

SETTING YOUR FOSTER DOG UP FOR SUCCESS!

Whether you are a first time foster or a seasoned veteran, or recently adopted a dog from us, we all know that the first 72 hours of bringing a new dog into the home are the hardest. But, if you can endure, you will have given a dog not only clear boundaries and rules he can understand, but laid the foundation on which this poor sweet soul can finally start to rehabilitate.

All of the dogs that come to Dogs Without Borders have each suffered some sort of trauma in their lives.

These are the "**Golden Rules**" of fostering:

BE PATIENT - this dog does not know better, he may never have been loved or a part of a family. He may never have had a toy before, he may not understand what little kids are, and having a furry friend may be really frightening right now, too. Everything is new, and you are a complete stranger he must learn to trust- and you must earn his trust in return.

BE KIND - he needs you to be firm, but please don't yell or lose your temper when he is whining in his crate at night. He may be afraid of the dark. He may have been abused and is already fearful of humans; please remind him not all humans are bad. Surely a few sleepless nights are a small price to pay to have saved this dog's life, right?

BE COMPASSIONATE - he may have lost the only family he ever knew and has a broken heart, or he may have lived on the streets eating trash and having to fight to stay alive, but wherever he came from, he will get better in time. All he needs is love.

REMEMBER WHY YOU BECAME A FOSTER IN THE FIRST PLACE - in those wee hours of the night when a dog is crying in his crate, it's hard to think clearly. When your dog is scared of the leash, or has refused to eat for days, it's frustrating for sure. But when you think about giving up, remember why you started: To save a life. To make a difference in your community.

To have a companion. Whatever that reason was that brought you to our rescue to foster, THANK YOU. What you are doing DOES make a difference, just look at that dog staring at you right now- you are a stranger to him, but he's looking at you for guidance and reassurance that he is safe... and he is, because of YOU.

Thanks for taking the time to read this, and for making the decision to foster!

THE TRANSITION: MANAGING YOUR FOSTER DOG

The first few days is a critical time for learning rules and breaking bad habits. Dogs are particularly impressionable in a new environment, especially the first time they try a behavior (and believe me, they WILL try anything if you allow it!). Therefore, plan to invest time during this period to socialize, teach and get acquainted with your new foster dog.

1. Plan and prepare for your new dog in advance whenever possible. Read about basic training. Get food, bowls, collar, leash, toys, and dog gate or crate.
2. Decide where the dog will be confined when you're not home and arrange a crate, dog bed (or old towel/blanket) in that area.
3. Prepare yourself mentally -- all things will NOT go smoothly at first. There will always be surprises! It's how you get past each challenge that will define you as a foster and your dog's ability to succeed.
4. As soon as you get your new pet home, begin managing his behavior and supervising him closely. *Do not give him run of your house.*
5. The most important thing he needs for the first few weeks is **STRUCTURE** -- enforced rules for living in your house. **Freedom comes later as he develops the responsibility to handle it.** Failure by the fosters and adopters to teach a dog the house rules is a chief reason for unsuccessful adoptions and foster homes. Let's change that!

RULES TO TEACH YOUR NEW FOSTER DOG:

1. **Housebreaking.** Assume your new foster dog will have accidents in the home, even if housetrained; the stress and new boundaries in a new home with new people ... it's a lot for a dog to understand.

Take your dog out on a long leash at two-to-three hour intervals to the area designated as the bathroom. Allow him to explore and get used to the area. When he poops or pees, praise and then reward him with a few minutes of play, sniffing or a walk; sometimes food treats are helpful for a dog who is "treat motivated".

When inside the home, for the first few days, keep the dog within your line of sight; close the doors to other rooms in the house and/or crate the dog frequently when unsupervised and to also accomplish the need of "crate training". The dog should be kept near you in the house so that if he begins to potty inside or looks like he is about to, you can reprimand (say "nah-ah-ah") and take him out immediately. Punishing a dog after the fact is ineffective and confusing to the animal; never push a dog's face in his excrement or urine.

2. **Jumping up on humans or being carried around in the home should never be permitted.** Additionally, rough play or wrestling is NEVER appropriate, particularly when kids are in the home as some dogs do not understand how to be careful or what is

considered playful noises versus fighting. If you do have kids in the home, create a separate area for the dog to be crated or separated for safety within the first 72 hours while a foster dog is getting adjusted. A foster dog should never be off-leash unsupervised around small children particularly; erring on the side of caution is expected and required.

3. Leashing INSIDE the home. As you introduce your dog to each area of your house, take him there on a long leash. For the first 72 hours, whenever the dog is not inside of his crate, he must be on-leash & tethered to a heavy piece of furniture- in other words, restrict his access to the entire home, one room at a time, so that he learns boundaries, appropriate behavior and also slowly earns his way into the “pack” when other animals are in the home.

4. How to interact and coexist peacefully with other pets in the home. Be sure to get a leash, a crate and REMOVE all bones, toys and shared food /water bowls.

For the first 72 hours, the foster dog must either be on-leash tethered or inside of his crate; trust me, this very easy and simple method is proven to work time and again, and allows for a new dog find his place inside the “pack”.

Always feed your own pets first in another room, and crate the foster dog during eating times. When it is the foster’s turn, either separate your dogs from where he will be eating, or feed him in his crate. All toys can be enjoyed in separate areas for the first 72 hours as well, and absolutely NEVER have bones inside the house during a foster period- that is the sure way of causing aggression that would normally never exist.

5. All foster dogs should be kept off the furniture in the home. Not only will this prevent jealousy between other pets in the home, but it establishes boundaries which all adopters want in a dog- they want a dog who is housetrained, has basic obedience and manners. By keeping dogs off the furniture (and out of your beds) you will be accomplishing two very important rules that will make your dog MORE adoptable!

RULES FOSTERS MUST LEARN:

1. Communicating with a dog is critical. Correct unwanted behavior, praise wanted behaviors and re-direct a dog’s attention to something positive when necessary. If the dogs ignores corrections, work to improve your communication skills.

2. Pay attention and be consistent. Don't send mixed messages. If you correct behavior sometimes and ignore (or even inadvertently reward) it other times, you dog will be confused and never behave reliably. Keep the rules simple and enforce them, but always remember to praise with words, physical touch or treats.

3. Dogs look for authority in their lives. You are their teacher, so tell them what you want (not what you DON'T want).

If no leadership or clear boundaries are forthcoming from people, dogs begin to act as their own bosses and may even try to push around their human companions using growling, snapping and lunging. **Leadership with a dog is a positive relationship, not based on punishment or abuse.** Set a dog up to succeed by telling him when he's being good or doing something you like, even if it is as simple as "good sit", "nice quiet", etc. Rewarding a dog with treats or affection/praise for even the smallest of things creates CONFIDENCE in a dog, which breeds trust between dog and human... and a desire to learn to do more that the human likes!

4. Dogs should not roam when no one is home. A new dog that is free to wander in the home in the foster's absence is *almost certain* to get into trouble or practice bad habits. In most cases, the damage is not done out of spite, but because the animal is nervous, stressed, frightened, stimulated to escape, bored or just exploring.

Restrict the dog's access when you are out ideally using your CRATE, at least until he has comfortably adjusted to your home. Crating not only protects the dogs by preventing them from making "mistakes", but gives you peace of mind to know the dog is safe, your home is safe, and you're instilling rules that a dog can learn to understand. To do otherwise jeopardizes your possessions, the dog's safety and your new relationship.

Questions? Please email Rachel@dogswithoutborders.org