



Welcome Home Starting Life with Your New Dog

Bringing home a new dog is a very exciting time for everyone, including the dog. First impressions are important for dogs—early experiences in a dog's new home can have a lasting impact. You can do a lot to help your dog feel secure in their new home.

When you first arrive home, leave your dog on-leash and explore your home together. It is very important that the dog remains on-leash especially if there are children or other pets already in the home. Show your dog each room in your home, where the food and water bowls are, and where the bed or crate/kennel is located. Let your dog take their time to sniff around and check things out.

After the tour of the inside of the house, it is time to go outside. Take your dog around the property of your home to the spots they will be using for bathroom breaks. Until your dog's bathroom habits have been established, it is recommended that you take your dog outside every hour when you first bring him home, as well as after any play sessions, meal time, nap time or drinking a fair amount of water. Puppies have much less bladder control, which you can accommodate by taking your puppy out every 30 minutes or after the above-mentioned activities. Check out the House Training section of this guide for more advice about house training.

The Nova Scotia SPCA supports the use of positive reinforcement techniques for training pets, which means rewarding behaviours you want to encourage your dog to repeat in the future. When you first bring your dog home, follow these initial house training and safety tips:

- ❖ Do fit your dog's collar snug enough so that they cannot back out and slip away. "Martingale" style collars can be fit so they are slightly snuggier than a flat buckle collar when pressure is applied, but not tight enough to choke the dog. These collars should not be used for correction-based training.
- ❖ Do use the buddy system! Make sure a mature member of the family always supervises your dog. Dogs are social animals and want to be with their family members. A dog wandering away on it's own is a signal to let your dog out or that the dog is searching for it's own "amusement."
- ❖ Do use a leash or create a barrier to ensure your dog can't slip away when answering your door to visitors or delivery people. Attach a leash to your dog and the other end to your belt or belt loop. Baby gates to help block doors and entryways can be useful for house training and receiving visitors at the door.
- ❖ Do take your dog outside after every event, such as eating, drinking, playing or waking up from a nap, after the arrival of visitors, or if you see your dog "searching" for a spot.
- ❖ Do acknowledge and reward your dog anytime they relieve themselves in an appropriate area
- ❖ Do acknowledge and reward your dog for any appropriate behaviour you wish to encourage, such as greeting guests politely or walking mannerly on a leash.
- ❖ Don't rub your dog's nose in a "mistake" or make them nervous about relieving themselves in your presence.
- ❖ Don't punish your dog for a mistake or if you find something they have chewed or otherwise damaged. No matter how guilty your dog may look, he or she is responding to your voice and body language, which is clearly telling the dog you are not happy.
- ❖ If your dog is having accidents in the house, the dog's supervision needs to be increased until you can clearly read your dog's signals for needing to relieve himself.
- ❖ If your dog starts to relieve himself in an inappropriate spot, it can be hard to stop, so it is often less messy to let your pet finish, take them out and then tackle clean-up.