

The First few Weeks with your New Puppy or Dog

Now that you have adopted your new family member, what can you and your family expect for the very first weeks with your new furry friend?

Most of us have been there!! We are so excited and in love with our new best friend that we sometimes think that the pup will instantly know what to do! Well, some dogs do and some will need a little time to adjust to having parents and a new routine – almost like having a new job- new boss, new desk!

The first few weeks will definitely be full of “firsts”. The first time you take him/her for a walk around the neighborhood, the first time he/she sleeps on the dog bed, the first days of eating and going out potty training (some dogs have an idea of this, now they just have to figure out that it happens every day and that it is something expected of them).

Make sure that you “dog proof“ (like baby proofing) your home. Place items you don’t want to be knocked to the ground on a high shelf. **You want to set your new companion for success**, so this is important for the first few weeks. Taking him/her out for walks may be a little scary for your new dog at first, so start slow, perhaps a walk around the house/building- and every other day you can add blocks. Some dogs may feel a little uneasy with car noises, people in bikes, etc. This way your new dog will get to know the neighborhood and feel safe in his new surroundings.

It is also VERY important that your new dog gets to know “you and your family first”. I know that for some of you who may have had a dog before, this may be redundant. I suggest no huge parties where all 20 cousins come to meet the new companion. This can be overwhelming to your dog, and he may or may not get over stimulated with too many new things and faces. **Keep it simple**; invite a friend/family member or two every week, and allow the dog to meet every one at his pace. Your new dog needs time to decompress from his previous life and setting; especially if he/she was in an animal shelter.

One last but important note about your new dog: If you have a baby or already have a resident dog, **take your time**.

About babies: Let the dog hear the baby, smell your baby (from afar, dogs have great sense of smell!), after a few days introduce the baby to him in a safe environment (both mom and dad present if possible) A quick sniff and you are done. Slowly add more time.

About dogs: let the dogs smell each other, from afar, if you can keep them in separate rooms or areas for a couple of days, that is a good idea. Take them both out for a walk “on leash” (you hold one and your husband or friend holds the other). After a block, switch dogs. Both the resident dog and your new addition will know that they are together and will get used to each

other. Allow together time at home, supervised by you in order to make their transition easier. This would also apply to your neighbor's dog!

Keep in mind that though some dogs are great at jumping right into a new family; there are some dogs that require "time". We know that now that they are in our home, they are safe and will never go without food or affection, but they need to learn that feeling. So, don't be discouraged if your new dog doesn't come running and smiling when you call him/her. I suggest that you sit on the couch with a yummy treat, speak to him/her and let the dog come to you. Allow your furry friend to discover (at his/her pace) that "you are the cool person that pets him when he comes"! He needs time to know you!

I also suggest a visit to the veterinarian. Just a basic check up to make sure your new dog is nice and healthy. There you will learn about preventative care, and avoid health issues down the line.

Most importantly, allow yourself to enjoy getting to know your new dog. It is so great to see them fall asleep on your lap, or to hear the first time they snore! Your dog will take on the world outside your home a little at a time. Like a child, if you set that solid base of care, love and some rules at home, they will do great in the real world. And what a pleasure it is to hear "what a sweet dog you have!" from your neighbors.

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