



Introducing a Rescue Dog To your home

Fitting in

When we take our new dog home we must remember that he may have been in kennels for at least several weeks, and sometimes several months or longer. He will want to fit into your family but he will have to be shown how, with patience and understanding.

In order to help him fit in we must start as we mean to go on and not try to compensate for his bad past. We must remember that he is not human but a dog, and dogs have different needs to us. We need to lead our dogs in a gentle, kind way, We do have a big advantage because we control all the resources, food, water, exercise etc.

Ground Rules

From when your dog first enters into your home the ground rules must be set. To do this is not difficult but you must be very consistent, the more consistent you are the quicker your dog will learn.

When he has been left alone, even for a very short time, do not make a big fuss of him when you arrive back, keep it very low key, no excited voices, that will cause him to be more excited to see you. Dogs that get over excited when their family returns can cause quite a bit of damage, knocking over children, claws breaking the skin etc. You can give a command like "Sit", then reward him, this is giving him something to do instead of jumping all over everyone.

Both the "Sit" and "Down" commands are very useful and can be used constantly, ie. When putting his food down, before putting his lead on, before grooming, being stroked, playing, greeting visitors etc. It is also very useful if your dog escapes because it will give you time to reach him.

Dogs should be taught good manners, take things gently from your hand, you can teach this by closing your hand to stop your dog from getting the treat, he will try to get it from your hand but don't let him, once he has backed away, open your hand and give him the command to take it.

Don't let him barge through doorways, this can be dangerous because it can knock someone down. Before you open the door, ask your dog to sit/down, open the door then give your dog permission to go through. This will keep your dog a lot calmer and not as likely to knock someone over. It doesn't matter if your dog goes first, last or somewhere in between, what does matter is you dog doesn't barge through and hurting someone.

Playtime is very useful, it strengthen the bond between you and your dog, the more you play the quicker and stronger the bond. Don't let the play get out of control, if your dog starts to get over excited stop the play. If you are starting to feel uncomfortable with the way your dog is playing, you are probably right so stop the play.



Indoor Kennels

Many people do not like indoor kennels as they think that they are putting them in a cage, but will happily shut a dog in a room, ie, kitchen, when they go out. This is still a cage, although a large one. If introduced properly, and the kennel is large enough for the dog to stretch out, stand up properly and turn round, it will become his refuge like our bedrooms are our refuge and will be happy and secure there.

Dogs that are anxious when left may cause considerable damage to your house and could do some serious harm to themselves. One dog I know emptied the fridge each time she was left and there was not a child lock on the market that could keep her out. She was very stressed and unhappy but settled when someone was there. The change in this dog when she was put in a crate was remarkable. She became more settled, happy and more obedient. Her kennel was large enough for her, her bed, bowl of water, toys and chews to keep her occupied.

Grooming

Grooming is an important part of owning a dog. It reinforces the bond and dogs enjoy the full attention of his owner. Watch show dogs, they are quite happy being groomed as they are usually one of several dogs and while their owner is grooming them, they have their full attention.

If grooming is introduced quietly and firmly, most dogs learn to enjoy it. It is also very important for your dog to be touched all over including ears, eyes, mouth and legs. Vets appreciate a dog that they can handle easily.

Towel drying is also good for your dog but again it must be taught quietly and firmly or your dog will try to turn it into a game hoping that you will give up.

Feeding

Many rescue dogs have been running free and had to find their own food so they feel they have to grab their food, they don't realise that they will never have to do that again. If you allow your dog to grab their dish as you are putting it down they can knock it out of your hand. I always ask my dogs to sit/down before I put their food on the floor. They soon accept this and the grabbing stops.

To change your dog over to a different food, do this gradually by introducing the new food in small amounts at first then gradually more and more until that is all they are eating. This should take about 2 weeks from start to finish. Many dogs can get an upset tummy if there is a sudden change.



Training

Dogs do not communicate the same way that we do and have to learn by trial and error what we want. We can make this much easier by teaching them what the words mean. When your dog does do what you ask, lots of praise to make him feel wonderful. Treats can be used at first but your dog should be able to obey a command without a treat so they should be gradually reduced until they don't need them.

Using punishment to train a dog is very stressful for the dog, they get confused and it can destroy the bonding that you have already made. He needs to trust you and if you punish him, that trust will be broken and you may never get it back.

Punishment is negative and as a dog cannot relate to something that happened 5 seconds earlier, they won't know why they have been punished. What can happen if you punish a dog, they relate the punishment to what they are looking at when it happens. If they are looking at another dog, they could think that is why they are being punished.

Dogs do not feel guilt, they don't know what it is. When a dog lowers his body, tucks his tail between his legs, ears back and is trying to hide, this is not guilt but he is trying to tell you that he is submitting or very nervous. Many people regard this as guilt and punish the dog which results in a very confused dog that does not understand why you are annoyed or punishing him.

Dogs read our body language, they can tell by this when we are happy, sad, annoyed or angry and it is our job to make sure that we are showing the right body language to our dog so that they can fit into our family.

House Training

Puppies and some older dogs may not have been house trained but it isn't difficult to teach.

Take your dog outside and watch to see if they toilet, when they do, lots and lots of praise, be really excited so they feel really good. They will soon pick up the reason why.

Take your puppy/dog outside when they wake up, before and after they are fed, when you have finished playing and for pups, every half to three quarters of an hour in between, and for adult dogs, every hour in between.

If your dog does have an accident, put them outside before cleaning it up. Normal household cleaners take the smell away for us but not our dogs. Biological washing liquid, white vinegar or you can get something from the pet shop to clean and take the smell away.



Travelling

Many dogs like to travel with their owners but unless care is taken, your dog can be hurt.

Your dog can travel in a cage in the boot of your car or wear a harness attached to the seatbelts on the back seat. Your dog does need to be fastened somehow in case there is an accident. If your dog isn't secure, they can go through the windscreen and if someone opens the car door and your dog is loose, they can escape to be run over by a vehicle coming behind.

**NEVER LEAVE YOUR DOG IN THE CAR IF THE SUN IS OUT,
WINTER AND SUMMER.**

Even leaving a window open is not enough because the sun heats the car up to a very high temperature which will kill your dog. If you do leave your dog in the car and it looks as if he is suffering, the police can break in, take your dog and you can go to prison so losing your dog.

Equipment

Equipment is essential for your dog and is readily available, some items are essential.

Essential equipment

By law a dog must wear a collar with some form of identification of their own on. This can be a disc or can be put onto the collar itself. Some owners have neckerchiefs with discs attached. You will also need a lead, food bowl, water bowl, bed (there are many different types) brush, toothbrush, toothpaste (only use toothpaste especially for dogs), toys, poop-a-scoop, (nappy bags are cheap and good for the job) all woopsies must be picked up when outside in public places.