

## Bringing Home Your New Dog

*Congratulations on your new dog!* Bringing home a shelter dog is incredibly rewarding and exciting! Not to worry, there are many ways to best set them up for success!

### The first few days:

- **Be patient** — This is a HUGE change for them, and while they figure out your routine and criteria for your household, there may be some oopsies!
- **Let them decompress** — Avoid taking them to new places like pet stores, friends' houses or dog parks. This also includes having your dog meet lots of new people at once. The shelter is a stressful environment, and they'll need some time to decompress from that stress!
- **Make a safe space** – This can be as simple as a blanket that is theirs and theirs only! Creating a safe space for your new dog to go to where they can be unbothered can assist in decompression. Whether it be a blanket, crate, dog proof room, or even a spot on the couch, it's a great idea! This is also a great spot to offer enrichment and calming activities.
- **Ensure the collar fits properly** – The last thing anyone wants is to have their new dog get loose! It's stressful not only for us as adopters, but for the dog. A great rule of thumb is to twist two fingers underneath the collar or place them inside the loop of a martingale collar.
- **Enrichment** – Giving your dog enrichment items that allows them to use their senses can assist in decompression and relationship building. Enrichment can be something as simple as a lick mat, peanut butter plate, doing treat hide and seek, or whatever your dog may enjoy. Licking and sniffing are soothing tasks for dogs.
- **Use your walks to explore** – Make sure your walks are more adventurous rather than involving heavy training. Keep their world relatively small and help them explore their new environment with confidence.
- **Avoid leaving them for long durations** – This is as big of a change for them as it is for you! Try to bring home your new dog around a time where you can spend some quality time with them, and slowly work on leaving them for longer periods.



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### After the first week:

- **Slowly open their world** – As they decompress a bit more, you can begin to go for longer and more relaxing walks in quieter areas. Let the dog use their nose and get to know the lay of the land. This is a great way to help wear them out while also enriching their lives and creating some fun new experiences with you!
- **Chat with your vet** – Having a great relationship with your veterinarian can be a huge benefit. Call about an initial checkup, updating vaccines, or just schedule a happy time vet visit where your dog can get some cookies and have a good time!
- **Meet a few pals** – Now's the time to begin introducing new people in a controlled and calm way. Co-walks with new people, or some calm time together with the introduction of new people can help build confidence in the dog and their confidence in you.
- **Begin training** – With some stress decompressed, your dog will likely be more in the headspace to learn new skills. This can strengthen your relationship between you and your dog, as well as make sure you are communicating as well as you possibly can. Utilizing science-based, positive reinforcement-based training is a sure way to have some fun and strengthen the relationship. Start easy by working on things they may already know or are easier to learn and see where that brings you! You can always make it more difficult later!
- **Build a routine** – Dogs frequently thrive off routine and are beginning to learn what their new lives are going to look like. Try to keep a relatively consistent routine to keep your dog's stress levels low, but the routine doesn't need to be strict!
- **Enjoy your new dog** – As your relationship continues to build between you and your new dog, have fun! Learning silly tricks, going for fun adventures, and generally doing things your dog enjoys is a great way to bond with them.

**Have some questions?** Our behavior team is ready to help! Give us a call at (515) 262-9503, ext. 310 and we'll get back to you as soon as we can!

