

Royal Animal Refuge

Bringing A New Dog Home

The Two-Week Decompression Period

“People want the dog to fit in and often make the biggest mistakes during this period. They will give the dog too much love, too much training, too much attention... everything that’s too much is TOO MUCH. After the experience of living at the shelter the best thing a dog can get upon getting out is space. Space that will allow the dog to decompress from the emotional stress that dogs incur at our shelter. During that phase they should NOT be bothered too much, NOT be engaged too much and NOT too much should be expected of them. Especially for the first few days...allow the dog to SEE what his new life will be without expecting him to Live this LIFE”

-Robert Cabral - The Decompression Phase- Bound Angels



Give ‘Em A Break

Naturally, the first thing you want to do with your new dog is ... everything! We KNOW you are so excited, and you want to share your new addition with everyone you can. And after all, isn't socialization one of the most important aspects of dog ownership? Yes. **BUT before all of that comes the bond and trust between dog and owner.** Your new dog needs time to adjust and there are many scenarios that people put their new dog through that only encourage negative behaviors to surface.

So, what are you planning on doing when you finally get your new family member?

“Well, we plan to go to PetSmart to get a new collar, leash, bowls, toys, etc. and of course we want to show him off to everyone! We might also stop by the in-laws’ place on the way home. Oh and then there is my best friend who has a dog too and we KNOW they would get along beautifully! And then when we go home, we’re going to let her out with our other three dogs and the cats so they can meet one another and wear each other out playing.”

Imagine that from the dog's point of view. He might like you, but he doesn't know you yet. He's facing new people, new routines, and new rules all at once. He's stressed, and every additional challenge adds to the stress. Just like a human, your dog might react by becoming defensive and short-tempered, or fearful and shy. Think about this: the majority of us when put into new situations do not put all of ourselves out there and we are more likely to withdraw from situations that make us uncomfortable. Things many people forget is that we expect our new dogs to be so accepting of everything and we put them in these very similar situations and then become alarmed when they 'act out'. Remember, to them, you are putting them in situations that make them feel uncomfortable.

You can make this transition easier by taking things slowly and simplifying the introduction process. We call this the **“Two Week Shutdown”**. During these

first weeks, avoid unnecessary stressors while the dog settles in, keep everything positive, and take it slowly. Two weeks is just a guideline -- some dogs will need less, others will need more.



The Basic Guidelines

Some things you want to keep in mind with your new dog when you first get them:

1. **A tired dog is a happy dog!** Exercising your dog(s) regularly and thoroughly will help ensure they relax into their new household a little easier. Without that pent-up energy, they've GOT to relax!
2. **Do not take them on walks yet.** Walks provide an overabundance of stimulation and there are many variables you may encounter that you need that trust built FIRST before subjecting them to those new situations. Instead, exercise your dog in the yard on a long lead (20ft plus) and spend some time getting to know one another.
3. **Do not take them to pet stores, dog parks, other people's homes, etc.** Again, these situations provide an overabundance of stimulation and your dog needs to have built trust in YOU that you will handle the situation, so they don't have to.

4. **Keep them leashed to you at ALL times when they are not crated.** Yes, even in the house and yes, even if you have a fully fenced yard. Why? It builds the precedence with them that YOU are the bringer of everything in life. Additionally, keeping them leashed to you keeps them from getting in trouble. If they aren't housetrained, they can't very well go run out of your line of sight and have an "accident" if you have them leashed to you huh? Or, if someone new comes in the home, keeping them leashed to you can help prevent them reinforcing undesirable behaviors like jumping on people. When the dog is leashed to you, you are in control. The dog will begin to understand this.
5. **Do not allow your new dog and your existing pets into a 24/7 free-for-all.** Remember, your existing pets don't know this new "intruder" and the new dog doesn't know the routine of the home and what's permissible. Setting a routine with the new dog first, without the full distraction of other pets will make life 1,000 times easier when you begin integrating them.
6. **Do not allow your new dog furniture privileges.** They haven't earned them yet. Create a spot for them to be when they are out lounging

around in each room. Furniture privileges can be given later on down the road if you so please.

7. **Do not give your new dog unstructured affection.** Any and all affection from you must have a purpose. No kissy face or baby talk. I know it is hard, especially when they have likely never had love before, but you will not be helping him or yourself if you do this.
8. **DO NOT PUT YOUR FACE IN YOUR NEW DOG'S FACE.** They do not know you and this can be very intimidating for your new dog. They could growl or worse, bite out of fear/anxiety. They need to trust you so don't assume that you can do this because they appear friendly.
9. **Do not allow your new dog to "go ahead of you".** Establish this rule right away. You go "out" and "in" FIRST through the door. In fact, it is a good idea to have them sit before they can enter, before you leash up, etc.
10. **If you have farm animals, do not introduce your new dog to any of the other animals during the decompression period.** The goal during the decompression period is to acclimate your new pet to their immediate surroundings and family and build trust with YOU. Introduction to chickens, goats, cows, horses and other farm animals requires a different type of introduction than you would do for introducing them to their home and other canine or feline pets. *For more information on introducing your new dog to farm animals, please ask your adoption coordinator.*



Ultimately, slowing things down and setting up a solid routine helps tremendously. It will help him learn who makes the decisions and it will help build the relationship between your new dog and all the members of your household. It may sound like tough work, but it's worth it!

The First Week

1. The Leash Tour.

When bringing your new dog home, give them a brief tour of their primary living area or the places they will be most often.

