

Behavioral Adoption Counseling - DOGS

1. SAFEGUARD AGAINST SEPARATION ANXIETY

Dogs bond quickly to their new owners, a quality we love but that may lead to separation issues if you spend 24/7 with your dog the first few days and then suddenly go back to work. To help your dog adjust to your schedule make sure that you leave him/her alone for bits of time starting on the very first day you bring him/her home. When you leave, turn the radio on and give the dog a food filled Kong or hide treats around the house to keep him/her busy and form a positive association with your departure. Don't make a big deal about leaving and greet your dog calmly when you get home.

2. HOUSETRAINING

Before you bring your new dog into your home, take him/her for a walk so that he/she is "empty". Keep your dog on a leash when you go into the house for the first time. Walk him/her around on leash so he/she gets to know the house. Supervise your dog for the first week or so. The only time you can reprimand a dog for eliminating in the house is if you catch him/her in the act so supervision is important. If you catch the dog starting to eliminate - say "et et" sharply and then take him/her outside to finish. Make sure you take your new dog outside regularly and praise and give a food treat for outdoor elimination.

3. INTRODUCTION TO RESIDENT CAT/S

Make sure that your new dog never has the opportunity to chase your cat. Bring him/her into the house on leash and keep him/her behind a baby gate when you are not there to supervise. Once your new dog and cat seem fine together you should still make sure that your cat always has an escape route to get away from your dog. A baby gate in a doorway that your cat can jump over or run under to escape the dog is best.

4. INTRODUCTION TO RESIDENT DOG/S

You should introduce your new dog to your resident dog/s off territory. Take them for a walk in the neighborhood to get started. After the walk, take them into your yard and let them wander around together (still on leash). If all goes well you can remove the leashes and let them play. Then put the leashes back on and take them into the house. Walk them around the house together. If all looks okay you can let them off leash. Supervise the dogs well for the first few weeks as they learn to share the house and other resources.

5. PHYSICAL EXERCISE

All dogs need aerobic exercise (a leash walk is NOT aerobic to a dog). Make sure your new dog gets at least 20 minutes of aerobic exercise each day. Suggested activities include fetch with a ball, going for a jog with you and playing the recall game where the dog runs back and forth between two people for treats. A tired dog is a good dog!!

6. MENTAL STIMULATION

A bored dog can get into trouble as he/she tries to entertain him/herself so you want to provide your dog with some mental exercise too. The best mental stimulation for a dog is using his nose. Take your dog for a walk and let him sniff things. Hide treats around the house for him to search for. Lay a trail of treats through the yard or house for him to follow. Additionally, putting your dog's meal inside puzzle feeders, feeder balls (an empty soda bottle will do) or a Kong toy can make it a challenge to get the food, thus providing mental stimulation each day at feeding time.

7. TRAINING

Dogs do not come knowing what you want them to do. You need to teach them to be polite members of the family and the community. Reward the behaviors you like (with praise and/or a food treat) and ignore the behaviors you don't like. Dogs learn through the consequence of their behavior – if the behavior is rewarded it will happen again, if it is not – it will go away. Resist the urge to simply punish the behaviors you don't like or your dog will learn that's the only way to get your attention. Find a good positive reinforcement training class to help you understand how to train your dog (www.apdt.com).

8. KIDS AND DOGS

Kids sometimes do things to and around dogs that make dogs nervous or afraid. Things like hitting and kicking a dog can cause the dog to defend himself. But even behaviors like hugging, kissing, laying on top of the dog can also trigger fear and cause the dog to act aggressively to stop the unwanted interaction. Please teach your children to respect the dog and to not hit, kick, hug, kiss or lay on top of your new dog.