

Tips for Dogs in Transition

These tips apply to dogs and puppies entering a new environment.

Adjustment Time

It can take weeks to months for a dog to adjust to a new home. Patience and management are key.

Plan to provide active supervision for the first three weeks to prevent the dog from forming unwanted habits (chewing, accidents, digging). Use baby gates/exercise pens/crates to eliminate access to areas, or leash the dog to you while in the house. Gradually allow them more freedom while maintaining supervision.

Reward them with attention, treats, play, and access to things they like when they are calm and doing the behaviors you expect.



Dog-to-Dog Introductions

There are multiple strategies for introducing new dogs. Choose a strategy that will work best for your particular dog and situation. Some key points for any introduction include:

- Avoid having dogs directly approach one another from the front or letting dogs sniff face-to-face.
- Handlers should avoid having any tension on leashes as this can increase tension in the dogs.
- Introduce only when both dogs show relaxed body language. See the body language article for more information.
- Some dogs need more decompression time and slower introductions than others.

A few introduction strategies include:

- Introduce existing dogs to new dogs on a walk outside, on leash. Walk further apart and gradually decrease the distance as a dog's comfort allows until both dogs are walking parallel. Or, walk the dog in arcs and work your way closer to one another (relaxed dogs typically meet with their bodies approaching in curves instead of direct face-face approaches).
- Go on a sniffing walk together at a park. Allow the dogs to sniff the ground, which can be a calming activity.
- Go on a nature hike together.
- Meet through a baby gate inside the house. For shy/fearful dogs who panic on leash, this may be a better option than leash walking. You can gently toss some treats to each dog in the direction away from the baby gate to help the dogs get comfortable.
- Meet through a fence. You can gently toss some treats to each dog in the direction away from the fence to help the dogs get comfortable.

After the dogs are relaxed and comfortable, you can bring them into a securely fenced yard or together within the home if you do not have a yard. Ahead of time, pick up any food or water bowls and toys off the floor before introducing the dogs in the home or yard. Keep them leashed and drop the leashes and let them interact, monitoring body language.

During the first few weeks, not leave the new dog and existing dog together without supervision. Some dogs may need extra time. You can consider leaving dogs together unsupervised when they have demonstrated the ability to negotiate conflict on their own and can share space calmly.

Prepare to give your new dog time away from the other dog in a quiet area where they can decompress. If either dog is not exhibiting loose, relaxed body language, separate the dogs so that they can have some alone time.

Introducing Dogs to Other Pets



Leash the dog and also use physical barriers like a gate or pen for initial introductions – go slow. Both pets should display calm and relaxed behavior before allowing more freedom. Keep introductions short and increase duration when they are both comfortable.

Give cats a safe, separate space to retreat to. Baby gates with cat doors and cat towers are helpful.

Do not leave other pets alone unsupervised with the new dog. Monitor the dog’s behavior to make sure they are relaxed around the other pets. If the dog’s body stiffens, if they stare, if they chase, or if you have

trouble gaining their attention around the other pet, separate them from one another using sturdy physical barriers (separate rooms would be best) and seek the help of a behavior professional.

Dogs and Children

Teach children to use Pat Pet Pause when meeting a new dog. Check out this website for videos, songs, and posters that help kids learn how to interact with dogs and read body language: <https://www.thefamilydog.com/>.

Actively supervise the dog with young children or children who are not members of the household, even if you trust the dog. Active supervision means an adult is in the same room, observing the child and dog interacting and able to support positive interactions and intervene if there are inappropriate choices (by child or dog). It is never okay to let a child pull a dog’s tail, sit on a dog, etc. Do not allow a child to get in a dog’s face, kiss, hug, stare, or blow air in the dog’s face. If a dog is eating their food or a chew, children should be taught not to approach or touch the dog. Children should not take toys/chews away. Never wake a dog up using touch.

