



# Dog Adoption Handbook



**General Information:** (503) 988-7387

**Behavior Resources:** [multcopets.org/training-resources](https://multcopets.org/training-resources)

**Medical Support:** (503) 988-9075

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# Successful Homecomings

Adopting a new dog can come with a lot of change for both pet and pet parent, and having the right supplies on hand can help to make the transition as smooth as possible. Here is a list of supplies to help you start on the right foot with your new dog:

## Basic Supplies

- Collar with identification tags
- Harness and leash for walks
- Food
- Water and Food bowls
- Bedding
- Crate and/or baby gates
- Poop bags
- Toys (chew toys, balls, plush toys, rope toys, etc.)
- Treats for training

## Other Supplies

- Brush
- Dog shampoo
- Nail trimmers
- Flea Control
- Dog toothbrush & toothpaste

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# The First Week Home

Congratulations on adopting a new dog! Below are some tips to help you both make the adjustment and settle into your new lives together:

- Don't let your new buddy be just a backyard dog. Dogs form extremely strong social bonds, and one of their most important needs is to be around the people they are bonded to. Dogs left in the backyard on their own become deprived of attention and affection and can develop some unwanted behavior such as jumping, mouthing, and barking, as well as not becoming house trained. A backyard can provide outstanding mental and physical activity such as playing fetch and basic obedience training for dogs and their owners.
- This may be a big lifestyle change for you. You are responsible for every need of your new pet, including: daily walks, aerobic exercise, daily feedings, fresh water, house-training, manners and obedience training, giving attention, and grooming. Regardless of rain, shine, sleet, snow, or daylight savings time, dogs still need to burn off energy with a walk or run at the park. Young or high-energy dogs will bounce off the walls if they can't expend that energy appropriately.
- Setting up a routine this first week is highly important. Dogs are creatures of habit, and the way they interact with the world around them can be shaped by how they feel about their environment. In order for them to be able to deal with any changes that come their way, dogs must be established with a stable and consistent routine, so that they know what to expect from their new world and what the appropriate response should be. Set your new dog up on a routine so that they are waking up, going to sleep, eating and going for walks around the same time each day. This will help him to feel loved and secure and will strengthen the bond between the two of you.
- And of course, don't forget to license your new dog with your county animal control!

## Housetraining

As tempting as it is to give your new dog the run of the house immediately, it may be too overwhelming for them. It's best to set up a "dog-proof" area as you learn your new dog's habits and they learn the rules of the house. This dog-proof area is a space they can hang out

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when they are not being supervised, where nothing important can get chewed up and potty accidents are easy to clean up.

Regardless of your new dog's potty training history, they may need a refresher course on how to do it. You will need to give them frequent opportunities to go potty in the yard or on walks, and you will need to reward them for going potty there. You can use your dog-proof area or a crate to limit accidents when they're not being actively supervised or trained.

## Crate Training

Crates can be really helpful for safely traveling with your dog, for keeping them out of trouble when left home alone, and for aiding in potty training. If you decide to use a crate, it should be a comfortable place for your dog to hang out in. The crate should be a size that they can fully stand, turn around, and lie down in. Any smaller will be too constricting, any larger they may get the idea to use one end as a bathroom and the other as a bedroom.

### Introduction to the crate:

1. Begin by propping the door open and tossing a treat or two inside. Once they step into it, praise them and give them another treat.
2. Repeat this a few times until they are entering the crate easily on their own.
3. Once they are happily entering the crate, try closing the door momentarily. Reward them with a treat and open the door back up. Repeat many times, slowly increasing the amount of time they are in the crate with the door closed.
4. If your dog or puppy already knows cues like "lay down" or "stay" you can add those to the crate too. If not, you will want to keep rewarding your dog for more relaxed behavior, by giving them a treat for going into the crate and then sitting, then giving them treats for going into the crate and lying down on their own. Remember that the goal of crate training is that the dog will willingly go into the crate and relax for a period of time. Moving too quickly through crate training may set you back from this goal.

Tip: Never force your new dog into a crate; this will likely be scary for them and make the crate training process very difficult.

### Adjusting to the crate:

5. The next step is to get them comfortable hanging out in the crate by themselves. Prepare a treat that is special and that will take them a little bit of time to work through, such as a stuffed KONG. Put it in the crate and close the door behind them after they go in. Go about your day and casually open the door up after a few minutes. When the dog

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comes out of the crate, you should remove the Kong or other treat/toy so that they are only getting their goodies while they are in there.

