



Tompkins County SPCA

Dog Care Series

The Pet Lover's Guide to Your New Dog

Thank you for adopting your new dog from the Tompkins County SPCA. Not only have you helped save a life, but you are about to embark on one of the most rewarding personal experiences--sharing your life with a dog!

Congratulations!

There are 53 million pet dogs in the United States, and now that you have adopted a dog from the Tompkins County SPCA, you've made it 53 million plus one. Once you've outfitted yourself with some basic supplies and a little helpful advice, you'll see how rewarding it can be to live with one of these wonderful animals.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Dog bed with washable cover or folded blanket
- Food dish
- Water dish or dispenser
- Dog food
- Chew toys such as Kong toys
- Nylabones
- Dog brush
- A leash
- A collar and I.D. tag
- Dog treats for training and rewards

GETTING ACQUAINTED

Bringing a new dog home is exciting for everyone, including the dog. First impressions are important for dogs, so early experiences in a dog's new home tend to leave a lasting impression. You can do a lot to help your dog feel secure in his/her new home.

Your Dog's Special Person

Assign a particular family member to be your dog's special person. A dog needs a leader, someone to play with who will feed and exercise her. Dogs are highly social, they love to be around people 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Unlike people, dogs don't usually need a break for time alone. While the realities of modern life make this extremely difficult, dogs can still be happy and healthy even if they have to spend time alone. But it is important that all of their needs are taken care of. So while one person does not have to do all the exercising, cleaning, and feeding, one person should be responsible to ensure that all of this gets done--each and every day.

Your Dog's New Home

Keep your dog on leash when she first comes to her new home and take her around the house. Show her each room, where her food and water are, where her bed is, where her toys are and where the yard is. Introduce her to any family member she has not yet met. Take her to the appropriate place and wait to see if she needs to relieve herself.

Until her bathroom habits have been established, take your adult dog out every couple of hours. If you adopted a puppy, you should take her out every hour. (You can expect a puppy to start having bladder control at about 5 months). When you go out, praise your dog each and every time she uses the designated area, whether this is in the backyard or during a walk. Tell her what a great dog she is, even give her small treats. NEVER rub her nose in a "mistake," or make her nervous about relieving herself in your presence. And never punish her for a mistake discovered later in time. Your dog will not understand no matter how "guilty" you think she looks.

Introducing Your New Dog to Other Pets

Pets enjoy each other's company. A pet with a playmate can get more exercise, stimulation and companionship. But sometimes it takes a while for them to realize the wonderful advantages they're about to enjoy.



Most dogs view the arrival of another dog as an invasion of their territory. To get them off to a good start, have short, fun sessions with the dogs. Play games, go for walks, be generous with doggy treats. Let the dogs know that when they are together, they are going to have a great time. When you are not at home, keep the dogs in separate rooms for the first few days until they are comfortable with each other, if possible.

Dogs can experience jealousy and other complex emotions. Your resident dog may revert to some long-forgotten behaviors like chewing or territory marking to express her negative feelings. Punishing her for them will only alienate her more, reinforcing the feelings she is upset about. In addition, be careful not to neglect your old friend in your excitement over the new dog. Nothing will irritate her more than seeing all the hugs and attention that she's used to getting being lavished on another dog. Tip the scales of treats and praise in favor of the resident dog.

A dog meeting a cat should always be leashed. Supervise the encounter, and watch your dog for signs of aggressive behavior towards the cat. Curiosity is normal, but a dog who lunges at a cat is not safe to be off-leash with the cat. If your dog gets on well with the cat, but the cat shows you that she's feeling threatened during this experience, let her retreat to a safe room until she's willing to try again. Never force an encounter.

