



# GREYHOUND ADOPTION

**BUILDING A GREAT RELATIONSHIP  
WITH YOUR NEW GREYHOUND**





## CONGRATULATIONS ON ADOPTING A GREYHOUND!

**You've provided a wonderful opportunity for a dog in need to enjoy a new life in a loving home. And your life will be enriched by the experience too, especially as you come to know your new canine friend and help them in starting a whole new chapter.**

Most ex-racing greyhounds have had a very different start to life than dogs raised in a family home, so there may be some challenges ahead. The most precious things you can give are love, patience and understanding, which will build trust and a feeling of security, which in turn will help your new greyhound learn what they need to know and what you want from them.

This booklet aims to help you settle your new greyhound into your home and provide the best care for a happy and healthy future together.

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## UNDERSTANDING YOUR GREYHOUND'S BACKGROUND

**Greyhounds can, and do, make great pets. Unfortunately many of their early life experiences, such as a lack of appropriate socialisation, can have lifelong implications. These are not necessarily impossible to overcome, but learning more about greyhound behaviour will help you better understand and cater for your dog's needs.**

In addition to limited contact with people, greyhounds raised in a racing kennel generally live in a very bland environment without toys or other objects that provide enjoyment or mental stimulation. Arriving at a new home with a completely new environment and atmosphere can be too much change for them to take in all at once.

While some greyhounds may adjust easily to life as a pet, others may need more time, patience and understanding.

Before being made available for adoption, your greyhound will have undergone a behaviour assessment to help understand their individual personality and needs. However, this knowledge is not a guarantee for a stress-free new life, and so it's essential to follow the advice in this guide.



## WELCOMING YOUR NEW GREYHOUND HOME

**When preparing to bring home your new greyhound, there are a few important questions you need to consider:**

**Will your greyhound live indoors or outdoors?** Due to their low body fat levels, greyhounds don't cope well with very hot or very cold weather. Provide a retreat for them so that they have a place they feel safe and secure — this may be having a bed in a quiet part of the house or outside under shelter.

**How much space do you have to offer?** Make sure all outdoor areas are well-fenced, safe and secure.

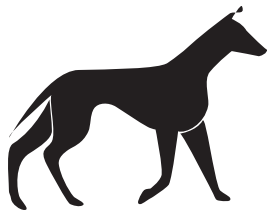
**How will I manage introductions to resident pets?** Seek advice from the shelter on how to approach this — temporary separation might be required, so make sure you can accommodate this.

**What equipment do I need?** Again, check with your shelter staff or vet for advice on collars and leashes, grooming products, bowls, bedding, food, toys, treats and medications.

**Remember, health and medical requirements.** If your greyhound has recently had surgery, ensure you're aware when the stitches are due for removal. Make sure you keep your desexing certificate, as in some regions it may entitle you to a discount on council registration.

If you received medication at the time of adoption, it is important to follow the instructions until the course of medication is completed.





## **RESPONSIBLE GREYHOUND OWNERSHIP**

**Being a responsible dog owner — and therefore, being a responsible greyhound owner — means complying with all relevant laws, including muzzling requirements as well as local council laws on desexing, registration, microchipping and secure housing.**

Greyhounds do have some special needs. Because greyhounds can reach a high speed very quickly, keeping your greyhound safe means being especially careful about safe and secure environments. You should only allow your greyhound off leash in a very secure, full-fenced enclosure. Be very mindful of any smaller animals nearby — ‘play’ time can quickly turn into ‘prey’ time.



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## HELPING YOUR GREYHOUND TO ADJUST

**Take your time — remember, too much initial exposure to a range of different sights, sounds and experiences may lead to fear instead of acceptance.**

Like us, dogs learn best when they are calm. Allow your greyhound a chance to gradually take in their new home environment. Initially at least, aim to make their world smaller, not bigger: less is definitely more.

While your family is no doubt excited about the new arrival, allow your dog space and time to show and receive affection. People are probably among one of the scariest and unpredictable things in their new home — so it may take a while before your dog develops the confidence to approach you. Love your new greyhound from a distance to start with — be patient and allow them to come to you when they're ready. Don't be offended if this doesn't happen straight away — it may take some time.