6. Slowly increase the length of time, while still keeping some variation. Your dog may have worked up to 30 minutes or an hour, but you can still have them enjoy a treat in the crate for 15 minutes while you sit in the other room reading the news or something. This will help reassure them it's not always going to be for a long time.
7. Adult dogs who are fully potty trained can typically hold their potty overnight or for an 8hr work day. Puppies may need to go out in the middle of the night. And dogs who are still learning may not be ready for extended periods of time either, in which case you may want a dog walker, friend or neighbor to come by and help let the dog out. If your adult dog isn't picking up on potty training after a couple weeks, or was reliable with potty training but is suddenly having accidents in the home, you may want to consult your veterinarian.

## Physical and Mental Stimulation

Dogs may have slightly different needs when it comes to exercise and enrichment, though every dog needs some of both. You may have a marathon runner or a couch potato. Some dogs are highly inquisitive and curious about new toys, while others are happy to just chew on the same ball every day. Get to know your dog as an individual, but here's some general information to start with.

### Exercise

- Running, swimming, climbing stairs, and playing fetch are all forms of anaerobic exercise that can be great for healthy, adult dogs.
- Every dog needs some kind of exercise, but their age and breed group play a part in how much. Tailoring your dog's workout to their needs is crucial. Puppies, especially large- and giant-breed puppies, shouldn't run much until their joints are more developed. Short-faced dogs, like Pugs and Bulldogs, shouldn't run for long or they may not be able to breathe, especially if it's hot out. It's wise to consult your veterinarian about any specific exercise needs your dog may have.

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## Mind Games

Equally important is keeping your dog mentally stimulated to ensure both their happiness as well as to prevent any unwanted boredom behaviors such as excessive barking or problematic chewing.

- Your dog's regular toys, like dog-safe tennis balls, rope toys, stuffed animals, or rubber bones can be rotated on a regular basis to keep them interesting. Put a few toys out for your dog and the rest away in a basket or closet, then swap them later. Some dogs need new toys daily, while others could go all week. Rotating toys will save you money on toys your dog might otherwise lose interest in.
- Use feeding time to give your dog some mental activity too. Food-dispensing toys such as Kongs can last hours and are a great tool to keep dogs occupied with problem-solving. You can also use your creativity to make food puzzle toys out of recyclables like boxes or paper towel tubes!
- Training is a great way to get your dog thinking, and it'll help develop the bond between you. Sign up for a group training class or practice basic skills and tricks at home using reward-based training. The sky's the limit on what you two can learn together!
- If your dog enjoys the company of other dogs, it's important to have playdates, doggie daycare, or dog park time. Social interaction plays a huge part in a well-rounded and healthy lifestyle. If your dog is picky about their friends or their surroundings, you may want to keep smaller play dates at home. If your dog is trustworthy with coming when called, is comfortable meeting lots of new dogs, and doesn't get upset over sharing toys, they might enjoy frequenting the park. Please note that not all dogs enjoy interacting with other dogs. A trainer or behavior consultant may be able to help you decide if it's right for your dog or help prepare them for these activities.
- Walks are more enrichment than exercise, so don't forget to let your dog stop and sniff!

## Introducing Dogs to Children

Dogs and children can make great companions, however not all dogs have had a lot of exposure to children so it is best to introduce them slowly and always supervise their interactions.

Children tend to move quickly and a bit erratically, and are generally unaware of where they are in relationship to where the dog is. This means that dogs have a difficult time understanding children and predicting what they will do. The following tips are great reminders to keep on hand when introducing dogs to children

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- Respect the dog's personal space and let the dog initiate the interaction – the dog might not be comfortable right off the bat interacting with children.
  - Never let a child take the dog's stuff (food, toys, sticks, etc.), especially when they are using or playing with it.
  - Always ask the dog's owner before approaching and/or petting an unfamiliar dog. If a dog stiffens their body, turns away or looks uncomfortable, back off. It does not matter much a child wants to pet them, if the dog looks like they want out, let them go.
  - Don't pet the dog on top of the head or hug them – although this is what humans like to do, dog's really don't like it. If they want to be pet, always pet dogs under the chin or on the side of the head.
  - Make sure children don't hold or eat food at the dog's level. They may just sample it or feel like they are being teased.
  - Be ready to intervene in child/dog interactions if the situation is even remotely uncomfortable.
  - Never assume your child and dog can be left alone together without supervision. Children and dogs always need to be supervised.
  - Do not let a child 'ride' a dog, tease them or get in their face and pull any body part.
  - If a dog growls during an interaction, try not to punish the growl. Growling is valuable because it is one of the few tools the dog has to communicate they are uncomfortable. By suppressing a growl, the dog is still feeling the same, but has no way of telling us. This can create a dog that does not give important verbal warnings before they bite.
  - Do not tolerate teasing or mishandling of a dog from any child. If the dog is uncomfortable, remove them from the interaction and give them a quiet, safe place to relax.

