

YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO DOG ADOPTION



**KEYS TO A HAPPY AND
SUCCESSFUL FOREVER HOME**

DOG ADOPTION GUIDE

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MEETING OUR SHELTER DOGS



A COMPLETE GUIDE FOR WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN MEETING YCSPCA ADOPTABLE DOGS

UPON ARRIVAL, PLEASE CHECK IN AT OUR FRONT DESK. A CLIENT SERVICES COUNSELOR WILL PROVIDE FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS.

ALL MEETS ARE OUTDOORS



To maximize the comfort of our animals and due to space restrictions, all dog meets take place outdoors. Please dress according to the weather.

HOW TO GREET



- Allow the dog to approach first.
- Do not make eye contact.
- Keep hands to your side.
- Client Services Counselors will give further instructions.

DOG TO DOG MEETS



When you arrive, please leave your dog in your vehicle with proper air conditioning / ventilation.



All humans will meet the dog first before the dog introduction.



Please have your dog on a well fitted collar or harness and leash. If needed, slip leads can be provided.

**FOR SAFETY REASONS,
NO RETRACTABLE
LEASHES ALLOWED!**

SHELTER DOGS

Kennels are considered a high stress environment, so you may not see a dogs **true personality** in this environment.

Dogs may be shut down or act out more than usual as a result of the stress.



WHAT TO BRING

IF YOU HAVE BEEN ADVISED THAT THE DOG IS READY TO GO HOME PLEASE BRING:

- Leash and collar
- If there are small children or other dogs present, a separate vehicle to leave in or appropriately sized crate for transport.

THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE THEY GO

HOW TO GET YOU AND YOUR HOME READY FOR YOUR NEW ADDITION



CRATE TRAINING

Crates offer dogs a **safe space** that can feel like their own as they adjust into your home environment.

- Prevents destructive and/or unsafe behaviors when unsupervised.
- Useful tool to set a routine and house train.

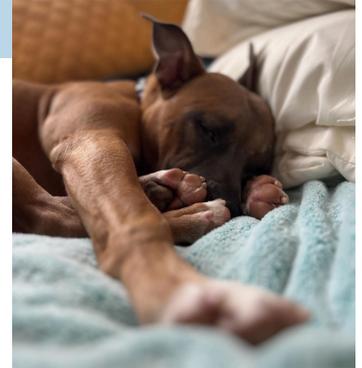
WE RECOMMEND FEEDING IN THE KENNEL AND PUTTING TOYS IN THE KENNEL DURING THE ADJUSTMENT PERIOD.

SETTING A ROUTINE

Consistency is key on getting a new dog adjusted to a routine. Establishing predictability will aid them in their transition.

- Set specific times for feeding, walks, playtime, and bathroom breaks.
- Use positive reinforcement as a reward for desired behaviors.

REMEMBER TO BE **PATIENT AND UNDERSTANDING** AS THIS IS ALL NEW.



RESOURCE GUARDING

Resource guarding is when a dog reacts to protect a high value item. High value resources include food, toys, treats, furniture, people, etc.

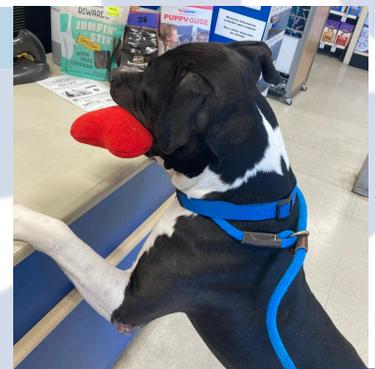
- **Trade ups:** Offer an item of equal or higher value in order to retrieve resources.
- **Respect boundaries:** Allow dogs to have personal space with items. Never take them directly.

NEVER SHARE RESOURCES BETWEEN MULTIPLE ANIMALS UNTIL SAFE RELATIONSHIPS ARE FORMED.

WHAT TO BUY

REMEMBER THAT THESE SUGGESTIONS ARE TO START. MORE ITEMS WILL LIKELY BE REQUIRED THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES

- Collar
- Leash
- Crate
- Bedding
- Waste bags
- Bowls
- Toys
- Enrichment activities
- Food, according to age and size



For additional resources, please visit www.ycspca.org/adoption-resources

TIPS FOR BRINGING A SHELTER DOG HOME

REWARD YOUR DOG

Dogs learn by association. Reward your dog's good behavior with treats and praise. Don't reward bad behavior. Never punish or scold them, just ignore it. Your dog will soon start to associate the good behavior with rewards.



