

When we make a decision to adopt a dog and subsequently find the one we are sure will be a perfect fit for our families, we expect the experience to be wonderful. Sometimes new adopters don't realize there is a certain adjustment period for your new dog as well as your family. The list of suggestions provided will help your new family member to adjust in the first few weeks.

One of the most common mistakes an adopter can make is to bring a new dog home without a plan for structure and boundaries. We at BROOD would like to offer some suggestions to avoid problems and to make the transition of your new pet from shelter or foster home to your home as successful as possible.

INTRODUCTIONS: When introducing your new dog to existing dogs in your household do it on neutral territory, not inside your home. Both dogs should be on loosely held leashes held by separate handlers. Avoid nose to nose meetings and give them the opportunity to investigate each other doggie style. Walking side by side, crossing paths can be helpful.

BOUNDARIES: When introducing your dog into your home he or she will need boundaries. Too much freedom--especially if the dog is not used to it--can be overwhelming. Inconsistent and unclear boundaries can cause all sorts of unwanted behaviors moving forward. Introduce your new dog to each room of your home while on a leash allowing him to sniff and explore with boundaries. Initially a centrally located room with a gate is a great start. Utilizing a crate can be a useful tool. A crate is not a punishment, on the contrary it can be a safe zone for a dog; a place that is his or hers. Also utilizing a crate for house training is very effective. Be sure not to use the crate for long extended absences as your dog will need to go outside both for elimination and exercise.

EXERCISE: Even for a proverbial couch potato, exercise is crucial for the wellbeing of your dog. Dogs require a varied amount of exercise depending on their energy level. A well-exercised dog is happier and much less likely to get into things that are not his. Exercise can consist of a walk--distance and speed will depend on the ability of the dog--to extended hikes, swims, jogs, play dates....the possibilities are endless. Daily loving interaction with the family is crucial as well as socialization with people and animals outside your family circle. Try to take your dog with you when possible and expose it to other dogs, children and new situations.

RESOURCE GUARDING: A dog will sometimes guard things and people it feels are valuable such as food, toys, furniture and even a person. Resource guarding can be dangerous if the dog perceives it needs to guard items from the family, particularly children. Do not allow your new dog immediate access to the couch or your bed—which are high value areas for dogs. It is best to slowly integrate your dog into areas that you eventually want him to be (such as the couch), and never assume that your current dog or cat will not guard the area itself. Integrate toys and bones slowly with your new dog, and be careful around food. Many rescue dogs may be protective of their food. Consider feeding the dog in a crate for a while. There are approved methods to deal with resource guarding in the two reference guides mentioned below.

STRESS OR STRESSFUL SITUATIONS: If you find your dog is stressed or in a stressful situation, stop and determine what the dog is reacting to. You will want to make the dog more comfortable by removing the dog from the situation and attempt slow exposure at a later time.

GETTING YOUR DOGS TO GET ALONG: Be patient. Let both dogs spend time getting acquainted on either side of a baby gate. Give each dog his own space and give both dogs plenty of attention and separate time, especially your resident dog who may be feeling neglected.

REFERENCES: Educate yourself, seek professional help if necessary. Preparation and a plan will go a long way to a successful outcome. Please contact your BROOD adoption coordinator if you need training help with your new hound. BROOD has a training coordinator who can offer assistance..

Here are two excellent online recourses recommended by BROOD.

ABC's of Dog Life from Best Friends Animal Society
<http://bestfriends.org/Resources/ABCs-of-Dog-Life/>

ASPCA

<http://www.aspca.org/pet-care/virtual-pet-behaviorist/dog-behavior>