## Introducing Dogs to Cats

If you are combining a dog and a cat in your household, here are some tips to position your pets for success together:

- Have a safe room as well as offer high places the cat can access but the dog cannot. It is important that the cat can retreat to relax away from the dog and then venture forward at their own pace. The cat should have access to food, water and litter in this area.
- Never force the cat (or dog) into proximity by holding, caging, or otherwise limiting their ability to escape.
- For the first introduction, always have the dog on leash. If it seems to be going well, drop the leash and supervise closely.

- If the dog is behaving in a friendly and/or cautious way, try to not intervene in their interactions, except to praise and reward the dog for their good manners.
- Interrupt any chasing and redirect the dog's attention to another activity. You may need to manage the dog on-leash around the cat until you have worked out a routine.
- In the first few weeks, observe the trend: is their relationship improving or declining? Monitor interactions until there is a positive pattern in their interactions.
- Make sure the resident cat gets a lot of attention and individual time with you so they do not associate the newcomer with reduced attention and affection.
- If the newcomer is a cat, it's also a good idea to make sure the dog associates positive interactions with the new intruder.
- Dogs should never have access to the cat litter box – it may cause the cat stress and the dog may eat cat feces and litter. Most dogs will also eat cat food the cat leaves behind – it is best to feed the cat in an area the dog cannot access.



## Introducing Dogs to Dogs

- Introduce new dogs to each other on neutral territory. This helps to prevent any territorial dispute. Each dog should be on leash with separate handlers. Walk them at a distance at first and then slowly shorten the distance between them. Verbally reward and praise positive and friendly behavior. If neither dog is showing negative reactions, let them meet nose to nose
- Pay attention to each dog's body language. Watch carefully for any body language that indicates one of the dogs is uncomfortable, including hair standing up on their back, teeth baring, growling, and avoidance. If you see this behavior, either when the dogs are at a distance or close to each other, immediately redirect the dog's attention. Once the dogs become relaxed again, you can have them approach each other.



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- Never try to force interactions between dogs. Each dog is going to have their own unique play and interaction style. Some dogs may become best friends right away, while others take some time to adjust. It can take time for them to figure each other out and to determine the role they each are going to play in the family.
  - Before you take the dogs into the home, pick up any resources they could potentially squabble over- such as toys or rawhides. Once you get home, monitor the dog's closely; is their relationship improving or declining? Monitor interactions until there is a positive pattern and keep them separate when you cannot .

## Troubleshooting Any Problems

### Barking

Dogs bark for a variety of reasons and your reaction to the barking can either encourage or discourage this behavior. Below are different types of barking and steps to modify it.

- **The Watchdog:** Alert barking serves multiple purposes: both to alert the family that an intruder is present and to try to scare away the intruder. This type of barking can be welcome in some types of homes, however can be annoying when an actual intruder is not present (such as the mailman). The best way to manage this type of barking is to teach your dog a different kind of response to the stimuli- such as exhibiting calm behavior for a treat. Everytime the doorbell rings or someone knocks, ask your dog to sit or lay down and offer them a treat. With time this will become their go to response.
- **The Demand Barker:** Demand barking occurs when your dog wants something NOW, such as attention, a walk, etc. Dogs learn to try different behaviors to get the things they want and barking works well due to it being annoying. If you don't like it when your dog barks- don't reward it with either the thing that they want or a correction. Corrections can actually serve to reinforce the behavior because even though it is negative attention, it is still attention. Patience and time are necessary to work with this type of barking. To manage this type of barking it is best to do two things: Set a regular schedule that your dog can anticipate and ignore the barking while rewarding calm behaviors.
- **The Lonely Barker:** This type of barking usually involves anxiety at being left alone. For a dog that is uncomfortable being left alone, it is best to build up your absences and create positive associations with being left alone from the start. Practise brief absences to desensitize your dog to being left alone. Don't make a big deal of it when you leave or come back and provide an interesting thing for them to work on while you are gone such as a frozen stuffed Kong. As dogs are very social creatures, some dogs may not tolerate

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prolonged absences and would do better with another dog companion, a dog walker, or doggie daycare. Make sure your dog is receiving enough mental and physical stimulation when you are home. A tired dog is a happy dog!

- **The Scaredy Dog:** This barking occurs when a dog is scared, or uncomfortable in a situation. To prevent this, it is important that you practise safe socialization while your puppy is young. If your dog is older, use positive reinforcement to acclimate your dog to the scary stimuli. If strangers are scary- use treats to help them make positive associations around them.

