



How to Bring a Newly Adopted Dog Home

You went to the shelter. You spotted that dog pressing himself against the front of the kennel, wagging his tail in the biggest, fastest circles he could make. You took him out on a first date--uh, sorry, I mean a little walk--and he was maybe a bit bouncy, but your heart melted as you watched him sniff shrubbery and every so often look at you with a big grin on his face. The adoption counselor grilled you about your landlord and your past history with pets and then smiled and approved your application. You've got a leash and a collar and a bowl and a bed and a brand-new dog. Yikes! Now what?

This week, how to help your adopted dog settle in.

How to Bring a New Dog Home

First, bear this in mind--your new adoptee has undergone a lot of stress. She came to the shelter as a stray, or her family relinquished her. Even the cleanest and quietest shelter isn't a home, and even the kindest staff can't substitute for a long-term family. Now here comes another upheaval--and your new dog has no way to know what's coming next. It's a lot to take in even for the friendliest, most stable dog.

So keep Dogalini's arrival low-key. Give her an opportunity to eliminate in the backyard or on a neighborhood walk; then let her explore her new home at her own pace. If you have children, they should have met her at the shelter so you and the shelter staff could assess how comfortable she is with kids. Hopefully, the meeting has also cut Dogalini's novelty value, so if your kids are young they aren't screaming with excitement to have her home.

When to Bring a New Dog Home

What about the adoption's timing? A couple of days off from work will give you a good opportunity to get to know Dogalini and introduce her to your friends and household routines. On the other hand, there's evidence that shelter dogs suffer from separation anxiety more commonly than dogs who've had the same home all their lives. And some behavior experts feel that separation problems can be triggered by an abrupt increase in how much time a dog spends alone. So if you adopt Dogalini at the start of a two-week vacation and she gets used to having your company all day, she may find your return to work unduly distressing.

Let Your New Dog Get Used to Spending Time Alone

To help avoid such problems, leave Dogalini alone for a while every day. Start small-- see how she does by herself as you make several daily outings to the mailbox or the corner store. Then hit the supermarket or go have coffee with a friend. You can also use these early days as an opportunity to crate train her if she came to you without that valuable skill. I'll discuss crate training in my next article.

- See more at: <http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/pets/dog-care/how-to-bring-a-newly-adopted-dog-home#sthash.DEbbQINT.dpuf>

Introduce Your New Dog to Your Friends and Family

I also recommend that during Dogalini's first days and weeks with you, you [introduce her to your friends and extended family](#). Have them pay low-key visits to your home and get acquainted with Dogalini there. That advice reflects my observations in working with [territorially aggressive dogs](#). These dogs [bark and lunge](#) fiercely at strangers coming to their home, yet many of them respond with appropriate sociability and friendliness to people who visited the home and made friends early in the dog's life or soon after the dog was adopted. I know of no studies on this subject. But I have a hunch that immediately after adoption, when a dog is learning what's normal in his new environment, there may be a brief window of opportunity for socialization. If Dogalini does later prove territorial with respect to strangers-- well, the more of your friends and family don't qualify as "strangers," the easier your life will be, and the better your chances of successful behavior modification as well.

Start Reward-Based Training Right Away

I mentioned that any shelter dog has been through considerable stress. That awareness may tempt you to set no rules or boundaries during Dogalini's first days and weeks with you. Bad move! Remember, this is the period when she's learning how to get along in her new home--what works, what doesn't, where the biscuits are kept. Start her off right by [showing her that polite behavior earns dogs all the good stuff in life](#)--dinner, walks, attention, butt scratches, and ball throws. Set aside at least some of Dogalini's food ration every day for training.

Let me make it absolutely clear that I'm not telling you to take a grim and taskmasterish attitude to your dog. On the contrary! You'll be watching Dogalini like a hawk so you can [catch her doing things you like](#). Then you'll quickly reward those desirable behaviors by giving Dogalini things she likes. If she happens to go lie quietly on her bed, [toss her a treat](#). If you're letting her out in the backyard to pee, take the opportunity to [teach her to wait for permission to go out the door](#). Does she paw at you for attention? Get up and walk away, but make it your business to deliver ear mooshes and chest rubs when she sits next to you instead. The sits will crowd out the pawing, I

guarantee it. And yes, you may reward pawing if that's the attention-seeking behavior you prefer.

The more your dog sees you as a source of good things, the more attentive he will be to you, and the stronger your bond will grow.

Positive Training Strengthens Your Bond with Your Dog

[Reward-based training](#) of a newly adopted dog has so many benefits I get excited thinking of them all. You're establishing good habits for a lifetime. And reward-based training is fun. If both you and Dogalini enjoy teaching and learning, you're more likely to keep training, and she's more eager to learn. The more your dog sees you as a source of good things, the more attentive he will be to you, and the stronger your bond will grow. Reward-based training even reduces stress. It's well established that stress increases in chaotic, unpredictable situations--that's as true for dogs as for humans. The dog whose household runs by clear rules and who knows how to get what he wants by means that delight his people instead of angering them is a happier, more confident dog.