



New-Dog DO's and DONT's

Kidnapped by Aliens

Many people assume that their new dog is going to be *thrilled* to come home with them, that he's going to be *so grateful* to be rescued and have a real home at last!

Unfortunately, as far as the dog is concerned, he/she has just been kidnapped by aliens – total strangers who don't speak his/her language! And now they've put a noose around his/her neck and are taking him/her to an unknown planet filled with *more* strange beings, planning to do heaven-knows-what to him ... honestly, what could be more terrifying?

On average, it takes two to three weeks for a new dog to really relax and begin to feel comfortable in a new home ... and during that time, they're so unsure of everything that they typically don't do much of anything. In the dog world, this is called the "honeymoon period," because everything seems to be just fine: the dog is "behaving himself," being quiet and cooperative, not stirring up trouble — but that's usually because he's *afraid* to do much of anything. Once he feels comfortable enough to let the "real" Rover come out, you may see a completely different dog!

During these first few scary weeks, do your best to make the transition as easy as possible on him. Here are a few important points to remember:

- DO ...** **provide a quiet place** where the new dog can relax and regroup without anyone bothering him. Ideally, this will be a gated-off kitchen and/or laundry room, with a crate where he can curl up and feel safe. Keeping the crate door open and randomly tossing in great treats will encourage him to use his new "den" for naps.

- DO ...** **keep things quiet and low-key** for the first week or so. That means no pressure on the dog to do anything except eat, sleep and take bathroom breaks — no intense training sessions, no fussing over him with an excess of affection, no constantly checking on him, petting him, talking "at" him or reaching for him. Let *him* make the first move; if he's feeling comfortable enough to approach you and wants to interact, he will. Sometimes simply ignoring a new dog is the kindest thing

you can do for him. Even happy, cheerful attention can be very stressful for a dog who's just been kidnapped by aliens!

- DO ...** **try to stick to a daily schedule** for meals and bathroom breaks. Dogs like knowing what's coming next, and when. A predictable schedule provides security and reassurance.
- DO ...** **find a good positive-reinforcement trainer or training club**, and sign up for a basic obedience class. It's a great way to bond with your new friend, and as a bonus, you get a well-mannered dog who is a joy to live with!
- DON'T ...** **invite your friends**, neighbors, family members, kids' friends, mailman, dog-walker and landscaper (and their dogs!) over to "meet the new dog!" No matter how much you're dying to show off your new best friend, think of his needs first ... and right now, being surrounded by a crowd of even more aliens is the last thing he needs! Wait until he's comfortable with the immediate family, and then gradually begin introducing him to other folks.
- DON'T ...** **immediately drag the new dog off to PetSmart** to shower him with treats, toys, goodies, and a spiffy new leash and collar. Of course you want to spoil him with all of those fun things, but until he's recovered from his "kidnapped by aliens" experience, do the shopping yourself and let your new friend relax at home.
- DON'T ...** **immediately throw the new dog in with any current pets** (dogs or cats), and expect everyone to be instant best friends! We recommend keeping the new dog separate from current pets for at least a week before letting them get up close and personal. (For more information on doggy introductions, see "Take It Slow!" below.)
- DON'T ...** **assume your new dog is housebroken!** Even if he never had a single accident in his foster home, "Housebroken in my house does not mean housebroken in your house!" Until you're 100% sure that he knows where the "bathroom" is, keep him confined to an area like the kitchen or laundry room, and make sure he goes out frequently to the designated "bathroom" spot outside.
- DON'T ...** **assume that he knows any training cues.** Even if he used to be an obedience star, you may be using words or signals that are completely different from the ones he knows — you're speaking an alien language, and no one gave him the Rosetta Stone CDs! → Sign up for those obedience classes, and start from the beginning ... together.

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Doggy Introductions: Take It Slow!

If you already have a dog, you're naturally eager for the two (or more!) dogs to become buddies and playmates. However, don't be surprised if the "old dog" (or the new dog) is horrified at the thought of sharing his turf with another dog. Some dogs will be thrilled to have a new playmate, but many will not.

1. **For the first few days, at least, don't even worry about introducing the dogs. Keep the new dog separated and safely crated in a place where your dog(s) can see, smell and hear the new guy.** It's a good idea to NOT let the resident dogs go right up to the new dog's crate; the new dog may feel threatened and bark or growl at them, which won't get things off to a great start. One good option is to have the new dog's crate in a room that's "baby-gated" so the old dogs can't get too close.
2. Take the new dog out separately for walks or exercise in the yard. If you're using a yard, this will be a good opportunity for the old and new dogs to get used to each other's scents without actually having to interact face to face.
3. After a few days, everyone should be used to everyone else's sounds and smells, and you can try having them meet "up close and personal." Many people do this with both dogs being leashed, figuring that if it goes badly, they'll be able to pull the dogs away from each other. However, if a dog is anxious, being restrained on a leash can make him feel trapped ("fight or flight"), and if "flight" isn't an option, he's more likely to react badly to another dog. This is called "leash aggression" – many dogs who are leash-aggressive are just fine when they're off leash. So do put leashes on the dogs – so you can grab them if necessary – but just let the leashes drag. That way, the dogs will know that they can run away from the "scary other dog" if necessary, and won't feel the need to go into "fight" mode.
4. Walking together is a great way to make dogs more comfortable with each other – this is called "parallel walking." With one handler for each dog, keep the dogs a few yards apart but heading in the same direction. You can gradually decrease the distance between them, watching carefully to be sure neither one is anxious about the other's presence. It's also a good idea to have the more anxious dog walk behind the more calm dog, so Anxious Dog can do some rump-sniffing without the pressure of another dog looking in his direction.
5. Feeding the new dog in his crate will ensure that there are no "food fights," and it's a good way to make the dog feel that his crate is his "happy place."
6. Until you're positive that all dogs are okay with sharing toys, bones, etc., pick up EVERYTHING that might cause an argument, and only give bones, toys, Kongs, etc. to the dogs when they're safely separated (i.e., new dog in crate).
7. If there are children in the house, keep them out of the picture while the dogs get acquainted. If something goes wrong, you don't want a toddler in the middle of it!

NOTE: Especially during the first week or so, keep an eye on both dogs for signs of stress: looking away, yawning, excessive panting, etc.

If either dog seems anxious, back up a few steps and give them some breathing room: Don't force them to be together. Most dogs do eventually work out their differences (sometimes with a very scary-sounding argument!), but it's important to let them do it at their own pace.