## SETTLING IN AT HOME

**Time and patience are most important as your greyhound gets used to you and their new home. Here are some things to remember.**

### **Your greyhound might need to get used to their new name!**

This is important for training and safety, so use your dog's name often and positively, including when offering treats and rewards.

### **Keep noise and movement to a minimum for the first few days.**

Television, ringing phones, appliances and vacuum cleaners might all be new. Give your dog a bit of space to become familiar with their new surroundings.

### **Many greyhounds won't have experienced common home features like stairs, different and slippery floor surfaces, mats and rugs or glass doors before.**

Supervise closely and avoid rushing through these new experiences, as this could lead to injury.

### **Many dogs can be restless on their first night in a new home.**

Allow plenty of time before bedtime, and try leaving the room for longer periods until your dog stays settled in their bed. Leave the TV or a dull light on if it helps, and understand you may have to stay within sight for these first few days (you can move their bed elsewhere later on).







**Toilet training!** Your dog may have never lived inside and so may not understand where they should or shouldn't relieve themselves. Watch carefully for signs they may need to toilet, and gently train them using positive reward-based methods. Never punish your dog if they have an accident, and if these keep occurring, seek advice from your vet as your dog may be suffering from fear, anxiety or a medical problem, such as a urinary tract infection.

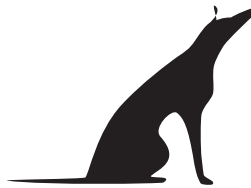
**To avoid stomach upsets,** it is best to continue feeding your dog the same food as the adoption centre, and if you wish, you can gradually transition to a new diet over 7–10 days. Always use a high-quality pet food, which you may supplement with suitable fresh ingredients (meat, tinned fish, rice, vegetables and raw meaty bones, for example)

**Many ex-racing greyhounds don't have good teeth,** so watch for any discomfort when eating and check in with your vet regularly. Remember, greyhounds are naturally slim but a thin fat layer should cover the body so that ribs and the tip of the hips are just visible. Remember not to overfeed them, as overweight dogs suffer health problems.



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## COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR GREYHOUND

**Body language is a dog's main form of communication, so it's really important that we learn how to understand them. This applies to all dogs, not just greyhounds.**

Many people know that if a dog's ears are flat against their head, it means they're not comfortable or happy. However, there are many different ear positions that, in conjunction with the tail position and movement, will tell you how your dog is feeling. Staring directly into a dog's eyes can be threatening — brief eye contact is fine, but staring is to be avoided.

The other parts of the body to check in with are the tail, mouth, face and general body stance. When you have learnt to interpret all of the different body parts individually, you can start to combine them. The overall picture of the dog will reveal a great deal about how they are feeling. This will make life better for both you and your dog.



### COMMON SIGNS OF STRESS OR FEAR

If you see these signs, your dog is asking for space and it's time to take a break: yawning, frequent blinking, lip licking, panting, turning their head away, showing the white part of their eye.



**Remember!** Never punish your dog when they growl, as this is intended as a warning. If it is suppressed due to punishment, then no warning may be given next time, i.e. your dog may bite.

The Pet Professional Guild Australia has excellent advice on how to read dog body language [ppgaustralia.net.au](http://ppgaustralia.net.au)

Be careful regarding interactions with other people, especially children. Your dog may need time to get used to strangers and children must be taught how to behave safely around dogs. As a general rule, children should never be left unsupervised around dogs.

### **SOME IMPORTANT LESSONS FROM YOUR DOG FOR CHILDREN TO UNDERSTAND**

- ✗ Please don't hug or cuddle me, especially around the neck
- ✗ Please don't kiss me or nuzzle your face near mine (this also avoids being licked on the face or mouth which can transfer worms)
- ✗ Please don't pat me on the head or touch or pat me whilst I am laying down and especially when I am sleeping
- ✗ Please don't approach me when I am eating
- ✗ Please don't tease me or play roughly





## TRAINING

**Helping your dog to become a good canine companion is one of the most important responsibilities for every dog owner. This leads to happy and safe interactions at home, with friends, with strangers and with other dogs.**

The first concept to understand is that training should only be carried out using reward-based methods, i.e. no punishment or corrections. This means no check chains or aversive methods including spray water bottles, noisy rattlers or even using a firm voice to say 'No'

Greyhounds are very gentle and sensitive dogs, many of whom have had unpleasant experiences in the past. So positive reward based training is especially important. Dogs learn quickly if they are rewarded for good behaviour and you will be amazed at how this approach can also be used to stop undesirable behaviours such as jumping up.





