a large crate or exercise pen, or (2) set an alarm clock for 12 am, take puppy outside quietly, let puppy eliminate, and crate her back up for more sleep time. The second method actually teaches puppy the valuable skill of going back into the crate and settling down immediately. And don’t fret. Remember this is only for a very short period of time, perhaps a month or two.

A puppy takes time to develop the **“I need to go outside”** dance. Watch for the subtle signs of turning, looking at the door, slowing down, squatting, or discomfort. Take them outside when you see this, even if they don’t eliminate. We want puppy to start asking to go out!

If puppy makes a mistake, urge them to go outside or pick them up calmly, and let them finish outside. The more we can prevent the accidents, the less common they will be. Never scold them for making a mistake in the house – they won't understand, and might even start to not want to eliminate when we are close by because they are afraid of us. Make it positive, always!

HELPFUL SUPPLIES for RAISING YOUR DOG

Enzyme Cleaner Spray for cleaning up pee or poop in house

Bitter Apple Spray for teaching a pup to not chew household items, skin, or clothing

Crate with padding for sleeping

Exercise pen for dog safety when you can't watch her; can be attached to the crate

Baby Gates to prevent dog from wandering and limiting her space

Toys for play, chewing, kibble dispensing