

Adoption Counseling for Dogs

Important Issues to discuss with adopters concerning behavior

1. Decide on the rules of the household before you take the dog home and instill them from the very first day.

Examples: - dog is not allowed on the furniture
 - dog eats in the laundry room
 - dog can sleep in Joe's room

Dogs do not understand inconsistencies – set the rules and stick to them. Everyone in the family must agree.

2. Safeguard against separation distress

Dogs bond quickly to their new owners because they have had a broken bond in the past and were left at the scary shelter. This may lead to separation issues if you spend 24/7 with the dog the first day or two and then go to work on Monday.

To help the dog adjust to your schedule make sure you leave him alone for bits of time even on the first day you bring him home.

When you leave for work, turn the radio on (NPR station) and give the dog a food filled Kong or hide treats around the house. Don't make a big deal about leaving. When you get home greet the dog calmly.

3. Exercise

All dogs need aerobic exercise (a leash walk is NOT aerobic to a dog). Make sure he gets at least 20 minutes of aerobic exercise each day.

Suggestions: - fetch with a ball
 - going for a jog with you
 - stairmaster (tossing a ball or treats up so the dog runs up the stairs to get it)

4. Mental Stimulation

The best mental stimulation for a dog is using his nose. Take your dog for a walk and let him sniff things. Hide treats around the house for him to find. Lay a trail of treats through the yard or house for him to find.

Putting your dog's food inside feeder balls (or just an empty soda bottle) or a Kong toy can make it a challenge to get the food, thus providing mental stimulation.

5. Training

Reward the behaviors you like (with praise and/or a food treat) and ignore the behaviors you don't like.

Dogs learn through the consequence of their behavior – if the behavior is rewarded it will happen again, if its not – it will go away.

Resist the urge to simply punish the behaviors you don't like or your dog will learn that's the only way to get your attention.

6. Houstraining

Even adult dogs may have a few accidents in a new home – especially if they spent too long in the shelter.

Make sure you take your new dog outside regularly and praise and give a food treat when she eliminates outside.

Then watch her well when inside so that you can give immediate feedback if she starts to eliminate inside.

If, and ONLY if you catch the dog in the act – make a loud startling sound (clap your hand, stomp your foot, etc) so that the dog startles and stops “going”. Don't yell or use your voice in any way or you will teach the dog to be afraid to “go” in front of you.

You CAN NOT punish a behavior unless you catch the dog in the act!

Clean all accidents with an enzymatic cleaner. That's the only way to neutralize the odor so the dog can't smell it anymore. The smell of their waste can trigger them to go there again.

7. Crate Training

Crate training is a wonderful tool to safeguard your dog when you can't supervise him. It is not cruel but it is important to make sure the crate is big enough for the dog and that he likes to be in it.

Size: the dog should be able to stand up without his head touching the top and he should be able to lie down comfortably.

Make a positive association with the crate by tossing treats inside, feeding him inside, and giving a special chew toy or stuffed Kong when inside.

If a metal cage type crate is used – cover it with a sheet (leaving the door side uncovered) so that it's more like a den.

If the dog panics in the crate he may have confinement anxiety, not necessarily separation anxiety. Try confining him in a small bathroom or laundry room instead and see if he does better.