2. Use the Crate as a Tool.

Now, it's crate time! Once you have done a quick tour with the dog, take him to his crate area, allow him some water and practice the crate exercises. Crate the dog in a room by itself if possible.

WHY? It's time to give the dog some time to itself to take in everything that's happened thus far. It will be a safe haven for him in a time of uncertainty. It also keeps him isolated from other pets and helps him make good choices like NOT peeing inside or destroying your shoes.

With the dog still leashed, walk him to the door that you will be using to take him out to potty and take him out. Bring him back in and put him in his crate. **Let him rest.** It's important to establish the routine and structure of the crate straight away.

After some time, leash the dog and remove him from his crate, hand feed him his meal (great bonding/engagement exercise) and then go outside for a potty break.

Then back inside for some "out of the crate time."

3. Short Out-of-Crate Interactions

Initially, keep out-of-crate interactions short, just like time in the crate should be short. 20-30 minutes at a time initially will help keep interactions with you positive and help reinforce positive crate training. You will increase the time as needed as the days move forward, little by little. You are using the crate as a way to give them a time out to collect their thoughts and to process the new information they received in their interactions with you.

The goal for these first few weeks is to help your dog learn the structure/rules/boundaries of your home.

After free time, its back outside (still leashed) for potty and then back in for some crate rest.

Once you put your new dog in his crate, ignore him. **Let him rest.**

The first few weeks for your new dog should be very simple.

Walks/hand feeding/access to water/potty breaks/limited free time in the house/crate time ... **repeat.**

If you do not have other animals, please continue this process until you see fit. Patience and consistency with your new dog will reap the greatest rewards!



The Second Week

Introducing Your New or Foster Dog to Your Dog(s)

Take Things SLOW and EASY

When bringing home a new dog to a home with existing pets, it's important to realize that everyone in the household will need time to adjust to the new living arrangements and routine. It's important to take things very slow initially and keep things positive and upbeat.

1. Introduce Dogs in Neutral Setting

First, the initial meeting of the new dog with resident dog(s) needs to happen OFF your property in a quiet, neutral setting. We don't need your resident dogs to feel the need to "protect what is theirs" without having the opportunity to get to know one another first.

2. Crate and Rotate

Now, after the initial meeting, if things go well and you choose to bring the new dog home (*or this can be tweaked if you've already introduced some other way that wasn't recommended here*), it's time to crate and rotate initially. For at least the first 48 hours,

keep the new dog and your existing pets separated. Sure, let them sniff around.

You can even crate them side by side (never nose to nose) to help them get used to the other being around. But keep at least the first 2 days for yourselves and don't expect the new dog and existing dogs to interact and everything be hunky dory.

3. Keep Leashes On

After the initial time has passed, do another outdoors meeting on leash first, then bring them indoors and let them further interact. **KEEP LEASHES ON.** This is just in case something unexpected DOES happen. You've got leashes on to help keep things under control.

Keep new interactions **VERY** short initially. 10-15 minutes. End things on a positive note and give the dogs time to process everything that happened. This gives the dogs the opportunity to enjoy one another's company without becoming overstimulated and it also gives them the desire to want **MORE** interaction. Being very deliberate in the amount of time they have to play together and **WHEN** they get to play together sets that precedence of **YOU** being the person they look to for direction. And with multiple dogs, that's what you **WANT!**

4. Slowly Increase Interactions Together

Over the course of a few days, slowly increase the time they are out together. Remember to end things on a positive note and be on top of their play 100% of the time. Do not allow over excited play because it can quickly amplify. If one of the dogs is walking away from play, step in and separate. Pay attention and supervise and you can help keep a peaceful multi-dog home



5. Make Sure to Monitor Toys

We recommend not having any toys at all for them to play with. Let the dogs learn one another first before introducing things which may be of high value to one or all. Give them the chance to realize one another's signals for play and agitation. It is also YOUR responsibility to learn these things well. As they say, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!

Every dog is different.

Some might just fit right into your life with enthusiasm. Young pups sometimes handle things more easily than older dogs. A very timid or very reactive dog may need extra care, or one coming into a dramatically new environment (for example, a former yard dog moving into a house). But any new dog, especially one coming out of a chaotic shelter environment, will go through an adjustment period. By giving the dog a “time-out”, the dog can learn its new works, its new people, and begin to relax and

blossom under your care. So SLOW IT DOWN! You will see a HUGE difference in the dog and begin to see its honest and true personality. It will make for a better “honeymoon” period and save you both a lot of stress down the road. Two weeks may seem like a long time, but it is very short in comparison to the next 10 or so years you will have with your new companion.

If after following the two-week protocol and your foster or adopted dog is showing overt aggression such as snarling, growling, or baring teeth, please contact your Foster or Adoption Coordinator immediately so the situation may be assessed. If there is any aggression from the new dog, they may still be lacking the confidence in your relationship and you should separate the dogs immediately and continue the First Week protocol for 2 more weeks. Once all possibilities have been exhausted, RAR will bring in a trainer to assess the dog's ability or inability to live together. Until the dog can be re-homed, the dog should be kept in rooms safely apart from one another.



Additional Resources:

Introducing dogs to your chickens! by Kassandra Smith, 21 July 2020

<https://www.backyardchickencoops.com.au/blogs/learning-centre/introducing-dogs-to-your-chickens>

How to Introduce Your Dog to Pet Chickens (Yes, They Can Get Along) by Christina Montilla

<https://www.rover.com/blog/introduce-dogs-to-chickens/>

www.RoyalAnimalRefuge.org