

FOSTER GUIDE

A handbook for fosters of rescue dogs.



Welcome and introduction	3
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PART ONE - BRINGING YOUR DOG HOME

Getting Ready to Foster a Dog	4
Introducing Your Dog to the Foster Dog	6
Fostering - The First Week	7

PART TWO - CARING FOR YOUR FOSTER DOG

Daily Care & Daily Routine	8
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PART THREE - HOUSE TRAINING AND CRATE TRAINING

House Training & Crate Training	11
Crate & Confinement Training Pointers	12

PART FOUR - BEHAVIOR AND SOCIALIZATION

Behavior issues	13
Basic Training	14
Socialization	15

PART FIVE - EMERGENCIES

General criteria for emergencies	17
Illness and injured dogs	17
Lost dogs	18



Welcome & Introduction

Welcome to the Saving Great Animals Foster Care Program!

The Foster Care Program will save the lives of many dogs who would otherwise not have homes or would be euthanized.

Time spent in foster care is crucial for these dogs and will help them begin the journey that will lead to adoption and to their forever home!

Although fostering is a lot of work, it is a very rewarding experience. You will help dogs grow from helpless beings to confident, well-adjusted pets. You also get the fun of raising a dog without the commitment to lifetime care. Most importantly, you are saving lives!

All of our fosters have 'first dibs' on their dogs, should they wish to adopt him or her. If not, our foster's voice counts in the rehoming process. You know the dog best and it is important to us that you feel comfortable with where the dog is being placed.

Foster family is asked to supply...

- Healthy and safe environment
- Socialization (family and pet interaction, leash walks)
- Dog food (incl. special dietary needs where possible)
- Activities (potty training, correcting behavior, positive training, etc.)
- Interactions with toys and different noises around your house

Foster family is asked to...

- Pick up from transport if needed
- Help with meet and greet if able
- Help with adoption events if able



PART 1 - BRINGING YOUR DOG HOME

Getting Ready to Foster a Dog

After being approved by the SGA staff as a qualified foster home, and before you bring a foster dog home, we suggest you prepare yourself, your family and your home for a new canine companion.

Where to keep your foster dog

Planning on where you will keep your dog before you bring your foster dog home will make the entire process easier for everyone. When you first bring a foster dog home, you will want to confine them to a single room, such as a kitchen or family room. This room should not be an isolated room, but a room where you spend a large part of your day or evening, as dogs are pack animals and want to be with you. This room is especially important when you are at work or away from the house, as it will be a new environment in which they will need time to become familiar and comfortable.

Use a baby gate to block off the entrances to other rooms. By keeping the dog in one room, you are helping to prevent accidents that may occur because of stress or adjusting to your routine. Even a house trained dog may have an accident or two during this adjustment period. For dogs that are not house trained, keeping them confined to one room will help start this important training as you must be able to monitor their activities. SGA recommends you also use a crate in this room for times when you are away from the house.





The Do's

- Do keep your foster dog indoors in a location with a crate available.
- Do keep your foster dogs in a warm /cool location (depending on the season)
- Do keep your foster dog on a leash at all times when outdoors unless in your secured fenced yard. When in a secured yard, you must supervise your dog at all times. It is very common for a shelter dog to try to escape. They can scale fences, slip through cracks in the fence or dig their way out.

The Don'ts

- Do not place your foster dog around other strange dogs as we often do not know the dog's past history.
- Do not allow your foster dog outdoors unless supervised by an adult.
- Never take your foster dog to an off-leash park. Not only is this a liability, but you may not have enough recall control to get the dog back if anything happens.

How to dog-proof a room

Walk into the room in which you plan to confine your foster dog, and ask yourself:

- Is there room for the dog's crate (the dog's safe place)?
- Is there quick access to the outside for bathroom breaks?
- Is there anything that can be chewed, such as drapes, a couch or rugs?
- Are there exposed electrical cables?
- Is there anywhere the dog can hide? Will you be able to get the dog out if hidden?
- Are there coffee tables with objects that can be knocked off by a wagging tail?
- Are there plants in the room? If so, check the list of toxic plants in this manual.



