

# Welcoming a New dog to Your Home

Congratulations on the arrival of your new dog! Here are some helpful tips for ensuring a smooth adjustment and introduction to your family.

## PUPPY PROOF YOUR HOME

Dog proof your house and outdoor areas BEFORE your new dog arrives home. This is essential for puppies, but also very important for welcoming dogs of any age into a new home. An effective way to proof is to get down on your hands and knees and view the environment from the dog's perspective. There are likely many interesting chewing opportunities placed right at your dog's eye level! Remove or make a plan to prevent access to these things before the dog arrives.

## PLAN AHEAD FOR THE BIG DAY

Before your new dog arrives, be sure to gate off or otherwise block areas of the house where the dog will not be permitted. You can provide access to select rooms initially and then gradually open up new areas of the house when housetraining and appropriate chewing habits are well established.

Prepare some especially nice "welcome to the family" treats and hide them in places that will be reserved areas for the dog, such as his crate, bed, or doghouse.

Have food and water bowls in place. Have a few special treats in the food bowl and fresh water in the water bowl.

Ensure that every person has some exceptional treats. You want the dog's first impression of everyone in the family to be positive and rewarding.

## CALM GREETINGS ARE KEY

Family members will be excited to interact with their new dog. The best greeting approach is to wait patiently for the dog to approach each family member for an offered a treat. If the dog appears comfortable (relaxed body and loosely wagging tail) or returns for another treat, it's OK to start stroking under his chin or on neck.

## A SPECIAL TIP FOR SHY DOGS

For dogs who appear shy or fearful, introduce each individual family member one at a time and from a distance. Each person can gently toss the dog a treat, say "hello" in a gentle, upbeat voice, and retreat from the dog to provide him comfortable opportunity

to eat the treat. Repeat this until the dog appears more relaxed and interested in interaction. Please take your time when arranging greetings for the shy pups; less is more when encouraging friendship.

### FAMILY = FOOD AND FUN!

After the dog is comfortable with every family member, let him explore the area and approach family members of his own accord. Every time he approaches a person, he should receive another treat. The key here is to make the first impressions of his new home and family members as stress-free and rewarding as possible. Limit the initial greeting session with everyone present to no more than 15 minutes then take a break and go for a walk outdoors. You may wish to stage a repeat of the greeting session later in the day.

### SUPERVISE KIDS AND PETS

Make sure the dog is always under adult supervision or safely confined at all times. Do not leave your new dog under the supervision of any aged child, even temporarily. This may overwhelm or frighten the dog which may result in injury to a child.

### BUILD FRIENDSHIPS WITH OTHER DOGS

If you have other resident dogs, the first introduction should occur in a neutral area outside of your home. A neighborhood park or similar open area is an ideal setting for an introduction. Taking a walk together prior to an actual greeting is a great way to build some relaxed familiarity. The dogs will have the opportunity to observe and smell one another, but will be engaged in an enjoyable shared activity (walking!), reducing the stress that may accompany an immediate face-to-face introduction. Ensure each dog has his own handler and walk the dogs in proximity to one another, but not so close as to invite interaction. Supply treats to each dog throughout the walk for relaxed behavior, playful body language, and responsiveness to handler. As dogs grow increasingly comfortable in each other's proximity, you may elect to allow dogs to approach each other, but preferably not head on. Keep your leashes loose and your voice and chatter upbeat and gentle. The more relaxed you remain, the greater the opportunity for a successful introduction. If they appear relaxed and enthusiastic (loose body, loosely wagging tails), allow them to investigate each other, for short periods of time (5 to 10 seconds at first) and then continue your walk together.

If you feel tension arise between the dogs or one appears fearful, gently separate them by calling each name and guiding to you with a treat before resuming your walk. Take your time with the introduction and plan to take walks over a period of several days to

provide continued opportunities for the dogs to gain familiarity with one another. In the house, plan to keep the dogs separated until you are confident both dogs are comfortable and relaxed together. In most cases, well-socialized dogs are very good at navigating their relationships with other dogs. Your goal is to ensure the safety of your dogs and other people while they develop their friendship.

### LOW STRESS, NO PRESSURE FUN

For the first few weeks, refrain from exposing your new dog to overwhelming events such as parties, large family gatherings, or very crowded environments. Certainly go out and enjoy the world together and meet new people, but do so in smaller-scaled settings. Think local park instead of large farmer's market.

### NOTE ANY BEHAVIOR CONSIDERATIONS

While you and your dog are forming a fast friendship, pay attention to any behaviors you observe that may indicate the need for some additional support from a behavior or veterinary professional. Examples may include: growling or barking at strangers or a family member, guarding food or toys from people or other dogs, or excessive barking and destructive behavior when left alone.

### WE ARE HERE TO HELP

Many behavior and veterinary professionals are available to support you with positive, dog-friendly strategies to manage and resolve behavior concerns. When addressed early, behavior concerns resolve more swiftly. Please do not hesitate to reach out for support with any questions.