



For all creatures great and small.

We have put together some suggestions that will help settle your new companion into your lives.

## **The first few Days – Set up for Success!**

When you take home a new dog or puppy from the Shelter, remember that you are not best mates yet, you are virtually strangers who have only met a couple of times. The first few days in a new home are really stressful for a dog. They don't know the family, the house, the yard, the neighbourhood noises and smells, or other pets. Adult dogs with an unknown past may find your home to be a very different place to what they are used to.

There are some things we can do to help them settle and feel safe in those first few days. Keep in mind though, that it generally takes about three weeks for a dog or puppy to start to feel 'at home' and to show their true nature.

### **Dog proof your home**

This is an activity you should do before you get your dog or puppy home. We know with puppies that they aren't toilet trained, or chew trained, or house trained, and with most adult dogs, we also don't know this information either. Why wait to find out by discovering your runners chewed to pieces or your prize Camelia bush severely pruned?

Assume the worst and pick everything up or put it away. Check for exposed power cords that could be chewed and consider turning power switches off when the dog or puppy is unsupervised. As you get to know your new dog, as you train it, and provide for its needs (eg. chew toys such as bones, stuffed Kongs, pigs ears and exercise through games and daily walks), you can then start to put those things back.

Start your toilet training program the instant you get your puppy home. If you have an adult dog with an unknown history, you need to treat it as a puppy and take it outside regularly for opportunities to toilet, and don't leave it unsupervised in the house at all.



For all creatures great and small.

The best environment to provide for your dog or puppy is an error free one that doesn't allow them to make mistakes.

## **Children**

Whilst the adoption of a new pet is a very exciting event for children, their enthusiasm must be supervised and controlled. It is essential that the new dog is not crowded by children or forced to interact with them until the excitement of being somewhere new has worn off. When it is time for the children to meet the dog have them sitting down with a small treat on the palm of their open hand, and one at a time they may call the dog or puppy over. Teach the children how to pat and stroke the dog by patting it under the chin and throat, and not on the top of its head. Then take the focus off the dog by giving the children another activity. This way the dog can get to know the children at a pace it is comfortable with.

It is extremely dangerous for a child to hug your new dog or puppy, and you must not allow it to happen. Hugging is a human action that reflects affection, from a dog's point of view it is a dominant/ aggressive action. Depending on the temperament of the dog, it may retaliate and bite the child, or it may feel threatened and try to escape, but as the child holds on stronger, it may bite in its attempt to break free. Submissive dogs may try to turn off this dominant action by displaying submissive behaviours such as urination. Even if the dog does not react outwardly to the child hugging it, the dog may start to actively avoid and dislike being around the child.

Teach the children that when the dog is sleeping or even just lying on its bed, that it is to be left alone. It is critical for the success of the adoption that the dog learns to like children and not feel harassed or threatened by them.

Once the dog or puppy has settled in, relationships have been forged, training for both children and dog have commenced and the family understands and knows more about the dog, and the dog understands and knows more about the family, a hug from a trusted friend can be a lovely experience.

Just as dogs needs to be taught how to behave around children, children also need to be taught how to behave around dogs. One of the first lessons is to teach children to respect dogs and not treat them as a toy.

Remember, young children should never be left alone unsupervised with a dog or puppy.



For all creatures great and small.

## **Home Alone**

It is always a good idea if commitments allow, to take a few days off work or at least have the weekend to help settle a new dog or puppy in. With adult dogs where their history is not known, we don't know if they can jump or climb fences (or dig under them), so it would be fool hardy to leave them alone in a strange yard for long periods of time. If they can jump fences, then this is the time they are likely to do so, as it's not their 'patch' yet. They have not started to form a bond with the family, the yard is strange and unfamiliar, as are the sounds and smells of the neighbourhood. Further, we don't know if the dog is a digger, or pulls washing off the line or does some other unwanted behaviour in its efforts to keep itself occupied.

When you first bring the dog home, you need to spend time together in the yard first, playing games, and just hang out with the dog whilst it explores its new home. When not supervised initially, either have the dog inside, or confined to the laundry or some other suitable place where there is a comfortable warm bed, water and a chew toy.

The first time you leave your dog unsupervised in the back yard, do it while you are home and give it something to do to keep it there, such as a bone or stuffed Kong. Watch it from inside your house. Over the next few days, gradually increase the time that the dog is left unsupervised in the yard. Always give it an activity to do, such as a treasure hunt for food treats, a raw bone, a stuffed Kong, or a treat ball. If possible come home at lunch time to give the dog some company and to leave it with another activity for the afternoon.

## **Establishing the rules from the word go**

One of the kindest things you can do for the dog is to have consistent rules and start working towards them as soon as you get the dog home. Make sure the whole family knows what the rules are and what to do, such as when a dog jumps up for attention. Teaching the dog the household rules will enable the family and the dog to live in harmony together. Using positive motivation training techniques (reward based training) will help to quickly establish a strong bond based on mutual respect, and elevate you to the leadership position.



For all creatures great and small.

### **The first night when the lights go out**

Even if you don't believe in having dogs inside your house, it is not advisable to leave the dog outside alone on its first few nights. As stated earlier, your home is still a strange place to the dog, so it may fret, bark and try to escape from the yard to find company. Make sure the dog is secured somewhere, such as in the laundry, or a garage where it has a comfortable warm bed and water.

From your dog's point of view, it would like to sleep in the same room as you, as it is a social animal and therefore has a strong need to belong to and be part of the pack. For some people this is unacceptable, so keep in mind that wherever you decide the dog is going to sleep, if it's not in the same room as you, it may cry and whimper once you put it to bed. Do not go to the dog if it starts to make a noise. It is crying from emotional isolation, it wants company, and if you go to it even to tell it off, you have just given it company, and therefore reinforced the crying, which ultimately strengthens the crying behaviour.

Be prepared, let your neighbours know that you are bringing a new dog or puppy home and there maybe some settling in issues. If the crying is not rewarded by you attending to the dog, it should stop within a couple of days.

Before putting the dog or puppy to bed, make sure it has been fed and gone to the toilet. With a puppy, play an energetic game 30 minutes before bed time, so it is tired and more likely to settle down for sleep. If you have a puppy or young dog, and it cries during the middle of the night (eg. it has woken from sleep), you need to get up and take it outside for a toilet break (no matter how cold it is).

### **Help: What do I do when my dog does ..... ?**

Please call the Shelter on 6287 8100 if you are having any trouble or would like to discuss any issues or seek advice. We are here to help you and the dog, and just like you we want this adoption to work out. It is much better to call and nip problems in the bud, than to struggle on and let them escalate.

***Enjoy your new companion - the effort and training you put into your dog will ultimately determine the success of the adoption. Dogs aren't born knowing the household rules and polite greeting manners; it is something you must teach them.***