Allow your dog to have his/her personal bubble, just like any human, especially around a child. Always provide a safe space like a quiet crate to be away from children. If your dog growls at an approaching child, direct the child to stop and move away. If you cannot, direct the dog to



Ask your PARENTS & our OWNER
But MOST importantly - ASK US (the dogs!)

<p>then ALWAYS...</p> <p>pat to invite us</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STAND STILL • PAT YOUR LEG • INVITE US INTO YOUR SPACE <p>We come over = YES PLEASE We don't = NO THANKS</p> <p>Pet another dog, another day, and thanks for listening!</p>	
<p>pet the right spot</p>	<p>ON THE BODY NOT on the HEAD!</p> <p>Our fave places are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ON THE SHOULDER • UNDER THE CHIN • ON THE SIDE 	
<p>pause to see if we still dig it thefamilydog.com</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PET FOR 3 SECONDS • THEN STOP PETTING AND PAUSE ...to let us choose. <p>Do we walk away? YES = we're done, thanks. NO = more, please. Another 3 seconds & a pause, please!</p>	

move away. Support the dog's warning system, they need to be able to communicate when they are uncomfortable. Punishing or correcting a dog that growls or snaps when they are uncomfortable can teach them not to warn – creating a dog that may bite with no warning.

Crate Training

Crate training can help keep your home and dog safe. A crate can keep your dog from developing bad behavior habits. The crate should be a place of comfort and safety for them to call their own. Put a mat or blanket in the crate, as long as your dog will not chew it. There are also more durable or “chew-proof” beds that you can buy. If crating the dog at night, placing the crate in the bedroom can help the dog stay calm and sleep through the night.

Give treats for going in and feed meals in the crate. Have a special “crate only” chew toy. Never use the crate as punishment. Never crate your dog in anger. Always treat your dog for going into the crate.



Especially in the beginning, keep crate times to short periods. As you are sure the dog is comfortable, gradually increase the time and vary it. Sometimes just crate your pup for 10 minutes while you are home. Puppies should not be crated for longer than they can hold their bladder and bowels. If your dog is anxious in the crate and is not able to be left home alone outside of the crate, seek the help of a behavior professional.

Home Alone

Give the dog or puppy a safe space to be, where they can be comfortable while you are away. Provide activities like a stuffed Kong or chew they can safely enjoy when alone.

Practice leaving for short durations several times before you need to leave for a longer period of time. Adult dogs could be crated 6-8 hours of time at maximum. The maximum number of hours a puppy could be left alone is their age in months + 1. For example, a 2-month-old puppy could be left home alone in a safe area for up to 3 hours. If you can't come home frequently enough, hire a pet sitter, dog walker, or have a neighbor or family member check in.

Use video conferencing from a device left in the house with the dog (muted) to your phone so you can spy and make sure they are settling within a few min of you leaving. They should relax and rest or do the activity you provided. If your dog is not comfortable being left alone, talk to your vet and hire a behavior professional to help you teach your dog how to cope with being alone

Housetraining

Be patient. Even house-trained adult dogs can have accidents while adjusting to the routines of a new home. Good management will prevent accidents. Restrict the dog's home access to a smaller area where you can provide supervision. If you cannot actively supervise at the moment, confine the puppy or dog to a crate or pen.

Pick a spot outside for bathroom area and use it consistently. Take your dog out after they wake, eat, or play. During the first few days it will help to take your dog out as frequently as possible (every couple hours regardless). Puppies will need to go much more frequently than adults. If you see your dog sniffing/circling in the house, take them out immediately.

Praise and reward with a treat immediately after the dog goes to the bathroom outdoors. You should do this within a second or two of the dog finishing (rather than waiting and going back inside and rewarding).

Never yell or punish your dog for a potty accident in the house. This will make things worse. The dog may become afraid to go to the bathroom in front of you, and this will make it more difficult to encourage the dog to go to the bathroom outside when humans are in sight. Punishment for bathroom mistakes leads to the dog sneaking away to potty in a quiet room where humans cannot see them.

