

## Top Tips for Safely Bringing Home a Rescue or Shelter Dog

- **Hold a family meeting to create rules about caring for the dog.** Will he be allowed on the couch, the bed, and in all rooms of the house? Where will he sleep and eat? Who will walk him and clean up after him? As a family, you must all be consistent with your decisions or you will confuse the dog, usually resulting in the dog making his own rules and causing unnecessary tension.
- **Have the necessary items your dog will need from the start:** ID tags, a collar and a 6 foot leash, food and water bowls, food, dog toys, a crate and bedding, and basic grooming tools.
- **Bring your new dog home when you can be there for a few days** (ideally) so you can supervise him as he learns your house rules.
- **Just before you bring your dog into the home, take him for a walk to tire him out a little.** Walks are not only good exercise, but they also serve as a training tool and an opportunity to establish the lines of communication that better educate him.

### Establish Ground Rules in the First Days

- **At first, limit your dog to one room or area.** This allows him time to become familiar with the smells and sounds of his new home. Try to limit your time away from home those first days; your spending time with him will help him to become more comfortable in his new, unfamiliar home.
- **Keep your dog on leash while inside your home for the first few weeks** so you can immediately teach him what behaviors are and are not acceptable by showing and guiding him through the appropriate exercises. For safety's sake, NEVER leave a leash on your dog when he is unsupervised.
- **Your rescue dog should NOT be left alone in the house with your existing pets** until you have carefully monitored and controlled their interactions for a period of time
- **Expect housetraining accidents.** Your dog is in a new territory and is establishing a new routine, so accidents probably will happen. Review housetraining information available from the shelter, your veterinarian or your local Bark Busters trainer. The key is to be consistent and maintain a routine.
- **Dogs instinctively like to den,** and a crate makes the ideal place for your dog to sleep and get away from household hubbub. While [crate training](#) also makes housetraining and training in general easier, limit the amount of time the dog is crated. The crate should be roomy enough to allow your dog to stand up, turn around, and lie down comfortably. An alternative to a crate is a dog-proofed part of your home, such as a laundry or mud room. You can use a tall climb-proof baby gate or dog gate to block off the area from the rest of the house.
- **Most rescue dogs have been given basic vaccinations and many have already been spayed or neutered.** It is important that your dog is examined by a veterinarian within a week after adoption for a health check and any needed vaccinations. While there, arrange for the spay/neuter surgery if needed.
- **For the first few days, limit guest visits to allow your dog to get comfortable with his new family.** When you do have guests, ask their help in training your dog by instructing them not to pay attention to him until he has calmed down. One way to communicate this request is to post a sign on your front door informing visitors that you have a new dog in training.

## A Trained Dog Makes for a Happy Human-Canine Bond

- **Get guidance for training your dog.** A well-trained dog is a happier dog and a joy to have around. Your animal shelter may have performed a behavioral evaluation on your dog to help the adopter understand what, if any, potential behavioral issues the dog may have. Knowing this information ahead of time may be helpful when you begin training with your new dog. If you already have a dog, whether he was adopted from a shelter or not, a helpful tool (called the Behavioral Rating Quiz) to determine how he compares to other dogs is available at [www.BarkBusters.com](http://www.BarkBusters.com).
- **Dogs need consistent pack structure.** If they don't have a consistent set of rules to follow, then they try to become the leader, which can create numerous behavioral problems. Thus, you—and all humans in your home—need to be consistent. Practice obedience training, set rules and apply them calmly and consistently, and praise your dog's good behavior. He will be much more comfortable in a pack with structure and will bond more quickly to you.
- **It is amazing how quickly dogs learn what is acceptable and what is not.** Dogs have a language of their own, and once we understand it, we can communicate better what we expect of them.