BE CONSISTENT

Don't let a puppy get away with things you don't want them to when they're older. Make sure all the family enforces the same rules so that your dog doesn't get confused.



BE POSITIVE

Don't train your dog when either of you are tired. If you're not enjoying the training, neither will your dog. Always be friendly and positive. End every training session on a happy note with praise and petting.



HAVE PATIENCE

Don't have unrealistic expectations. You're much more likely to remain patient if you don't set your sights too high when starting out. Enjoy the training process.

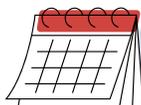


THE RULE OF 3

3 Days
to decompress



3 Weeks
to learn your routine



3 Months
to feel at home



For additional resources, please visit www.ycspca.org/adoption-resources

IT DOESN'T HAPPEN OVERNIGHT

THE 3-3-3 RULE

 The 3-3-3 rule is a general guideline for a dog's adjustment after adoption.  Every animal is **unique** and will adjust to their forever home **differently**.



3 DAYS: TO DECOMPRESS

- Feels overwhelmed
- Scared or unsure of what's going on
- Not comfortable enough to be themselves
- May not want to eat or drink
- Shuts down and/or hides
- Tests boundaries



3 WEEKS: TO LEARN YOUR ROUTINE

- Begins to show true personality
- Learns their environment
- Starts to feel more comfortable
- Behavior issues may start to appear
- Routine begins to take shape
- Realizes this could be their forever home



3 MONTHS: TO FEEL AT HOME

- Finally feeling completely comfortable
- Comfortable routine established
- Begins to build trust and a true bond
- Gains a complete sense of security with new family

POSITIVE CRATE TRAINING GUIDE

SIMPLE STEPS TO MAKING THE CRATE YOUR DOG'S BEST FRIEND

WHY CRATING?

A crate provides your dog with a personal space to relax, sleep, and feel safe. It mimics a den-like environment, which appeals to their natural instincts. It can also help with house training, preventing destructive behavior, and offering peace of mind when you need to leave.

SIZE GUIDE

Crates should be just large enough for your dog to stand up, turn around and lay down comfortably.

STANDARD SIZES:

- XS Dog Crate - 19" (Dog Weight: under 20lbs, Length 17" Height 12")
- Small Dog Crate - 24" (Dog Weight: 20-30lbs, Length 22" Height 18")
- Medium Dog Crate - 30" (Dog Weight: 30-40lbs, Length 28" Height 18")
- Large Dog Crate - 36" (Dog Weight: 40-70lbs, Length 34" Height 23")
- XL Dog Crate - 42" (Dog Weight: 70-90lbs, Length 40" Height 28")
- XXL Dog Crate - 48" (Dog Weight: 90+ lbs, Length 46" Height 30")

INTRODUCING AS A POSITIVE PLACE

1. **Location is Key:** Put the crate in a quiet but not isolated spot. Choose a space where your dog will feel included but not overwhelmed, and is easily accessible. Examples include bedrooms or living rooms.
2. **Leave the Door Open:** Start by leaving the crate door open and placing toys or treats inside that your dog may enjoy. Allow them to explore it at their own pace without any pressure.
3. **Reward Exploration:** When your dog approaches the crate, reward them with praise or a treat. This helps create positive associations with the crate.

MAKING CRATE TIME REWARDING

Positive Reinforcement involves rewarding a behavior to increase the likelihood that the behavior will be repeated. In simple terms, when your dog does something you like, you reward them with something they enjoy, which makes them more likely to repeat that behavior.

IDENTIFY THE DESIRED BEHAVIOR → **REWARD IMMEDIATELY** → **REPEAT SEVERAL TIMES** → **GRADUALLY INCREASE DIFFICULTY**



USE HIGH VALUE TREATS

A **high-value reward** is a treat, toy, or activity that your dog finds particularly motivating. It's something your dog is *willing to work for* and is often much more desirable than regular treats or everyday rewards. These high-value rewards are essential in positive reinforcement, especially in situations where your dog is learning something new or needs extra motivation.

Types of High Value Rewards

Rewards are typically food-based, but some dogs might prefer toys, playtime or verbal praise

- Tasty Treats - Look for treats that are aromatic, soft, and easy to eat quickly. Dogs are often more motivated by moist, smelly treats than dry ones
- Toys - If they are highly playful or prey-driven. A favorite squeaky toy or a ball might work well
- Attention - If your dog loves being petted, you can reward them with positive attention, such as gentle petting or scratching in their favorite spot.

