



A Guide to the First Two Weeks:

Setting your newly adopted dog up for success!

Adopting a dog from a rescue organization is one of the most meaningful and rewarding things a person can do in their lifetime. Over time, your canine companion will look to you for guidance, direction, and comfort, but for now, the feeling of being overwhelmed by all the new changes may take precedence. Whether you know your new dog's history or not, there's no doubt their life may have been extremely stressful and even though being adopted by you is the greatest thing to have ever happened to them, at first it will be another change they need to adjust to. There are specific things you can do to help your dog decompress and ensure a positive experience for your new pup. Here are a few tips to help your newly adopted rescue dog settle in.

Keep their Circle Small and Socialize Slowly

From the moment your dog walks through the door, they're bombarded with new scents and sights. Everything from the people in your family to the pillows on your sofa will be unfamiliar. Socialization is an essential part of raising a dog, but too much too soon can be a bad thing. Allow your new dog time to adjust to you and your family first. Stock up on supplies at the pet store without him. Places that offer a lot of stimuli and new smells can be overwhelming and your pooch isn't quite ready to make canine friends yet. Give them at least two weeks of transition time before starting with socialization. And when you do start introducing them to new people and experiences, do it one step at a time. Instead of throwing them a welcome home party with all your family and friends, invite individual people over only after the dog has gotten used to you and the other people in your house. Don't try to do it all at once.

Emit a Calm Energy

Dogs take emotional cues from the humans around them. They're more perceptive than people give them credit for, and they easily know what others are feeling. If you're in an excited, exuberant mood, they'll pick up on your energy. If you're calm and relaxed, they'll feel the same. Your main emotion when you first bring your dog home will probably be excitement, but remember your dog is already overwhelmed with feelings of stress, anxiety, and possibly fear. Acting overly excited or offering your dog too much stimulus will be too much for them to handle. Do your dog a favor and keep your emotions in check for the first several days. Try not to get too excited or too loud, and control your temper when your dog is around.

Establish a Routine

One of the first things you'll need to do when welcoming your dog home is earn their trust. When their life so far has been a confusing fluster of unreliability, establishing a routine is a good way to set them safely on their feet. They'll feel more confident and safe in their surroundings when they're not guessing what new surprise they'll be faced with next. They'll learn to rely on your predictability and trust you to keep up their routine. Establish a routine time for feeding, going for walks, and using the bathroom outside. \

Establish Positive Associations

It is important that you associate all possible negative experiences with something positive. For example, a dog that has been crated for most of its life may not enjoy being crated. If the only time the dog goes into the crate is when you leave, he will likely associate the crate with a negative experience. However, if he gets a high-value treat, like a Kong, every time he goes in the crate, then he will begin to associate the crate with a positive experience.

Offer Patience

Your dog's new life starts the moment they leave Sweet Paws Rescue or their foster home, but it will take more than a car ride home for them to feel completely comfortable. In general, newly adopted dogs don't begin to show their true personalities until 6-8 weeks after being adopted. They spend the first few days decompressing and the next few weeks learning about their new lives. They won't feel comfortable enough to fully relax until they trust the people around them and feel safe in their new environment. This is not something that can be forced or rushed. All you can do is be patient while providing them with the love and support they need. The timeline is different for every dog, and they'll benefit most when they're given time and space. Instead of always being the one to initiate interaction, let your dog come to you. Let them do things at their own pace to secure a strong foundation for your future friendship.

Adapted from "How To Help Your Newly Adopted Rescue Dog Settle In" by Amber King