

Bringing home a new dog can be a lot of fun, but it can also be stressful, for you and the dog. It can take days, if not weeks, before everyone is comfortably settled into a new routine. Please be patient with your new dog, and yourself. Your trial adoption may not be smooth sailing all the way, but with time things will settle and your relationship with your new dog will begin to blossom.

Please follow these guidelines to make the transition process go as safely and smoothly as possible.

1. Prevent escapes

Our number one concern with moving dogs into a new home is to ensure that the dog does not escape. This happens more often than you would think. Rescue dogs are always a very high flight risk. They generally have been through a lot of change and do not know their environment. We ask that you ensure that your dogs wears a **collar** and **tag AT ALL TIMES**, so that he or she can be identified and returned in case of escape. If your dogs does not have a Saving Great Animals tag when you receive him, please get a tag for him right away. In addition to a collar and tag, your dog should be wearing a harness as well as a collar when being walked. A dog can easily spook and back out of the collar so a harness is a good back up. For the first few weeks it is a good idea to double leash your dog, even when you are just walking around your neighborhood. **This means having a leash on their collar AND a leash on their harness.**



Learn more about lost pet prevention [here](#).

2. Integrate gently with other pets

If you have other dogs in your home, take the time to introduce the new dog properly. It is tempting to think that your easy-going dog will be just fine with the newcomer, but this is not always the case.

First, plan to have the dogs meet on neutral ground.

Choose a place where neither dog is likely to feel territorial. Even your dog's favorite park is not a good spot, unless it is a dog park (since dogs are often used to meeting other dogs there).

When the meeting occurs, have each dog on lead, each with a calm, relaxed adult handler.

Keep the leads loose, since tension on the leash might communicate to the dogs that you are fearful or anxious about their meeting, which will in turn make them more fearful and anxious.

Walk the dogs side by side with a safe distance between the dogs.

Then, cross paths (still maintaining that distance) and allow the dogs to smell where the other has walked. If either dog barks in the beginning or is acting a little crazy, just

ignore that for now and keep walk at a steady pace, maintaining a distance of about 10 feet. After about 10 minutes of walking, the dogs will likely have calmed down a lot. You can now let them walk a little closer to each other (5 feet) and continue on your walk.

Next, let the dogs meet. As the dogs approach each other, watch their body language closely, paying attention to the entire body.

The dogs may need to do a little posturing or make a little noise, but if you don't know how to tell the difference between dogs getting to know each other and dogs who don't like each other, have someone there who does.

If the dogs have shown no signs of hostility toward each other up to this point, take them to an enclosed area, drop their leashes, step back and give them space to get to know each other. We have a tendency to micro-manage these interactions, but in general it's best if we allow the dogs to work it out with minimal interference. Humans hovering and getting too involved can be frustrating to the dogs, which can make them tense and spoil the interaction.

For the most part, dogs in this situation respond well to verbal feedback from humans. For example, if the dogs are getting too tense around each other, saying something in a soothing tone of voice (such as “It’s OK, guys”) can help them to take it down a notch, shake off and start fresh. If one dog is getting too overbearing and the other isn’t correcting her,

we can often help out by saying something like “Hey, knock it off!” If the dogs do shake off their tension and engage with each other in polite, appropriate ways, we can reward them for those behaviors and encourage more of them by speaking in a happy tone (“Good dogs! Well done!”). In most cases, that kind of verbal guidance is all the interference they need from us. We must only step in and physically separate them when they are becoming too excited and cannot give themselves a break, or when it becomes clear that their relationship is headed for conflict.

Learn more about Dog to Dog introductions [here](#).

3. Be patient

Many rescue dogs have been through a lot by the time they make it to your home. They are stressed and confused and do not know that they have been given a ticket to freedom. If they were rescued from a shelter, they have been made to do their business on a cement floor, so gently help them with their potty training. Some dogs may never have been inside a home before so things like stairs, vacuum cleaners, garage doors, etc. are new and perhaps scary to them. Be gentle and have lots of treats on hand to teach them that these things will not hurt them. Take your time to introduce new situations and if things do not go well on the first day, don’t despair! The dog you see on day 1 is a very different dog from the one you will see on day 10. Try not to plan big events for the first week after your dog arrives. A big party or many visitors will likely be stressful on your new dog.

