



Your New Dog: Establishing a Routine

Consistency is the key to helping your dog feel settled and secure. Establishing a routine as soon as possible will help the dog learn what is expected of them and what they can expect in return. It will typically take 3-12 weeks to develop this routine. Your dog will need exercise, food, training, potentially grooming and, of course, love and attention everyday. Regular feeding times will be an asset in house training, and for people working the typical eight hours away from home, establishing routine is a must. Every dog needs some form of exercise, whether it is a walk around the block, a hike in the woods or a game of fetch at a local park. The amount of exercise required will depend on your dog's age and physical condition.

Dogs do not need a lot of space, but they do need a lot of time. No matter how high a dog's energy level is, they do not need to live on a farm to be happy. Dogs need to spend as much time as possible with you doing different activities that will ensure their needs are met. Depending on your schedule and the temperament of your dog, the activities you could become involved in are endless. A particularly high energy dog may require a moderate walk before you leave for the day, a much longer walk when you return home and perhaps a game of fetch after dinner to ensure the two of you can spend some time relaxing together in the evening. A dog with a moderate amount of energy may be fine with a few minutes of play in the morning and a good walk in the evening. A dog with low energy may be happy with one or two short walks around the neighbourhood.

Dogs will thrive with mental stimulation and using this to your advantage is easy. Spend time training your dog, teaching him new tricks, or playing hide-and-seek with their favourite treats or toys. You can also spend time grooming your dog, teaching them to be comfortable when having their nails clipped or their teeth brushed.

During the winter, many people find themselves cutting their normal routines down due to weather, short days and irregular access to local parks. If you have completed obedience classes, try enrolling your dog in a tricks, games class or dog sport class—it will be a good way for both of you to get out of the house, keep active and meet new friends.

If you have adopted a dog from an SPCA, in most cases, your dog will have been observed for about 2-3 weeks at the shelter or in a foster home prior to your adoption. During this time your dog may have presented behaviours that were documented by SPCA staff and volunteers. You would be advised about these behaviours when you adopt the dog. Once in a home environment with a regular schedule and perhaps the aid of dog obedience classes, these behaviours should improve and in some cases the behaviours will never present themselves in a home environment. At other times, behaviours never observed at the shelter start to present once the dog is in your home.

Sometimes, during the first couple of weeks as you and your new dog get to know each other, you may be scratching your head trying to figure out how such a "perfect" dog ended up at the SPCA. Many people involved with animal shelters and rescues refer to this as the "Honeymoon Stage." Often, dogs do not start to show their own personality quirks or issues until they become comfortable and bonded with their new family. This honeymoon phase typically lasts about 2-4 weeks. When undesirable or fear/stress driven behaviours present themselves, don't be surprised, but take heart that these behaviours can be changed with some work on your part.