



Tompkins County SPCA

Dog Care Series

Your New Dog

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.

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 and Nylabones
- Dog brush
- A leash
- A collar and I.D. tag
- Dog treats for training and rewards

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.

