

A small, fluffy white dog is sitting on a light-colored tiled floor with dark grout. The dog is looking towards the camera with its tongue hanging out. In the background, there is a dark wooden dining table and several chairs. A beige sofa is visible on the right side of the frame. The scene is set in a well-lit indoor space, likely a dining room or kitchen area.

Welcoming Your New Dog: The First 72 hours and Beyond

Frolic Pet Services | Care. Commitment. Trust.

Welcoming Your New Dog: The First 72 Hours



Welcome to Your Forever Family!

Congratulations on bringing a new dog into your home! Whether you're fostering or adopting, this is an exciting time for you and your new companion. However, the first few days are critical for setting your dog up for success. By following these proven guidelines, you'll help your dog feel safe, secure, and ready to thrive in their new environment.

Understanding the Rule of 3's

Dogs need time to adjust to a new home, and their transition often follows what we call the "Rule of 3's":

- **3 Days** to decompress and begin to understand they're in a new place.
- **3 Weeks** to settle into your routine and start showing more of their personality.
- **3 Months** to fully acclimate, build trust, and feel like part of the family.

The first 72 hours are especially important. During this time, your dog is likely feeling overwhelmed, confused, and unsure of what's expected of them. By providing structure and clear boundaries, you'll help them feel safe and set the stage for long-term success.

The Critical First 72 hours

When your new dog first arrives, it's essential to focus on creating a calm, predictable environment. Here's how to set your dog up for success during this adjustment period:

Limit Freedom to Build Security

One of the most common mistakes new dog parents make is giving their dog too much freedom too soon. While it might feel kind to let your dog explore the house or yard right away, this can actually overwhelm them and lead to preventable issues like accidents, destructive behavior, or anxiety.

A Better Plan:

- Confine your dog to one quiet room or area of the house at first.
- Use a crate or pen as their safe space (if properly introduced).
- Gradually expand their access to your home over time as they settle in.

By limiting their freedom, you're helping your dog feel secure, helping build a calm and balanced mindset and teaching them the rules of their new environment.

Welcoming Your New Dog: The First 72 Hours



Use A Leash Indoors

For the first 72 hours, keep your dog on a leash indoors, even when you're home. This might seem restrictive, but it's one of the best ways to set your dog up for success.

But why use an indoor leash?

- **It prevents** your dog from making mistakes (like chewing furniture or having accidents) before they understand the rules.
- **It allows** you to redirect unwanted behaviors immediately and calmly.
- **It helps** your dog see you as their guide and builds trust.
- It creates a physical connection that **strengthens your bond.**

A 6-foot leash works well for this purpose. You can hold it, attach it to your waist, or step on it when seated. For their safety, make sure whatever leash you chose to use, never let them drag unattended

Establish Routines Right Away

Dogs thrive on structure and predictability. From the moment they arrive, start teaching them what to expect by creating consistent routines.

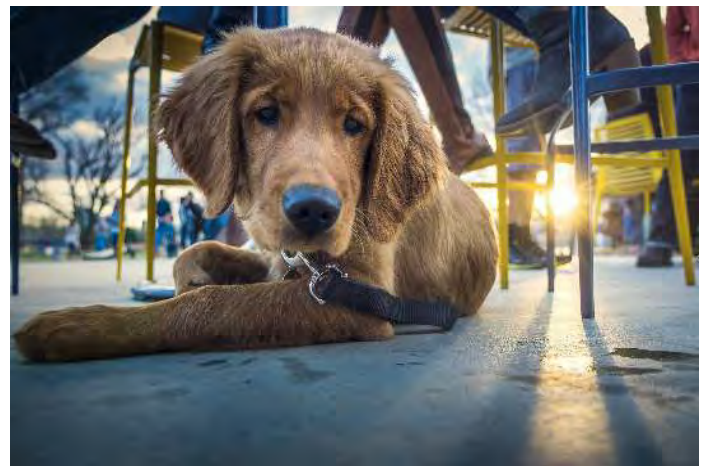
- Feed them at the same times every day.
- Take them outside for bathroom breaks on a regular schedule.
- Create a calm bedtime routine.
- Keep greetings and departures low-key to avoid overstimulation.

By establishing routines, you're helping your dog feel safe and confident in their new environment.

Avoid Overwhelming Situations

During the first 72 hours, it's important to keep things calm and low-stress. Avoid overwhelming your dog with too many new experiences at once.

- No dog parks or pet stores.
- No meeting new people or dogs.
- No house parties or large gatherings.
- Keep walks short and in quiet, low-stimulation areas.



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Your dog needs time to decompress and adjust to their new surroundings before they're ready for more excitement. They also need the opportunity to simply exist and observe their environment without any expectations, which helps prevent an overly aroused or anxious mindset.

How Can You Put This Into Practice?

Here's an example of what a typical day during the first 72 hours could look like:

Morning: Wake up, take your dog outside first thing, for a leashed potty break, and feed them breakfast in a quiet area (possibly in their crate). Follow with a short, calm leashed walk in a low-stimulation environment and back to their safe space.

Daytime: Provide structured rest time in their crate or confined area. Puppies need naps just like kids do, otherwise they start to show bad behaviors like nipping and biting. Adult dogs sleep an average of 15-16 hours a day. Offer short training sessions, timed potty breaks if they are not potty trained, or calm bonding activities. Keep them on a leash when they're out of their confined area.

Evening: Feed dinner, take them outside for another leashed potty break, and spend quiet bonding time together (no rough play). Establish a bedtime routine to help them wind down.



Why These Guidelines Are Essential to Your Success

These protocols aren't just suggestions—they're essential for your dog's well-being and long-term success. Many reputable rescue organizations require these practices for their fosters and adopters and even behaviorists agree, because they:

- **Reduce stress** and anxiety for your dog.
- **Prevent common behavioral issues** from developing.
- **Build trust** and strengthen your bond.
- **Set your dog up for success** in their new home.

While it might feel restrictive at first, remember that dogs don't want unlimited freedom right away—they want structure, guidance, clarity and security. By following these guidelines, you're giving your dog the best possible start in their new life.

Welcoming Your New Dog: The First 72 Hours



Moving Forward

After the first 72 hours, you can begin to gradually expand your dog's freedom, but it's important to remain their calm and confident guide.

Have them drag a leash behind them, or remove the indoor leash for short periods while you closely supervise. Allow access to additional rooms one at a time, and slowly introduce new people, dogs, and experiences at a pace your dog is comfortable with.

Your role is to guide them and prevent mistakes out of fear or uncertainty. By staying calm and confident, you'll help your dog make good choices and understand the expectations in their new environment. Privileges and more freedoms should be earned as they learn to trust you and adapt to their new home.

By respecting and understanding your dog's need for structure and security during this adjustment period, you're not just preventing current problems—you're building a foundation of trust and communication that will benefit your relationship for years to come.

The more opportunities a dog has to make mistakes, the more they are in effect practicing those behaviors, which can make them harder to address later on.

Final Thoughts

Your new dog doesn't need a house full of toys or the freedom to roam—they need you to be their calm, confident guide. By limiting their freedom at first, using a leash, and establishing routines, you're setting them up for success and helping them feel safe in their new home.

Welcome to the journey of living with your dog! With patience, structure, and love, you're already on the path to a happy, thriving relationship with your new companion.

For more help and personalized training, reach out to your Frolic Trainer!