HOW TO USE

1. Motivate the Dog to Enter the Crate
 - Use a high-value treat to lure your dog into the crate. Hold the treat just inside the door and encourage your dog to follow it inside. Once they step into the crate, immediately reward them with the treat and praise them.
2. Encourage Calm Behavior
 - **Reinforce calmness:** If your dog remains calm and quiet inside the crate, reward them with high-value treats. This teaches your dog that staying calm in the crate leads to good things.
 - **Gradually increase duration:** As your dog becomes more comfortable in the crate, begin rewarding them for staying in the crate for longer periods. Start with just a few seconds, then gradually work up to a few minutes, always rewarding calm behavior.
3. End on a Positive Note
 - When it's time to let them out, make sure to wait for a moment of calm before opening the door.

HANDLING SETBACKS

- If your dog shows signs of stress (whining, barking, or pacing), PAUSE and give them a high-value reward when they calm down to encourage relaxed behaviors. Even if it is only a fleeting moment!
- Be **patient** and avoid forcing your dog into the crate. If your dog is struggling with crate training, return to earlier steps, using high-value rewards to create a gradual and positive association.

DOWNTIME IS IMPORTANT FOR EVERYONE!

Quiet crate time helps prevent overstimulation, supports their mental and emotional well-being, and encourages positive behaviors like independence and calmness. A well-rested dog is a happier, healthier dog, and crate time can become a positive, peaceful routine that benefits both the dog and their owner

WHAT IS RESOURCE GUARDING ?

Resource guarding is a natural behavior in dogs where they protect objects or areas they value, such as food, toys, or even a spot in the house. Dogs may guard their resources out of instinct, fear of losing something they see as important, or because they feel vulnerable.

It's important to understand that this behavior is not necessarily aggressive—it's a protective instinct.

COMMON SIGNS

- Stiffening of the body or adopting a tense posture
- Avoiding eye contact or moving closer to the guarded object
- Baring teeth
- Increased vigilance when the object is near
- Growling or snarling
- Snapping or biting if someone approaches too closely

WAYS TO MANAGE

RESPECT THEIR SPACE

- Never scold or punish the dog for guarding
- Do not take a valuable resource directly from the dog. Instead, focus on teaching the dog to relinquish items voluntarily.

DON'T TAKE AWAY ALWAYS ADD

While your dog is calmly eating, practice tossing extra food or treats into their bowl. This practice builds the association that your presence near food is positive

PLAYING THE "TRADE GAME"

The "trade game" is an excellent way to help your dog understand that giving up resources results in something better. This technique teaches your dog that losing a resource doesn't mean they'll lose out—it can lead to a new, exciting reward.

1. Offer a Higher-Value Reward
 - Hold a high-value treat (something your dog finds irresistible, like their favorite snack or a piece of chicken) in your hand. The idea is that this treat should be more appealing than the object your dog is guarding.
2. Introduce the Trade
 - Approach your dog calmly and show them the treat. Wait for your dog to drop or release the guarded object in favor of the higher-value treat. It's important to remain patient and not force the item out of their mouth—let them choose to give it up.
3. Reward the Exchange

TRAINING CUES

“LEAVE IT”

1. **Start with a Low Value Item:** Choose something your dog is mildly interested in but isn't too precious or difficult to resist. Hold the object in a closed hand and allow the dog to try and get it but do not open your hand. Wait for them to stop trying or look away.
2. **Say “Leave It”:** As soon as your dog stops trying to get the object, say “leave it” in a calm tone.
3. Immediately **reward** them with a treat or praise when they look away from the object.
4. **Gradually Increase Difficulty:** Over time you can advance to using more high value items or leaving the item in other places like on the floor.

“DROP IT”

1. **Start with a Toy:** Choose a toy or object that your dog enjoys but isn't overly attached to. Get your dog to grab the toy in their mouth. You can do this by playing a game of tug or tossing the toy so they pick it up.
2. **Present a Reward:** Hold a high-value treat (something even more appealing than the toy) near your dog's nose. As soon as your dog sniffs the treat or shows interest in it, say the cue “Drop It.”
3. **Reinforce the Drop:** Your dog should naturally drop the toy in favor of the treat. The moment they do, immediately reward them by giving them the treat and praise them enthusiastically.



GUARDING IN A MULTIPLE PET HOUSEHOLD

In households with multiple pets, resource guarding can also extend to interactions between dogs and other animals, including cats, rabbits, or other dogs. Dogs may guard food, toys, or resting spots not just from humans, but also from other pets.

