

Bringing Home a New Dog

Transitions can be difficult for all involved -- you, your family, your pets, and most of all, for the new dog you are bringing home. Shelters are stressful, overstimulating environments that can cause dogs to act out in ways they might not normally act. Even if your new foster pet is coming from a different foster home, it's important to keep in mind that your new pet needs time to adjust to living in *your* home.

The first few weeks after bringing a dog into your home are the most critical time to set your foster dog up for success. Giving him/her time to decompress and adjust to your home is vital. Taking these extra steps will help ensure a smooth transition for humans and pets.

Common behaviors during transitions:

House training. We may or may not know if your foster dog is already house trained but even the most perfectly house-trained dog may have accidents in a new foster home. Expect this. Your new dog will need to know where the potty-area is at his/her new home and will need to learn how to let you know they have to go out. Don't let your new dog roam the house unattended until you know that they have fully learned about house training in his/her new home.

Separation Worries. It is common for dogs to be nervous in a new foster home and worried that they are being abandoned. They may try to follow you everywhere and whine, cry, bark or howl when they can't see you. Use enrichment toys to give them something to do while they are alone. Try to be patient with them while they learn that they are now in a safe home. If your fosters stress about being alone persists, please reach out to us for help as they may be suffering from separation anxiety.

Fear toward you or other members of your home. It's not uncommon for a new foster dog to accept one of the family members but not the others. Go slow with the new dog and allow him/her time to warm up to each person individually. It could take weeks for your new dog to learn to trust new humans but with time and patience it usually works out.

Hyper / Overarousal. Some dogs will sleep a LOT for several days and seem a bit lethargic. This is normal. The opposite may be true for other dogs - they have a hard time relaxing and you could experience hyperactivity and/or destructive chewing. Make sure your foster dog has plenty of exercise and provide enrichment toys when they are alone.

Not eating. It's not uncommon for dogs not to eat for a couple of days while they are de-stressing. As long as the dog is drinking water and urinating normally it's probably just part of the process. Continue to provide food and try leaving the food in their quiet space/crate to see if they will eat when you are not watching them. The opposite can also be true and your foster dog could be eating but experiencing diarrhea due to stress, change in environment, etc. If they have eaten nothing in 2 or more days, or diarrhea persists beyond a few days, please contact the clinic at appointment@sanantoniopetsalive.org.

Safety Tips:

While dogs are transitioning into a new home, there is a higher likelihood to see fearful behavior and escape attempts. These behaviors may decrease within the first few weeks, or it may just be part of the dog's personality. Here are some easy tips to keep in mind to prevent any escapes:

Around Doors. Be extra aware around doorways. A new foster dog does not have a connection with you yet, and may try to bolt out the door when you open it, even if you only have the door cracked open for a moment. The same is true with exiting cars - be extra cautious letting the dog out of the car, and make sure you have hold of their leash before you let them out of the car. Foster dogs are required to wear a drag leash at all times when first introduced to a new foster home.

In the Yard. If you have a yard, do not leave your dog unattended outside. Some dogs can jump over or dig under fences, either just because they want to escape, or because they see something on the other side. Keep them supervised in the yard while you are learning about your dog's behaviors, again make sure your foster dog is wearing a drag leash at all times.

On Leash. Be sure to be vigilant while walking your dog. Some dogs may dart unexpectedly at/away from loud noises, small animals, big trucks, or other triggers. If you are not holding the leash tightly, they could pull out of your hand and run away, potentially into harm's way. Do not assume they will walk politely the whole time, and do not let children walk the dog.

Gear. Keep a lightweight leash ("drag leash") attached to your dog's collar for the first few weeks. Don't hold the leash; just let it drag on the ground behind them even indoors. Use this as a point of contact instead of grabbing for their collar if you have to guide them around. We recommend keeping a Martingale Collar on your dog. This type of collar prevents your pup from slipping out of their collar on walks.

Body Language. There are several signs that a dog is scared or uncomfortable to be aware of. Wide eyes, pinned back ears, tail tucked, excessive drooling (without food around) and lip licking are all signs that your pup is uncomfortable. If you see any of these signs, back off and give them space; do not force your dog to continue in a situation they are uncomfortable in. Let them set the pace with your relationship, even if it is slower than you expected.

With Children. Please teach your children, and any children that visit, never to pull, hit, or poke any part of your foster dog and never to tease, frighten, or scream around the dog. Please provide reasonable supervision for children at all times with a new dog. If the dog or the child appears unsure or nervous, be safe and put the dog in another room. Dogs should have a safe place in the house they can go to at all times.

Here are some Do's and Don'ts for their first few weeks in your home. These will help ensure a smooth transition and a happy, healthy pet.

<p>Do create a quiet, cozy and safe place for your foster dog to decompress.</p>	<p>Don't take your new foster dog on social outings (no pet stores, coffee shops, parks, etc)</p>
<p>Do sit with your foster dog and let him/her, on his own accord, sniff you and your home.</p>	<p>Don't try to hug, pick up, or force petting on your new foster dog.</p>
<p>Do take your foster dog for quiet walks and provide plenty of exercise and enrichment.</p>	<p>Don't expect your foster dog to be social right away, even with you.</p>
<p>Do give your foster dog at least 2 weeks before introducing him/her to new people (anyone who doesn't live with you).</p>	<p>Don't leave your new foster dog and other pets together unattended. Separate (maybe crate) when you are not home or able to supervise their interactions.</p>
<p>Do give your foster dog time before interacting with other resident pets. Use tandem walks to let the dogs see each other. Use drag leashes and supervised interactions when they are ready to interact.</p>	<p>.</p>
<p>Do help your foster dog by establishing a routine for mealtimes, potty outings, playtimes, etc.</p>	
<p>Do remember that your new foster dog has been through some history that we might not understand and needs time and your patience so that they can be the best dog they can be.</p>	
<p>Do keep all pets separated when they are eating or getting treats, especially longer-lasting bones/chews.</p>	