Do not take your new dog to the dog park for at least 2 months. It takes time to build a relationship with a dog and to establish good recall. If you take a dog to the dog park, you need to be very sure that you have excellent control over the dog’s behavior and know how he or she will react in certain situations. Many rescue dogs don’t enjoy the dog park much, as they feel unsettled or afraid and having many other dogs around can be overwhelming. Be patient and get to know your dog and his or her tolerance levels before taking them on big excursions.

Remember, decompression is key for dogs in a new environment. Allow them time to learn the ropes. Leave them alone if they need some space to find their feet.

4. Watch their health

Many rescue dogs will have minor health issues, due to the simple fact that they have not received adequate vet care in the past. Many dogs arrive with tummy troubles, due to the stress of the shelter and transport, as well as change of food. Try to mix boiled potatoes, canned pumpkin, cottage cheese or rice with their regular food to help settle their stomachs.

Some of the dogs are a bit thin due to shelter life. If you notice any coughing and drippy nose, this is likely a case of kennel cough and may need some antibiotics. We just ask you to keep an eye so we can work with you on anything unforeseen. Some with have stitches to be removed after spay or neuter. Please check in with SGA to see when those stitches are ready to come out.

5. Work on potty training

Even the best potty-trained dog will have accidents in a new environment. They don't know where they are supposed to 'go' or how to tell you that they need to. Similarly, you do not yet know their signs that let you know they need to go outside. Take your dog out every few hours, following the same routine each time. Go through the same door, to the same spot. If they go potty, reward them with a treat and praise them profusely. If you catch your dog trying to pee inside, do not yell or get upset. Gently remove them from the situation and bring them outside. For the more stubborn dogs who have trouble catching on, you may need to confine them to one room with a baby gate and prevent them from having free reign of the house. Dogs typically do not like to pee where they eat and sleep so confinement to a smaller area will help them hold it until you can take your dog outside. There are certain times of the day when you will have more success with your dog: when they wake up in the morning, after nap time or meal time and after a good play session. In these situations, scoop your dog up or walk them outside to the designated spot and praise/reward when they go.

5. Practice leaving them

Your new dog probably thinks you are pretty great. In some cases you will be one of the first friendly faces they have seen in a while. They may not enjoy it when you have to leave. Dog enjoy company and would rather be with you or another dog than by themselves. Knowing this, gently get them ready to spend some time by themselves. Decide where you want the dog to be when you are away and plan on providing your dog some entertainment in that



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space. Some dogs do not like to be confined to a crate. They may never have been in a crate or they may have spent too much time in a crate. Always introduce a crate slowly.

You can read more about crate training [here](#).

If you are experiencing behavioral issues that you are concerned about, please contact us immediately.

TRIAL ADOPTION CONTRACT

By accepting an animal from Saving Great Animals into our home, I/we commit:

- 1) To keep this animal safe by following the 'two leash' rule at all times. I understand that I/we are not allowed to take this animal to the dog park or other off leash settings. If the dog is lost or injured while in our care, I/we understand that we are responsible for the cost of recovery and any possible medical bills.
- 2) To keep this animal in my personal possession and to provide proper and sufficient food, water, shelter, grooming, tooth and gum care, and humane treatment at all times.
- 3) To allow Saving Great Animals to examine the animal and its living conditions and to surrender it to SGA if the conditions are found unsatisfactory.
- 4) To never sell, trade ownership, abandon or dispose of this animal in any way, but to notify Saving Great Animals if I decide not to permanently adopt. I agree to work with SGA, knowing they are not a shelter by holding the animal until a suitable foster or replacement home is found. I understand that taking the animal to a shelter is a breach of contract and can result in legal action and my information being added to the National Do Not Adopt registry.
- 5) That I/we understand that this animal may come with issues, resulting from shelter life or previous treatment, and that I/we will allow this animal a reasonable amount of time to settle into our home.
- 6) To contact SGA immediately if issues arise with this animal that may lead to an unsuccessful transition into our home.
- 7) To contact SGA immediately if medical issues arise with this animal and to take the animal to an SGA approved veterinarian for treatment.

Trial adopter

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Foster/SGA Representative

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____