TAKE IT SLOW

Don't rush introductions; let both pets become comfortable with each other's presence at their own pace before learning to share.

Providing rewards when they are relaxed in each other's presence.

ALWAYS FEED SEPARATELY

Use crates, different rooms, or baby gates to create physical space while eating. This reduces the chance of competition or confrontation over food.



BOREDOM BUSTERS

EXERCISE OF THE MIND: ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

WHAT IS ENRICHMENT?

Enrichment involves activities and changes to your dog's environment that challenge their mind, body, and senses. The goal is to reduce boredom, prevent destructive behaviors, and help your dog thrive in their new home.

TOYS

Enrichment toys are designed to make your dog work for their food or treats. They require problem-solving, which stimulates your dog's brain.

1. **Kong Toys** - Fill a Kong or similar treat-dispensing toy with peanut butter, yogurt, and/or kibble, and let your dog figure out how to get the food out. Freezing the Kong increases the length of time for this activity.
2. **Puzzle Boards** - These are interactive toys with compartments, slides, or flaps that your dog has to move or manipulate to get to the treats inside. Some puzzle toys even have multiple levels of difficulty. They can often be found at your regular pet store, Amazon or Chewy.
3. **Snuffle Mat** - A snuffle mat is a fabric mat where you can hide kibble or treats. Your dog has to use their nose to find the hidden food.
4. **Licki Mat** - A non-toxic, food-grade mat that allows you to spread soft food like peanut butter, yogurt, or wet dog food for your dog to lick. Licking helps release calming endorphins, which can be especially helpful during stressful times.



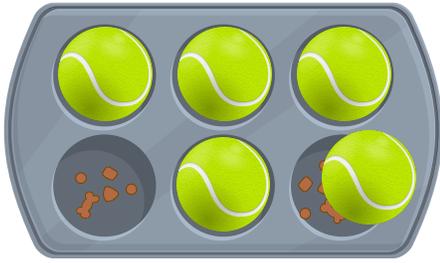
SCENT WORK GAMES (NOSE WORK)

Dogs have an incredible sense of smell, and scent games are a fantastic way to tap into that ability while providing mental stimulation.

1. **Treat Hide & Seek** - Hide small treats around the room or yard and encourage your dog to sniff them out. You can start easy by letting them see where you hide the treats, then increase the difficulty as they get better at finding them.
2. **Scent Walk** - Lay down a scent trail by rubbing a treat or your dog's favorite item along the ground and leading them to a hidden treasure. You can use their favorite scent (like their favorite toy or treat) to create a trail.



DIY ACTIVITIES

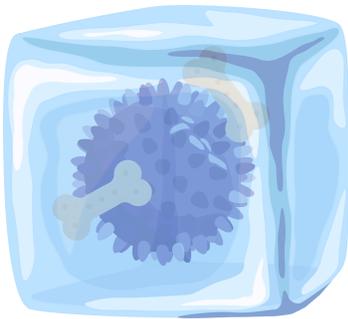
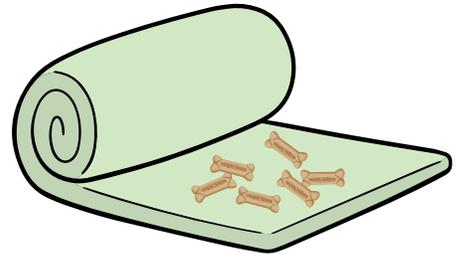


MUFFIN TIN PUZZLE

- **Materials:** Muffin tin, tennis balls, dog treats or kibble.
- **How to:** Place treats or kibble in the cups of a muffin tin, and cover them with tennis balls. Your dog will need to figure out how to remove the balls to get to the treats underneath.

TOWEL ROLL PUZZLE

- **Materials:** Towel, dog treats.
- **How to:** Lay out a towel flat, sprinkle some treats on it, and then roll it up. Your dog will have to unroll the towel to find the treats. You can make it easier or harder depending on how tightly you roll the towel.

