

TIPS FOR DOG ADOPTERS

CONGRATULATIONS!

Your lifesaving decision to adopt a dog means the world to your new canine family member. With just a little preparation, you can help ensure that your new dog's transition from homeless to home will be a smooth and rewarding experience for both of you.

PREPARING FOR YOUR NEW DOG

Your new pet will depend on you for everything, from healthy food to affection, exercise and training. It sounds like a lot, but what could be more rewarding? To be happy and healthy, your dog will need:

- Constant access to a bowl of fresh, clean drinking water
- A nutritionally balanced diet
- A safe place to eliminate outside
- A variety of safe toys to play with
- A comfortable place to sleep
- Daily exercise
- Training and socialization
- Lots of love and attention

DOG-PROOFING YOUR HOUSE

Before your new dog arrives, you should dog-proof your home in much the same way that you would child-proof your home for a toddler. Look at your home from a dog's eye level. What can she reach? Is there anything she can trip on or become tangled in (such as electrical cords)? If you don't want her drinking out of the toilet, tell everyone in the household to make sure they put the lid down. If anyone in the house smokes, put ashtrays out of reach, since cigarette butts, if eaten, can lead to nicotine poisoning. Will her wagging tail inadvertently wreak havoc on your prized possessions? Dog tails have been known to sweep the contents off the tops of coffee tables. If you like to keep lit candles around, make sure they are above the dog's reach.

MAKING YOUR YARD SAFE

Do a walk around your yard. Is your yard completely fenced in? Are there any spaces or gaps that your new dog or puppy can squeeze through? Is there anything that he can climb on that would allow him to escape over the fence (e.g., a woodpile, a fountain, latticework)? Some dogs know how to flip open gate latches, so latches should be clipped or locked if your dog can reach them.

What sort of plants do you have in your yard? Snail bait and some plants (such as oleander, azaleas and rhododendrons) are poisonous to dogs. Antifreeze is another hazard for dogs; it is toxic and can be fatal if ingested. Dogs are attracted to its sweet taste, so don't allow your dog to drink from standing water near where cars have been parked.

Do you have an uncovered pond or pool in your yard? Dogs have been known to drown in backyard pools when they jumped or fell in and couldn't get out. You should also make sure your trash cans have tight lids to avoid "dumpster diving" by your dog. Besides the smelly mess that an overturned trash can creates, some of the items in your trash (like chicken bones) may be dangerous for your dog to eat.

Ideally, you should check your yard for safety before your new dog comes home. If you haven't done this prior to the dog's arrival, supervise the time that your pet spends outside until you have a chance to inspect the yard for safety. Even a child's toy can be trouble if it is chewed up and swallowed.

PREVENTING AN IDENTITY CRISIS

Your dog may come with a collar and lead, or you may only be provided with a temporary slip-type lead. The latter is fine in an emergency, but should not be used beyond getting your new pet safely home.

Your new dog will need a sturdy collar and leash, as well as an ID tag with your name and phone number on it. If your dog was microchipped by the adoption organization, be sure to add your name and address to the microchip registration. Even if your dog has a microchip, put a collar and ID tag on her as soon as you get home. That way, if your pet gets loose, she can easily be identified and returned to you. A dog's collar should be snug but not tight; you should be able to fit two fingers under the collar.

TAKING THE LEAD

If your new friend is not trained to walk nicely on a leash, or if he tries to pull out of the collar, it's a good idea to get a chest harness or a type of collar called a martingale in addition to the regular collar. Remember to always keep your dog on a leash when you're outdoors, except in a fenced-in yard or an enclosed dog park. And, of course, always use a leash near traffic so your dog doesn't run into the street.

PREVENTING YOUR DOG FROM CHEWING UP YOUR STUFF

If your new dog has her own toys, she may not be as interested in chewing up human things (though leather shoes are hard to resist). Buy durable rubber or nylon toys that satisfy the dog's urge to chew. Toys that you can stuff treats into (like [Kongs](#) and [Buster Cubes](#)) should keep your pet occupied for a good long while. If she starts chewing one of your personal items, resist the urge to yell or reprimand her. Instead, immediately get her interested in one of her own toys and try to keep your personal items out of reach until she learns the rules of the house.

TRAINING

Your dog needs you to be a kind but firm leader. If you don't function as the leader, your dog will start making decisions on her own, some of which you may not like. That's why it's important for you to help your dog learn what behavior is appropriate and what is not.

[Petco](#) and [PetSmart](#) stores offer group training classes that you and your dog can attend, and most communities have dog trainers who teach the basics. If this is your first dog, you will also learn a lot from the training classes.

If you decide to hire a trainer, pick one who uses humane methods. Humane trainers do not use chain or prong collars, nor do they advocate yanking on or lifting the dog by the collar. To find a good trainer, we recommend that you visit during one of the trainer's sessions to see the techniques and tools being used. If the trainer does anything that you are uncomfortable with, keep looking.

SOCIALIZATION

Your dog needs daily, loving interaction with you, but he also needs a social life. Socialize your dog by bringing him on car rides, letting him be around different types of people and other dogs, taking him to the groomer, shopping with him at pet stores (those that let you bring your dog in), and walking him in public places.

Though you want to expose your dog to a variety of experiences, you should also strive for structure and consistency in your dog's daily routine to give him a feeling of stability as a member of the family. You should also select a veterinarian with whom you are comfortable, since you'll need to bring your dog in for annual checkups. The relationship between your family and your new pet can be great if you are patient and positive.

If you have any questions about the best way to care for your new dog, call the rescue group or shelter from which you adopted him, or you can call or email one of the NKLA partner organizations that work with dogs. You can also visit the [Resources](#) section of the Best Friends website.

Thank you so much for adopting your new best friend. Together, we can Save Them All®.