Introducing Your Dog to a Foster Dog

What to do once you are home with your foster dog

- If possible, go for a walk around your neighborhood with both dogs and two handlers. Walk the dogs side by side on leashes and allow them to sniff one another gradually. Nose to nose is not a polite way to sniff and can lead to fighting. Sniffing should be done at the side or back end of the body.
- Do give your own dog lots of praise and love.
- Do leave leashes on the dogs when you are in the home, so that you can get immediate control if you need. You may only need to do this for a short time.
- Do talk normally. Letting the dogs know that you are fine; they are fine, everything is fine!
- Be patient and go slowly with your foster dogs as they may have been through a stressful surgery, abusive situation and a lot of recent changes.
- Do not leave your foster dog unattended with your resident dog. Even if they seem to get along well in your presence, you should separate them when you leave the house. After a week you may determine that this is no longer necessary, but be sure to always remove all toys, food, and chews so that there is nothing to fight over.

Some common mistakes:

- Holding the leash too tensely as dogs may react with defensiveness.
- Leaving toys and chews around the house. This can cause resource guarding to escalate very quickly. Remove all toys and chews before you arrive home with your foster dog.
- Feeding your foster dog with your resident dog. It is best to separate them initially, and to always supervise feeding time.
- Over-stimulating your foster dog with introductions to many people or your neighbor's dogs.



Fostering - The First Week

Now that you are home with your foster dog, you should start a regular routine so your dog can begin to adjust to your household. During this adjustment period, please keep stimulation to a minimum. Some recommendations include:

- Find a quiet route to walk or run your foster dog (depending on energy level) to familiarize him with his new environment. This also helps start the bonding between you and your foster dog.
- Don't introduce your foster dog to people you meet on your walk. For the first 7-14 days (could be more or less) your foster dog should lay low while he tries to figure out just what his new situation is. You may not see any unwelcome behavior initially.
- Do not introduce your foster dog to other dogs (other than your resident dog). This includes neighborhood dogs, and dogs belonging to family and friends. Why? There is no way to tell how your foster dog will behave when introducing him to other dogs. If your foster bites a person or dog, you are required to report it to SGA immediately.
- Don't throw a party, or have a lot of people over to your home during the adjustment period. During the first week try to spend quality time with your foster dog.
- The most important thing to do during this initial transition is to clearly but non-confrontationally establish the house rules. Also, take care not to indulge your foster dog's timid, tentative or fearful behavior. We understand how tempting this is as many of our dogs have come from less than ideal situations, but in the long run it does not benefit the dog.



PART 2 - CARING FOR YOUR FOSTER DOG

Daily Care

Feeding

Create a consistent schedule for feeding your foster dog. Feed them at the same times every day. Create a separate space for your foster dog to eat so they will feel comfortable. If you have other dogs at home, feed your foster in a separate room and close the door. This will prevent any arguments over food. Do not feed them any people food. You do not know what the adoptive family will want to do, so don't start a habit they will have to break. By feeding only dog food you are also discouraging begging.

Feeding will depend on the size and age of your foster dog.

- Adult dogs: dry adult food twice a day, once in the morning and once at night.
- Adolescent dogs (4 months to a year): dry puppy food, twice a day.

The quantity of food you provide to your foster dog will vary depending on weight, age and activity level. Please refer to the suggested amounts on the dog food package you are feeding your foster dog as the amounts may change depending on the brand. Remember to reduce this amount to compensate for any treats, including chews. Obesity is an epidemic for pets in the US, and can lead to health problems or exacerbate existing ones.

Please do not overfeed your foster dog. Always provide plenty of fresh water.



Daily Routine

Exercise

Foster dogs should be exercised every day, rain or shine. The old adage, “A tired dog is a happy dog”, holds true for foster dogs. Most foster dogs will need at least two 30 minute walks a day to release excess energy. If your foster dog is an adolescent, you may need to step up the activity level to include regular runs/hikes or brisk walks. A dog that is exercised regularly will tend to sleep when you are not at home - and a sleeping dog cannot do undesirable things such as bark, chew, etc. Even a 10-week old puppy that plays inside or in a yard needs numerous walks daily as part of the socialization process. The exception to this is if your foster dog is recovering from an illness or injury.