Kids and Dogs

There is no reason why young children and dogs cannot be the best of friends, so long as your kids understand some simple facts about dog behavior. Read the section "How to Meet and Greet a Dog" aloud to your children and discuss it with them, and keep in mind these important reminders:

1. Dogs DO NOT like to be squeezed, picked up or have their tails pulled. Dogs are sensitive to loud noises and sudden movements, and will feel threatened if they are chased, stared at, or lunged at.
2. Dogs DO NOT like to be disturbed while they are eating.

HOW TO MEET AND GREET A DOG

Although dogs have been domesticated for thousands of years, they still retain some of their old instincts. They can be territorial, defensive of food, determined to dominate creatures, and just plain boisterous--because that's all acceptable, even necessary in a dog society. Depending on the individual dog, these traits are more or less obvious, but even the meekest little dog has a little bit of the wolf in him.

In order to understand how to meet and greet a dog, we must first think like dogs--to see things from their point of view. When a child greets a new dog by running up with wide eyes and a broad smile, crooning soft words, flinging arms around the dog's neck and giving her a warm hug, if the dog snarls or snaps, it is easy to say the dog attacked without warning or provocation.

Things, however, can look very different from the dog's perspective. The child was baring her teeth. We call it a smile, but bared teeth can be a sign of hostility to a dog. The soft words sound like a growl--and we all know that to a dog, growling is not a friendly gesture. The child was running--just the way a dog attacks another dog. Friendly dogs approach each other slowly, offering plenty of time for sniffing and learning each other's scents. Finally, the child hugged the dog--which the dog interprets as physical domination. All in all, the child's attempt to make friends could be, from the dog's point of view, a very scary encounter.

Instead, until your new dog becomes comfortable with all the new members of his family, children should:

- Stand quietly and allow the dog to approach;
- Not stare directly into the dog's eyes;
- Wait until the dog sniffs the child's outstretched fist;
- Gently scratch the dog's cheek, mimicking the way in which members of a dog pack exchange friendly greetings.

If your new dog seems nervous, give him some time to adjust. But establish the rules early in a fair, positive way.

ESTABLISHING A ROUTINE

Establishing your routines right away makes your new dog feel secure and settled. Establishing rules sets behavior patterns for the future because the dog knows what's expected of him from the first day. Establish an exercise routine, a feeding time, training routine and a grooming routine. All of these will strengthen the bond between you and your dog. Above all, take time to play with and just be with your dog. Sit on the floor next to her and scratch her ears or her chest. Watch television together, play with toys, take walks, and talk to your dog.

CARE AND FEEDING

"What do I Feed my Dog?"

We recommend a high quality (premium grade) dry food. At the Tompkins County SPCA, we feed dogs dry dog food two times a day and leave fresh water out all the

time. A regular feeding schedule will make timely bathroom breaks easier for you and make your dog feel more secure. Consult with your own veterinarian about the type of food that would be best for your dog, and what amount would be healthiest. Don't feed your dog leftover bones as these can splinter and injure the dog's mouth or internal organs. Your dog should be fit and trim. If you can see his ribs, he is probably too thin. But if you can't feel his ribs at all, your dog is too fat. Change the dog's portions accordingly, but avoid sudden, drastic changes in the amount or type of food you offer him.

"Should I Groom my Dog?"

Frequent brushing and combing helps to keep the fur clean and reduces shedding. Nearly all dogs learn to enjoy being brushed. Brush for short periods at first, and give lavish praise or offer food treats as a reward. There are also professional groomers in Tompkins County.

"Why Should I Spay or Neuter my Dog?"

If all dog lovers spayed/neutered their dogs, we wouldn't have so many puppies in our shelter every year. In addition, there is no truth to the urban (and rural) myth that having a litter of puppies mellows a dog's disposition or that spay/neuter causes dogs to become overweight and lazy.



In fact, altering a dog reduces the risk of urinary problems and cancer later in life, curbs the dog's compulsion to roam and mark territory by spraying urine, and makes them generally better behaved with small children and other pets.

Most dogs adopted from the Tompkins County SPCA have already been altered. If your dog has not, you are required to make an appointment for spay/neuter surgery. If you are unable to afford this, we have low-cost opportunities that may be able to help.