Keep a potty journal of the dog or puppy's accidents each day so that you can identify any patterns and if the dog is becoming more successful at going to the bathroom outside. Clean accidents with enzymatic cleaners like Nature's Miracle solution to prevent them from being drawn back to that area.

Chewing/Digging

Make sure that you have safe/suitable things for your dog to chew on, like Nylabones, Kongs, etc. If pup starts to chew on something they aren't supposed to, redirect them to something they can chew. For adult dogs, keep inappropriate items out of reach until the dog has established what is appropriate to chew (typically several weeks for most dogs). For puppies, this will take much longer.



Never chase after a dog that has "stolen" something. If your dog takes an inappropriate item, get a high value treat (meat, cheese, a bit of bread) and show it to them to trigger them to drop the item. As soon as they release it, praise and toss the treat away so they move off of the item so you can pick it up.

If digging becomes an issue, provide more enrichment and an appropriate place to dig if your dog enjoys this activity. Redirect from areas you do not want digging to the area where it is ok.

Enrichment

Dogs need daily physical, mental and social stimulation to meet their enrichment needs. Each dog's needs are unique. A satiated dog will be pleasant to live with.

Ideas for enrichment include taking walks around the neighborhood, teaching the dog new skills at home using positive reinforcement, rotating toys for the dog to play with so they get a new toy each day, trick training, going for a sniffing walk, taking the dog for a nature walk. Play games with your dog. Throw balls outside, roll them inside. Play hide and seek. Hide toys/treats in the room and encourage/help the dog to find them with you. Use puzzle feeders, snuffle mats, lick mats, or trick training for enrichment and mental stimulation. Take your dog on many short car rides to fun places (parks, pet stores, etc.) so they will become comfortable with transport.

Check out this group for more enrichment ideas:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/canineenrichment/>



Puppies

Learn more about puppy training through Puppy Passports:

<https://gigisbehavior.org/puppass/>

“Puppy-proof” your house; put electrical cords out of reach, place garbage cans behind doors. Set up an exercise pen with access to the puppy’s crate, a potty area, and puppy-safe toys. Puppies require constant supervision while not in a crate or exercise pen. Puppies who are teething will try to chew on inappropriate objects (or humans)! Redirect puppy to an appropriate toy. Use management to prevent puppy from accessing inappropriate objects (pick them up, don’t allow puppy to get to them). Take puppies outside to potty frequently. Very young puppies may go to the bathroom nearly every 30 minutes. The maximum number of hours a puppy could be left alone is their age in months + 1.

The socialization window for puppies is open until about 12-16 weeks. During this time, it is important to ensure that puppy has positive experiences with new people, places, sounds, and pets. Bad experiences will shape puppy’s future behaviors, so carefully set up these positive experiences with friendly people and fully vaccinated pets that enjoy interacting with puppies. Read your puppy’s body language to ensure that they are not overwhelmed.



If puppy has not had two vaccinations, avoid touching the ground at public places like parks, gas stations, dog parks, pet stores. Instead, set up other opportunities for socialization, such as at puppy school or the houses of neighbors with friendly, vaccinated and well-socialized pets that enjoy interacting with puppies. Teach puppy about new sounds and surfaces at home by playing different sounds on your computer and provide a variety of surfaces for your puppy to explore. You can pay them with treats or toys that they enjoy for choosing to be brave. Avoid luring them into doing something they might find scary! Get puppy comfortable with wearing both a collar and harness.

Get help early! For more information on welcoming an adopted dog into your home, read “Love Has No Age Limit” by Patricia McConnell. If you are having issues with your adopted dog, we recommend Gigi’s Behavior Services at <https://gigisbehavior.org/>. We also have a list of trainers on our website. Read the “How to choose a dog trainer” article in your adoption packet to learn how to choose an appropriate trainer and look out for red flags. You can also reach out to us at pawsbehaviormedical@googlegroups.com.