## EXERCISE

**Not all greyhounds want a lot of exercise, so it is best to gauge what your individual dog needs.**

Your greyhound might enjoy a short walk morning and night to help settle them into a routine. Greyhounds are built for sprinting; they are not an ideal breed for jogging and other vigorous, sustained physical activities. If your dog is refusing to walk or showing other signs of distress, they may not yet be ready to take in the various sights, sounds and smells of their new neighbourhood.

In terms of equipment, it is recommended you use a front-attaching harness instead of a flat collar, as this avoids placing pressure on the neck and the possibility of your greyhound slipping their collar and escaping. Martingale collars can also be used, as they are less likely to slip over the dog's head. Make sure collars or harnesses are well-fitted, in the right position and not too tight. Avoid extendable leads as they can injure your dog or yourself, and may fall out of your hand or snap, resulting in a greyhound on the loose.



## ENRICHMENT

**In addition to physical exercise, it is essential for your greyhound to have mental stimulation. Bored dogs can be destructive by digging, chewing and barking.**

Enrichment can be provided in many forms and may include a raw meaty bone or a specially designed food maze. Hollow toys (e.g. Kongs or treat balls) are very useful as you can place food inside, which may take some time to dislodge, creating enjoyment and interest.





## HELPING WITH YOUR DOG'S BEHAVIOUR

### **Most undesirable behaviours are actually normal dog behaviours that can create a problem when they're living with us.**

Most problematic behaviours in greyhounds are invariably founded in fear, anxiety and the uncertainty of a novel environment.



#### **SIGNS OF FEAR AND ANXIETY**

Fear and anxiety can manifest in different ways. Please seek advice from a veterinary behaviourist if your dog is showing signs of anxiety such as: separation distress, vocalising in your absence, freezing on walks, sleep aggression, resource guarding (aggression associated with food or toys, etc.), excessive fear, difficulty in toilet training, growling and lunging at people within the home, inter dog aggression (familiar and unfamiliar dogs), and destructive behaviour.

Your RSPCA shelter or a veterinary behaviourist can also provide advice on dealing with other undesirable behaviours such as mouthing or nipping, chewing, digging, barking or jumping up.

**Remember!** Always reward good behaviour. Tell them what to do (with treats and praise) rather than what not to do (punishing with spray bottles, saying no, time out, etc.).





### **DID YOU KNOW?**

An interesting quirk of some greyhounds is their tendency to collect various items, such as shoes, cushions, soft toys, etc. They usually don't chew or destroy these items, but their collections can be quite impressive.

The exact motivation for this behaviour is unknown but it may be a comfort or coping strategy. Therefore, if it isn't harmful or destructive, it shouldn't be discouraged or be of great concern. Manage it by keeping precious items out of reach, rather than chastising the dog for collecting them. Be sure to prevent access to remote controls, glasses, or other items that might be dangerous if chewed.



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## IS EVERYTHING THEY SAY ABOUT GREYHOUNDS TRUE?

**Every greyhound is an individual, so don't assume everything you've heard or read will apply to your greyhound.**

### **Have all greyhounds raced?**

Not all greyhounds available for adoption have raced. In fact, it's estimated only 30–60% of dogs actually make it to the racetrack, with an average career of 10 races. Prior to entering a race kennel, most greyhounds will have spent the majority of their time in a paddock with other greyhounds, with very limited contact with people.

The common experience for nearly all greyhounds is that they are not socialised with people or other animals as puppies. Missing out on this important stage of their development means they may be more likely to develop fear, anxiety, phobias and even aggression.

### **Will all greyhounds like living in an apartment?**

Not all greyhounds will feel comfortable living inside a home and, as most are not toilet trained, apartment living can be a challenge to start with. However, there are greyhounds who can successfully adapt to life indoors, including living in smaller homes.