"Should my Dog Sleep Outdoors?"

No. Dogs are highly social animals. Dogs should live and sleep inside the house like the rest of the family. Your dog should be integrated into family activities and a period should be set aside each day to spend quality time with him, such as playing ball or going for a walk. Keep in mind that a rambunctious dog can be perfectly happy so long as he gets plenty of attention and exercise. Take a few minutes to play with your dog every day. Buy some dog toys. One great way to keep a dog who spends time alone outdoors happy is to provide him with a playmate and a companion--namely, another dog.

"How do I Keep my dog Healthy?"

All dogs adopted from the Tompkins County SPCA have received their initial vaccinations. (If you adopted a puppy, she/he has not received full protection. Puppies must be given a series of vaccinations over several months because they are too young to receive full protection from just one shot. This can mean the difference between life and death for your puppy.) They have also been screened for general

health and behavior problems. In addition, any dog adopted from our shelter has a free initial veterinary check up within two weeks of adoption at participating veterinarians. We encourage you to take advantage of this and establish a relationship with a veterinarian of your choice.

Your dog is entirely dependent on you for her health and well-being. She should be alert and active, in good spirits, with a shiny, healthy coat. Watch your dog while she walks, runs and plays. A dog who receives adequate nutrition and who receives periodic veterinary examination will most likely live longer. At your initial visit, your veterinarian can discuss this further and his recommendations in more detail.

"What do I do if my Dog has Fleas?"

Frequent vacuuming of your household and laundering of your dog's bedding can go a long way to reducing fleas. In addition, there are some good products that can be applied as little as once a month that can virtually eliminate fleas on your dog. Talk to your veterinarian.

"Should I Train my Dog? If so, How?"

Teaching your dog how to behave will not only make her more pleasant to be around, but will also help protect her safety in a world dominated by man-made dangers such as busy streets. Training your dog can also be fun, and you'll both learn a lot. Well-trained, obedient dogs are more content, and so are their caretakers. A little love, patience and training will solve most annoying behaviors.



Never use punishment as a means of training as this will only confuse the dog. Yelling, scruff-shaking, hitting, and rubbing the dog's face in his mess is not only unnecessary, but combined with poor timing and lack of knowledge of basic animal learning theory, as is often the case, they can be cruel and ineffective. Not only does the dog experience the mental and physical punishment, but she will not know how to avoid it.

Telling ourselves that our dog "knows better" because she is acting guilty is not only untrue, it is little more than a justification for our own anger.

Physical punishment of dogs under the guise of "training a dog for her own good" is hardly a way to bond with your dog. Dogs can, and should be, trained free from physical and mental punishment. Happily, the 1990s witnessed an explosion of interest in, and development of, training and behavior modification techniques that utilize positive reinforcement rather than corporal punishment as the principle means of motivation. These techniques are now widespread, well-understood, user-friendly, dog-friendly and are available for virtually every training task and behavior "problem."

"How much Exercise Does my Dog Need?"

Even a dog with access to a yard needs the mental and physical stimulation of regular walks. Some dogs require a great deal of exercise, others remain happy and healthy with little. Daily exercise of some kind is necessary, but you don't have to walk or run for miles. A dog can chase a ball or retrieve a stick. All dogs should be allowed to build up to exercise gradually, just like a human. Keep in mind that heavy exercise with

young dogs under two years of age may do permanent damage to their growing bones and muscle tissues.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

"I just adopted a cute puppy. She likes to get into everything. Does my puppy have special needs?"

Medically, puppies require a series of vaccinations over the course of several months. Introduce her only to dogs you know have been fully vaccinated until she has received full protection herself. On the behavior side, your puppy needs to learn limits. Almost anything a puppy does is "cute," but don't fall so much for the puppy's charms that you ignore behavior you would not accept when your puppy becomes an adult. From the beginning, establish rules that will apply to the dog when he is full-grown. For example, if you don't want a large dog sleeping on the bed, don't allow the puppy to sleep on the bed. Teach your puppy to chew her own toys (not your shoes), to sleep in her bed (not yours), and to eat dinner from her own bowl (not beg at the table for scraps).

