

10 Tips For Welcoming Home Your Newly-Adopted Dog

1. **Be prepared:** Before you adopt your dog, know which training method you're going to use (we love clicker training and other positive-reinforcement techniques) and read up on it so you can employ the philosophy from day one. Research dog care and nutrition in advance as well, and decide which food you'll feed your dog and how many times a day he'll eat (usually once or twice). The more prepared you are, the smoother your new family member's transition will be.

2. **Be flexible:** While it's good to be prepared, remember that your new dog is a living being with a mind of his own, and he may well express preferences that run counter to your plans. If the sleeping arrangements you've laid out just don't work for him, you may have to shuffle things around a bit. If the sound of the clicker scares him to death, a different training method may be in order. Maintain a good sense of humor and try not to get exasperated. The transition period won't last forever. Take it slow: get your routine set that works for both of you, introduce new people, pets and places after you've had a chance to bond with your pet over the first week or two. Soon you and your new buddy will have a well-established routine.

3. **Shop for the basics:** You'll need a leash, collar, a bed, food and water dishes and, of course, food! It's a good idea to have these items in place even before you bring your new dog home. One other thing to buy right away: an ID tag! Put the tag on your dog immediately—we can't stress that enough. By the way, you'll notice that a crate isn't on the list of things to buy in advance. If you plan on crate-training, it's best to take your dog with you when you shop for the crate so you can find the correct size.

4. **Make sure all family members are on board:** Set some ground rules and make sure everyone in the family agrees to follow and enforce them. For instance, if you don't want your new pup on the couch, all the training in the world won't help if your daughter lets him sit there with her when you're not home. Also, if caring for your dog will be a family effort, be certain everyone understands and agrees to their particular roles and responsibilities.

5. **Help your new pal adjust:** Over the first few days to few weeks, your new dog will be going through an adjustment period. You may notice some symptoms of anxiety, including a lack of appetite and suppressed bowel habits. Your dog may even hide under or behind furniture or stay in one particular room for a few days. Don't be alarmed—this is absolutely normal behavior. By showing your new friend patience and understanding, you'll be helping him through a tough, scary time and showing him how wonderful his new home really is!

6. **Establish a schedule of feeding and walking and be consistent:** Try to walk him and feed him at the same times each day, and signal the walking and feeding times with the same key words every time. For instance, right before you feed him, you might say, "Dinner time!" A reliable routine is an important tool in successfully integrating your new dog into your family and helping him feel secure.

7. **Set aside time to bond:** Spend some quiet time with your dog each day, petting him gently and speaking in a soothing voice. Touch is an incredibly powerful method of communication, one that is almost impossible to misunderstand. Show your dog he's safe and loved, and your relationship will get off to a beautiful start.

8. **Everyone needs time alone:** Your dog is no exception! Give him time every day to be alone and to explore his new surroundings. Observe from a distance to make sure he's safe, but not close enough to intrude on his "me" time.

9. **Slowly introduce him to new things and people:** We know you're dying to show your amazing new family member to all of your other family and friends, but take it slowly! A good rule of thumb is to introduce no more than one new person to your dog each day. Also, save the first trip to the dog park or any other busy environment for a few weeks later, to avoid overwhelming and confusing him.

10. **Get him a tune-up:** Schedule a first visit to your dog's new veterinarian during the first week (or immediately upon adoption if you have other pets at home or suspect your new pup might be ill). Bring any and all medical and vaccine records supplied by the shelter or rescue from which you adopted your dog. Many veterinarians will even provide a free first checkup to folks who adopt a pet! This first visit is a great time to get clues about your dog's personality and past history, so don't be afraid to ask lots of questions. Also, have your dog microchipped right away (if he's not already), so you can be reunited if (gasp!) you ever get separated. True love is hard to replace!

Adapted from adopt a pet blog