Remember though, that all greyhounds need daily exercise and enrichment to keep their minds and bodies healthy. Be aware that some dogs may not like the company of other dogs, so you may need to choose your exercise location carefully to avoid creating anxiety or possible conflicts





**Do all greyhounds like lazing on a couch?** Some will and some won't, so be prepared if yours is not a couch potato! It's highly likely your greyhound has never even seen a couch before, so if you'd like your dog to share your couch, allow more time and give gentle encouragement.

**Do all greyhounds like being walked?** Some greyhounds may initially be wary of being walked, especially if they haven't been on a lead before. If your greyhound is hesitant about walking on a lead — or if they suddenly stop and refuse to move while on walks — have a chat with a veterinary behaviour consultant and in the meantime, encourage exercise through playing in the backyard.

### **Can greyhounds live with cats and other small animals?**

Many dogs, including greyhounds, can be quite predatory towards other animals. Dogs are carnivores, and their drive to hunt, chase and kill other animals in order to survive remains with them today.

Breeding and training play a huge part in how strong this prey drive might be: like all dogs, some greyhounds can happily co-exist with cats and other small animals, while others can never be safely left alone with them. Always err on the side of safety, and don't expect that your dog will become best buddies with other furry family members, including other smaller dogs. Many shelters will suggest you introduce your greyhound to other family dogs, before you bring them home.

For further information read the article 'Understanding predatory aggression and prey drive' [greyhoundequality.org/care\\_article1.html](https://www.greyhoundequality.org/care_article1.html)



### **Do greyhounds wear muzzles because they are aggressive?**

The muzzling law was introduced as an extension of the greyhound racing rules for race dogs living and possibly being trained within the community, without due consideration for the impact upon retired or non-racing greyhounds. Although currently under review, it is still a legal requirement in most states/territories that greyhounds must wear a muzzle in public, unless they have been exempted through a recognised assessment program. Note that while all greyhounds adopted out by the RSPCA have passed our behavioural assessment, this is a different program to the muzzling assessment and does not mean your greyhound doesn't need to wear a muzzle. Any dog showing predatory aggression must wear a muzzle. Visit [greenhounds.com.au](http://greenhounds.com.au) for an example of the program in NSW and seek advice from your council about any local initiatives.

Your dog may not have worn a muzzle often, so may need more time to get used to it. The light wire varieties are usually best. Make sure it's a good fit, and remember it's not a guarantee against any issues with smaller animals, so supervision will still be required.



## FURTHER INFORMATION

**The RSPCA and your local vet are here to help! You can seek advice and guidance at any time, not just when your dog is sick or injured.**

### GREYHOUND-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

The RSPCA Knowledgebase has an entire section dedicated to information on keeping greyhounds as pets [kb.rspca.org.au/122/](https://kb.rspca.org.au/122/)

Greenhounds Program  
[greenhounds.com.au](https://greenhounds.com.au)

Greyhound Equality Society  
[greyhoundequality.org](https://greyhoundequality.org)

Understanding anxiety and its implications for pet greyhounds  
[greyhoundequality.org/care\\_article3.html](https://greyhoundequality.org/care_article3.html)

Can I let my greyhound off leash?  
[greyhoundequality.org/care\\_article2.html](https://greyhoundequality.org/care_article2.html)

Does my anxious greyhound need medication?  
[greyhoundequality.org/care\\_article4.html](https://greyhoundequality.org/care_article4.html)

A word on punishment  
[greyhoundequality.org/care\\_article5.html](https://greyhoundequality.org/care_article5.html)

Laws relating to greyhounds  
[greyhoundequality.org/laws.html](https://greyhoundequality.org/laws.html)

### GENERAL ADVICE ON DOGS

Caring for your dog  
[rspcansw.org.au/learn/dogs/](https://rspcansw.org.au/learn/dogs/)

Dog training  
[rspcansw.org.au/learn/dogs/dog-training-video-tips](https://rspcansw.org.au/learn/dogs/dog-training-video-tips)

Being a responsible pet owner  
[rspcansw.org.au/learn/owning-a-pet/](https://rspcansw.org.au/learn/owning-a-pet/)

Pet hazards  
[rspcansw.org.au/learn/pet-hazards/](https://rspcansw.org.au/learn/pet-hazards/)



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*The RSPCA is Australia's leading animal welfare organisation and one of Australia's most trusted charities.*

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