"Some of my dog's behaviors, such as chewing, digging, and barking, are annoying to me. How can I change them?"

The first key to changing your dog's behavior is knowing that your dog is not being "bad." Most dogs adopted from our shelter have had early lives with another person, so they often have established habits or behaviors. The second key is the recognition that dogs are not people in fur coats. They are dogs, with a unique view of the world. All of the behaviors that point to a mentally healthy dog--chewing, digging, barking, chasing moving objects, scavenging, excited greetings--are often seen as behavior "problems." Dogs chew on shoes because in the eyes of a dog, that is what shoes are made for. Many dog lovers spend a great deal of time, develop a great sense of frustration, and cause a great deal of confusion to dogs, by trying to dissuade a dog from acting like a dog.

This does not mean that dogs should be allowed to chew shoes, bite inappropriately, bark endlessly, or dig up the neighbor's garden. Dogs should be provided outlets for their natural behavior and be actively taught to employ these human-approved outlets, rather than having their behavior deemed unacceptable in any context and therefore punished out of them. Appropriate chew toys, Frisbee, designated digging areas, regular exercise, and off-leash dog-dog interaction, combined with positive, reward-based training will go a long way to reducing your annoyance and keeping your dog happy and healthy.

"My dog/puppy urinates in the house. How do I house-train my dog?"

The success and ease of house-training depends on the amount of time you devote to it. The single most important aspect of house-training is rewarding good behavior. And to provide ample opportunity to eliminate outside--first thing in the morning, before you leave for work, as soon as you return from work, half an hour after a meal, and last thing at night. After a while, this can probably be reduced to three times a day but keep in mind that puppies do not start to have bladder control until they are

about five months old.

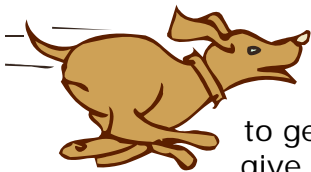
Crate training is perhaps the easiest and most effective ways to house-train a dog. Crates are nothing more than larger dog carriers that can be purchased at any pet supply store. Dogs do not like to soil their sleeping quarters if given adequate opportunity to eliminate elsewhere. Start out for short periods (no more than 45 minutes or an hour for puppies) and immediately take the dog outside to eliminate-- and reward her when she does with praise and treats right away! If your dog eliminates in the crate, do not punish her. If the dog eliminates in the crate because you left her in there too long, the fault is yours! Dogs should not be crated for extended period of times, as they can develop both an aversion for the crate and other behavior problems. The TC SPCA has a more detailed fact sheet on the importance and effectiveness of crate training.

"My dog pulls on her leash when I walk her, how can I stop this?"

Your dog is excited. Going for a walk means new sights, sounds, and smells. Dogs who get plenty of attention and opportunities to experience new things are least likely to pull. Make sure to provide your dog with ample opportunities to visit with other people and other dogs.

In addition, the easiest way to stop a dog from pulling on the leash during walks is to purchase a leash designed to control such behavior. We do *not* recommend the use of choke or pinch collars. These collars are designed to induce control through the application of pain. Once dogs become desensitized to the pain, the dog's caretaker must increase the severity of the pull, and thus increase the amount of pain, to achieve the same control. In addition, dogs quickly learn that it is safe to pull when the choke collar is off, but unsafe when it is on. The end result is more pain, as these dogs never stop pulling without the choke collars. Happily for dogs, halter-type leashes for dogs, based on the same principles as halters for horses and ponies, achieve great control mechanically (i.e., by changing leverage points) rather than through the use of pain. These types of leashes, such as the "Gentle Leader," are very effective and can be purchased at most pet supply stores.