When walking your foster dog, leave at least 6 feet between your dog and any other dog you meet. This keeps handlers and dogs safe from possible conflicts and also reduces the transmission of any diseases. Foster parents will need to be extra diligent because many dog owners seem to encourage their dogs to greet every dog they encounter out on a walk. This nose-to-nose greeting can be stressful for many dogs, as dogs typically greet each other from an angle. One simple way to avoid an oncoming dog walk is to just cross the street or start to walk in a semi circle around them. Most people recognize that this is a sign that you do not want your dogs to meet. If this is not possible, just announce to the oncoming walker that you are walking a shelter dog and would prefer that the dogs do not greet each other.

Sometimes you must broadcast this loudly if their dog is off leash or on a retractable leash. Keeping your dog to your side (rather than at the end of the leash) and creating a body block with your own body is also helpful.

Sometimes it is impossible to avoid another dog, so just stay calm, walk between your foster dog and the oncoming dog and move past. Also try talking to your dog, “Fido, keep with me” and giving treats as you pass an oncoming dog will help keep their attention on you, not on the other dog. Please do not use retractable leashes when walking or running with your foster dog. A harness is best.



Attention and Playtime

Lots of human contact is important for recovering, sick, injured or neglected dogs. Attention and playtime is a reward for your foster dog. Be sure to give your foster dogs several minutes of playtime periodically throughout the day.

As a general rule, children under 16 years old should NOT be left alone and unsupervised with any dog, but specifically a foster dog. Do not allow children to behave with the foster dog in a manner you would not want to child to behave with a younger sibling. Teach children to leave a dog alone when he is eating, chewing and sleeping. Never allow a child to remove a toy or any other prized possession from a dog. A child will not differentiate between a foster dog and a dog they have grown up with, so you must make sure to keep everyone safe.



PART 3 - HOUSE TRAINING AND CRATE TRAINING

House Training

Be patient with your foster dog. Even a house trained adult dog will make mistakes, especially if they have been at the shelter for a long time and have been 'doing their business' in their kennel. If there are smells in your house from another dog or cat, some fosters may mark on their territory. This action should be re-directed immediately with a calm "Ah-Ah" and escort him outside where he can finish. You will want to use some odor neutralizer on the areas where the foster dog has marked to insure he will not smell and mark that area again.

Even if you bring home an adult dog that is housebroken, you will want to follow these guidelines until your foster dog adjusts to his new situation and to your schedule.

- Determine where you want your foster dog to eliminate - it could be the backyard, side yard, on a walk, etc.
- When you have determined where he should do his business, take him to the same place every time, and tell him to "do his business". Take him out when he wakes up, after he eats or drinks, after a play session, or at least every two hours. Stand with him for 5 minutes. If he eliminates, reward him (with treats, praise, a favorite game or your own special happy dance). If he does not go in 5 minutes, take him back inside and try every 15 minutes until he goes. Every time he goes, make sure you reward him!
- Supervise the dog closely while you are inside. If he starts to sniff the floor or even squats to go, interrupt with a calm "Ah-Ah", scoop him up quickly and take him to the approved spot and praise when he finishes.
- If he goes in the house while you are not paying attention, do not correct him - it is not his fault. Clean it up and go back to your schedule. Use an odor neutralizer to get rid of the smell. **Never put the dog's face in his mess, or yell at him. He will not understand you and you will only be teaching him to fear you.**



Crate Training

Crates provide safe havens and dens for dogs. They calm them and can help prevent destructive behavior. How long an adult dog can be crates will depend on many factors. Some dogs have never been introduced to a crate and are not used to 'holding it' until they are let out. Older dogs with some medical conditions may only be able to successfully hold it for short periods of time.

Rigorous exercise should be given before and after long periods in the crate and good chew toys should be in the crate at all times. You may want to crate your foster dog for the first few nights in your bedroom - most of them feel more secure and it prevents accidents.

Crates should never be used as a means of punishment for your foster dog. If used for punishing, the dog will learn to avoid going in the crate. Crates should be a place that dogs like to be in and feel safe and secure when they are there.