## Pulling

When you just want to enjoy a nice walk with your dog and they just keep on pulling- it can be a very frustrating experience for both of you! The following tips can help to make these ventures more enjoyable for everyone!

- Invest in training equipment such as a front clip chest harness or head harness. Both of these tools use slight pressure to discourage your dog from pulling and give you more control over them. Never use a flexi leash; the flexi leash actually gives to a pulling dog and teaches him to pull. Never use choke chains, prong collars or shock collars. These types of collars are often used to correct behavior by inflicting pain any time the dog pulls, lunges, barks or performs an undesired behavior. These types of training tools are known for worsening behavioral issues such as fear and aggression. What should be a pleasurable and rewarding experience for the dog turns into a scary and painful one.
- Play “Red Light/ Green Light”
  - Start your walk and as soon as the leash gets tight, stop walking- just as if you had just come to a red light.
  - Wait patiently until your dog turns to you to see why you have stopped. As your dog turns, the leash will loosen. As soon as this happens, praise your dog and continue to move forward (Green Light).
  - Repeat this throughout the walk. Keep practicing loose-leash walking two or three times a day for 10 minutes at a time until your dog is an expert at the exercise.

## Chewing

Chewing can be a very natural behavior- it is how dogs can learn about their world, as well as keep themselves entertained! Remember- dogs don't have an understanding of the value of

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your things and may just find your fancy shoes more fun to chew than their toys. This energy can be redirected so that your dog is only chewing appropriate items.

- Remove anything you really don't want to be chewed: shoes, children's toys, books, etc.
- Find them toys they like to chew, or make them yourselves. A chicken broth soaked and frozen bone or toy can keep a dog entertained for hours.
- Kong's are designed for the chewer in your life and can satisfy the chewing need.
- Make sure to provide your dog with daily, vigorous exercise, playtime, and training sessions to keep them stimulated.
- Chew proof the area they are in when you cannot supervise them.

## Fear

Much of what a dog experiences as they grow up influence who they become as adults and what situations and things they may be afraid of. It is important to introduce a new puppy positively to new stimuli (such as new people, other animals and bikes) so that they do not develop a fear response to them. However, if you are bringing an older dog into your home, they may never have had the opportunity to positively experience the things that scare them.

Some signs of fear include: ears are back and/or pinned to the head, raised hackles, tail tucked, body lowered, fast panting, sometimes showing of teeth and vocalizations. It is important to recognize these signs of fear in your dog and to not force them to interact with the thing causing the fear. Remember- you have more control of the environment than your dog does, and you don't want to push them into demonstrating a behavior that can be damaging, such as biting.

The best way to deal with fear is to either completely avoid the stimuli if possible, or to slowly acclimate your dog to it using positive reinforcement.

- Understand your dog's threshold. Your dog has a threshold under which they are still able to make good decisions and learn new behaviors. Once they reach their threshold it is best to remove them from the situation and allow them to calm down before working with them again. Once they are back under threshold, the situation may still be challenging for them but it can help to build confidence, reduce stress and help to form positive associations for them.
- Pay attention to what your dog is saying. Every dog has a progression of behaviors that can build up to an unmanageable level of fear. Knowing when your dog is approaching an uncomfortable point is necessary to help them to either avoid the stimulus or practise calming behavior.
- Desensitization and counterconditioning are great tools to teach dogs that "scary" people or situations are not as frightening as they feel they are. Use treats or wet food

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to slowly acclimate your dog to the stimulus. Start with the stimulus in a non-threatening form (such as a picture of another dog, or a strange person at a distance). Gradually increase exposure to the stimulus until the dog is comfortable and not expressing any fearful behaviors. By rewarding the dog each time it makes a good decision about the “scary” stimulus, it will gradually become less and less scary and the dog will begin to have positive associations with it.

- Make sure to communicate to visitors to your home or strangers on the street how to properly interact with your dog. If it is going to cause your dog too much stress, or they have not progressed to a point in their training where it would be beneficial to the dog, remove them from the situation and do not force an interaction.

## Resources

### Microchip registration

Register your microchip number online with Found Animals.

[www.foundanimals.org/](http://www.foundanimals.org/)

### Behavior Helpline

If you are experiencing a behavior concern with your dog adopted from Multnomah County Animal Services, you can email your adoption counselor or call the Multnomah County Animal Services Behavior Helpline:

**(503) 988-7387 or visit [multcopets.org/training-resources](http://multcopets.org/training-resources)**