You can also teach a dog that pulling on the leash gets her nowhere. Hold a treat in your hand at your side next to your belt line. Make sure your dog sees the treat. Like the proverbial horse chasing the carrot, walk so that your dog is at your side following the treat. Allow the dog to get the treat every few minutes (do not wait too long or she may give up!). If your dog pulls ahead on her leash, simply stop walking. Every time she pulls, you stop. After some time, your dog will learn that keeping a slack leash gets her where she wants to go.



UNHAPPY DOGS

All people would agree that intentional physical abuse of a dog is a terrible thing. Yet there is another cruel practice to which dogs are subjected far more frequently than corporal abuse. It is a form of mistreatment which is also devastating and painful to a dog, yet often fails to be regarded as abuse at all. It is neglect.

As a society, we have yet to recognize and appreciate the emotional and psychological

needs of animals. As a result, while our laws demand that an animal kept as a companion receive the basic requirements of sustenance and shelter, there is no way to guarantee that an animal receive love and attention. For the dog, the absence of human attention and affection is tragic.

Because dogs, like human beings, are pack animals, they, like us, need to socialize in order to remain psychologically healthy. Since domestication, however, companion dogs no longer have packs of dogs with which to live. As a result, they consider humans to be their families, and we serve as their surrogate packs. Moreover, both people and dogs are "den" animals, which is why dogs can be housetrained so easily. They want shelter in a safe, secure den--our homes--and they want to go outside to relieve themselves. Because of the need to socialize and the need for a den, keeping a dog isolated in a backyard goes against a dog's most basic instincts.

The thwarting of these needs results in miserable, lonely dogs who exhibit aberrant and often annoying traits, such as persistent barking and whining. These behaviors, which are the dog's way of pleading for attention, are often met with hostility by the dog's human family, which hurls insults and sometimes objects at the dog in a misguided attempt to quiet the animal. This interaction further fuels the dog's sense of rejection and often fosters in the human guardian a resentment of the animal.

Dogs offer people undying loyalty and unconditional love. In return, they ask for nothing more than a sense of belonging. The realities of modern life, as well as the dog's own needs, often require that dogs spend some part of the day in the backyard. Many of these dogs receive plenty of love and attention and are happy and healthy companions. Yet to banish a dog permanently to the backyard, while the rest of his "family" enjoy one another inside, is a betrayal of this loving pact--and that is no way to treat man's best friend.

YOUR CONTRACT WITH YOUR NEW DOG

We, the _____ family, believe that our dog is a full member of the family. This means that he/she has the right to be cared for and loved. Each person in the family agrees to help take care of our new dog and treat him/her with kindness, patience, love and respect.

We know that caring for our dog means responsibilities and jobs that must be done every day. We will give our dog proper food and fresh water every day.

We know that it costs money to take proper care of our dog. We will bring our dog to a veterinarian for regular check-ups and when he/she gets sick or injured.

We promise to spend time with our dog every day and exercise him/her to show him/her how much we love him/her.

We promise to love and care for our dog throughout his/her lifetime. We know that dogs can live for up to 15 years and we will make every effort to keep our dog, no matter what changes life may bring. If we cannot keep our dog, we will make every effort to find him/her a loving, new home or bring him/her back to the SPCA.

Parents' Signatures:

Children's Signatures:

About the Tompkins County SPCA

The Tompkins County SPCA was founded in 1904 as a shelter of hope. Our mission is to:

- ❖ care for companion animals in need and to find a loving home for every adoptable animal in Tompkins County;
- ❖ foster, through education, community action, and example, an enriching, positive relationship between people and their pets;
- ❖ lead the way, through innovation and focus, in recognizing the benefits that companion animals bring, and by acting on our shared responsibility to them.

At the Tompkins County SPCA, we dare to dream of building a No Kill community. We are not there yet, but with your help, we are making our dreams come true.