Crate and Confinement Training Pointers

- Begin crate training straight away - first day home.
- Practice going in for small and tasty treats.
- When he is comfortable going in, practice waiting a few seconds inside before getting a treat - then practice closing the door. Go slowly! If a dog has never been in a crate before you will need to be patient.
- Gradually extend the time in the crate to 10 minutes with the door open and closed.
- Put the crate next to the sofa, rent a video and keep your foster dog in the crate next to you while he works on a stuffed Kong or another toys or chewy.
- Put the dog in the crate for 30 minutes with chewies while you are home going about your routine - visit the crate every 5-10 minutes to reassure.
- Start leaving your foster dog alone in the crate - the first time you do this, he should be tired (just exercised), the time should be short (15-30 minutes) and he should have a good chewy.



PART 4 - BEHAVIOR AND SOCIALIZATION

Behavior Issues

Some foster dogs will have specific needs regarding their behavior, training or socializing. SGA will advise you if your foster dog has a behavior problem that may require your help, such as an abused or fearful dog who needs socializing or confidence-building with other dogs or people. A dominant puppy may benefit from an older dog in your home to “show them the ropes” and appropriate behavior. A dog with an unknown/questionable history may just need to be observed in someone’s home before being adopted. Many times it is the foster parent who is the first to learn about a foster dog’s specific behavior so constant communication with the dog’s case manager is important. There are resources that we can provide to help you manage some of these behavioral issues.

We do not expect foster parents to be miracle workers. If your foster dog requires more attention, exercise or training that you can provide, the best solution for you and the dog might be a different foster home. Please contact SGA if you feel this is the case.

Regardless of the issue, we do not recommend punishment as this is rarely effective in resolving behavior problems. Punishment will not address the cause of the behavior, and in fact it may worsen any behavior that is motivated by fear or anxiety. Punishment may also cause anxiety in dog that are not currently fearful. Never discipline your dog after the fact.

People often believe their dog makes this connection because he runs and hides or “looks guilty”. But dogs display submissive postures like cowering, running away or hiding when they feel threatened by an angry tone of voice, body posture or facial expression. Your dog does not know what he has done wrong; he only knows that you are upset. Punishment after the fact will not only fail to eliminate the undesirable behavior, but may provoke other undesirable behaviors too.



If your foster dog is exhibiting any behavioral issues, ask yourself the questions below:

- Is my foster dog getting enough exercise?
- Is he being left alone for long periods of time?
- Does he have interesting toys to keep his mind engaged and stimulated?
- Is he getting enough attention and playtime?
- Am I reinforcing bad behavior? (e.g. telling a fearful dog that “it’s ok”, or verbally scolding a dog when they are seeking attention, etc.)
- Does my foster dog have a safe place that is dog proofed and has appropriate toys or am I leaving my belongings within reach?
- Am I providing specific outlets based on my foster dog’s breed?

Basic Training

Most potential adopters are looking for dogs with basic manners. You might feel it is appropriate to let your own dog jump on people, sleep on the bed or beg for food, but please do not let your foster dog have these same indulgences. Set boundaries for your foster dog and be consistent.

We suggest positive, rewards based training for dogs. Increasing your foster dog’s obedience skills has many benefits. Not only will the future adopter appreciate these skills, but your foster dog will “show” better when visiting with potential adopters. You will also have a much happier foster experience. Some basic obedience cues that your foster dog can learn are: sit, down, stay, come, crate/bed, heel and an attention cue such as “watch me”. These are very helpful in managing any dog. If you have a dog that does not like other dogs, these cues will be helpful on walks as well. For example, a dog that can heel nicely and that has been taught to “watch” you has less likelihood of making eye contact with another dog and getting agitated.



Additional training tips

- Short 5 minute sessions 4-6 times a day are more effective than one long session.
- Dogs need and respond to positive rewards when learning new behaviors. Remember, most behaviors we want are boring to a dog, so it is important to make them interesting to them. A positive reward is a high value treat, or a game of fetch.
- You provide the guidance and information he need to succeed and build his confidence. Always praise your dog when he is doing something good.
- Be consistent with your terminology and routine. Your foster dog will become confused if you let him play with some old slippers, but not your new ones.
- Start small and easy and slowly build from there. Most people jump too quickly into advanced environments (outside while on a walk) where there are too many distractions.
- Use "Ah-Ah" instead of the word "no". The canine mother would use this type of sound to correct her pup. Only use the word "no" for very serious matters. If it is overused, your foster dog will no longer respond.
- Be patient and calm. Dogs respond to your tone of voice and facial expressions as well as your emotions.
- Never lose your temper with a foster dog or strike him.