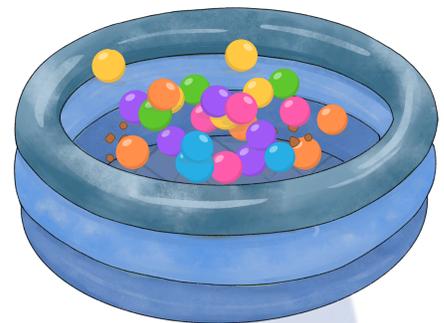


SCENTED ICE CUBES

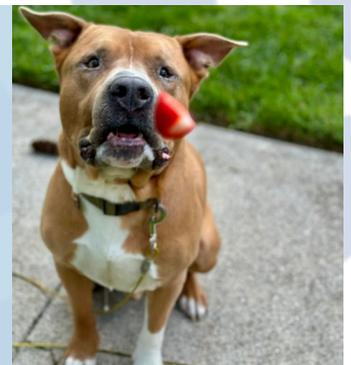
- **Materials:** Ice cube tray, water, favorite scent/flavor (e.g., chicken broth, tuna water), treats or toys.
- **How to:** Fill an ice cube tray with water or broth and drop a small toy or treat inside. Freeze and then give the cubes to your dog to chew or lick as they try to retrieve the hidden goodies. You can use different scents or foods to vary the experience.

BABY POOL BALL PIT

- **Materials:** Baby pool, plastic balls, treats or toys
- **How to:** Fill the baby pool with colorful plastic balls, enough to cover the bottom. Sprinkle small treats or toys for your dog to find among the balls. Encourage your dog to dig and search for the hidden goodies.



By incorporating these activities, you'll help your new dog settle into their home while providing plenty of fun, stimulation, and bonding opportunities. Enjoy the process and celebrate the small victories along the way!





INTRODUCING DOGS

When Introducing Two Dogs...

1. Start with walking both dogs on leash outdoors- if possible, start at a neutral territory like at a park, or on a quiet street/sidewalk
2. Begin a side-by-side walk, leaving a large space in-between walkers so that the dogs cannot get to one another. Continue this side-by-side walk until dogs are showing less interest in one another.
3. Move closer together and continue walking both dogs, leaving only a couple feet between them.
4. Work on decreasing the distance that dogs are apart. It could take a few walks until the two dogs are ready to interact.
5. Once dogs are appearing calmer, allow the dogs to approach and sniff one another for a few seconds. Lead the dogs away from each other and then repeat the process.
6. If a dog presents with a stiff body or tail, slowly lead them away from the other to minimize the pressure.
7. After the dogs can successfully approach and sniff one another with loose bodies, move to an area where you can drop the leashes safely.
8. Let one or both dogs interact with the leashes dragging on the floor. If interactions get too excitable, separate dogs and let them take a break.

BRINGING A NEW DOG INTO THE HOME



- Conduct introductions outside before bringing the dogs into the house together
- Dogs shouldn't meet nose to nose on leash as this can cause tension- allow them to sniff each other from the side or behind
- Leave leashes on dogs so you can have control if needed
- Remove toys, bones, food that may evoke resource guarding in either dog
- When leaving your dogs alone, keep them separated until you are sure they are comfortable with one another. Dogs can be crated or put in separate rooms of the house.
- Supervise dog interactions and make sure to separate them occasionally to give them appropriate breaks and down time

INTRODUCING DOGS AND CATS

PREPARING SEPARATE SPACES

Before you introduce your dog and cat, it's crucial to create separate spaces for each of them. This gives them a sense of security and helps prevent stress during the initial stages of their introduction.

- **Suggestions for Cats**
 - A quiet enclosed room that includes basic necessities (litter box, water, food, etc.)
 - High perches and/or hiding spots such as trees, shelves or hidey huts
- **Suggestions for Dogs**
 - A designated area or room for the dog to stay in. This can be a crate, a playpen, or separate room
 - Comfort items such as a comfy bed and their favorite toys

SCENT SWAPPING

Animals first become familiar with each other through scent. Scent swapping allows them to adjust to each other's smell prior to meeting face-to-face.

- Swap bedding
- Place the animal's belongings in the other animal's space
- Use a cloth to gently rub both the dog and the cat. Place the scent on the other pet's territory.



PHYSICAL INTRODUCTION

When officially introducing the dog and cat, do so in a neutral space where neither animal feels territorial. Keep the dog on a leash and utilize a physical barrier such as a baby gate. Make sure the cat has a safe spot (e.g., high perch or hiding place) to retreat to if they feel threatened.

SLOW IS THE WAY TO GO

- Increase the length of the sessions over time, ensuring each interaction is positive
- Keep the dog on a leash for safety and reward both pets with treats for calm behavior

PATIENCE AND GRADUAL INTRODUCTIONS ARE KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOUR DOG AND CAT.