Socialization

After your foster dog has settled in and has acclimated to his new home, it is time to get him out into the world. The more you can do this, the better socialized he will be. Get him used to different people and different environments. Start slowly and do not over stimulate as many foster dogs may not have had exposure to what seems to us like a normal environment. Always keep a good handle on the leash and be vigilant in your surroundings. Busy streets, a running squirrel or other distractions can send your dog running.

If you are a runner or jogger, start off slow and keep an eye on your foster dog to see how they react. Many dogs pull when they are in front and running can intensify this behavior. Keeping them at your side, rather than in front can help eliminate this pulling behavior. The runs should be about the dog's exercise initially, not your own. Help his get used to the running routine and build up his stamina over time to avoid injury.



PART 5 - EMERGENCIES

Emergency situations include

- Continuous weight loss
- Continuous diarrhea
- Continuous vomiting
- Bleeding of any kind
- Trauma - hit by car, dropped, stepped on
- Difficulty breathing / blocked airway
- Lethargy
- Dehydration
- If the dog has vomiting or diarrhea, but is still active, eating and drinking, it can probably wait until the next day to receive help. However, if the dog is lethargic and shows no interest in food and water, it is wise to seek emergency help.
- Coughing or sneezing should pose no immediate problem unless accompanied by blood or other symptoms listed.

If an emergency situation occurs please contact:

Jacintha Sayed - Cell 415-867-0146

Perrin Kaplan - Cell 206-909-0119

Medical expenses related to your foster dog are the responsibility of Saving Great Animals. However, unless it is an emergency, please call us for authorization prior to taking your foster dog to the vet. Unless it is logistically impossible, we ask that our foster parents use the SGA approved vets only, as they give us a much needed rescue rate.

Illness

Your foster dog may not display any signs of illness until quite ill. Therefore it is important to observe your dog closely each day. Call if you see abnormal behavior,



unusual discharge from the eyes, nose or other body openings, abnormal lumps, limping, difficulty getting up or down, loss of appetite or abnormal stool.

Diarrhea

Diarrhea can be caused by several factors, including stress, change of diet, poor diet, eating garbage, parasites and viruses. If your dog has diarrhea but no other symptoms, rule out change of diet by feeding 2 cups of cooked rice mixed with one cup of cottage cheese for a day or two. Then reintroduce dry kibble. Canned pumpkin or boiled potatoes can also help ease digestion.

Provide plenty of fresh water as diarrhea can cause dehydration. To check for dehydration, pull the skin up over the shoulder blades. If it snaps back quickly, the dog is not dehydrated. If the skin goes down slowly, then the dog needs fluids.

Injured dogs

Injured foster dogs will have specific needs. They will most likely be recovering from surgery and will come with veterinary orders. Generally, fracture, cast or other surgery patients may need to be confined to a crate or small room to limit mobility.

As with all foster dogs, watch for signs of illness, since injured foster dogs are under additional stress and are more prone to illness. Lots of human contact is important for healing injured dogs. Active play should be limited, but cuddling, petting, talking, brushing and massaging are all good social activities for a recovering animal.

Lost dogs

When your foster dog arrives, make sure he has his collar with a tag on at all times. Please check the paperwork you were given for a chip number. If there is no microchip, please contact SGA as that will need to be taken care of immediately.

Dogs in transition are always a flight risk, so keep a close eye on them and watch out for open doors, cracks in the fence, digging under the fence, scaling over a fence. Keep your foster dog leashed at all times.



If your foster dog does get away, notify SGA immediately. SGA will usually round up volunteers to come and help you look for the dog and in some cases will work with a search & rescue dog to help pick up the scent of the lost dog.

As soon as possible, make signs for the lost dog, to let everyone in your neighborhood know the dog is missing. Make it big and colorful enough that it will attract attention and people can read it. SGA can send you some examples of what these posters look like.

Remember that keeping your foster dog safe is the highest priority. We ask that all foster dogs are double leashed when outside at all times.

