Bringing Your New Puppy Home

Congratulations on your adoption!

It’s exciting to bring your new pet home, but please also know there will be an adjustment period for both dog and humans.

Everyone will need to get to know each other and learn to be comfortable and settled into their new situation.

This guide contains some helpful tips to help you successfully transition your new pet into your home and family.
Pet Care Supplies

Here are some key items your puppy will need:

☐ A crate and bed
☐ Water and food bowls
☐ Leash
☐ Collar or harness with ID tags
☐ Toys
☐ Enzymatic cleaner
☐ Grooming tools

You can talk to your local pet store or trainer for help in picking out the right items for your pet.
Before You Bring Your New Dog Home

Establish a family plan for caring for your new pet.

Who will be responsible for your pet’s exercise, feeding and daily care routine?

Establish the household rules and apply them consistently – for example, will you allow the dog on the furniture? Where will he or she sleep?

Learn about body language and signs of stress in dogs.

Do you know the signs of fear, anxiety and aggression? Refer to the Resources page in this guide for further information.
Introduce Your New Pet Into Your Home

If you have small children and/ or other animals in your home, new introductions should be handled with care and attention.

Maintain a calm environment as you perform the first introductions – no running and excitement for that first step, gently and calmly introduce your new pet to your family and keep dogs on leash until trust is established.

Keep an eye on your dog’s body language – are they anxious or threatened? Avoid face to face greetings, remain calm, and let them familiarize themselves with the family and their new surroundings.

Before introducing friends and neighbors, let your new pet adjust and transition into his new home.
Building a strong bond and relationship is key to having a happy and well-behaved pet.

Your pet should learn that good things are provided from you and your family.

Here are some ideas for beginning that relationship:
Try hand feeding in those first transition days – this will teach your pet that you are the provider of his or her food (good stuff!), and becomes a training opportunity.

Remember those household rules you set up in the beginning? Consistency in applying them will help to forge this new relationship.

Whatever your dog finds value in – food, walks, toys, that favorite spot on the couch – they will learn comes from you.

Refer to the Resources page for further guidance and links to the Learn to Earn program.
Puppy Socialization

Socialization is important for the training and manners of your new puppy.

Providing them opportunities to be around new people, new environments and other animals early and often will help them learn good behavior and adapt to future situations.

Consider puppy playtimes or training classes to teach them appropriate play skills.

Never allow unsupervised play with children. Instead, introduce your puppy to children in a safe and supervised environment, and let the children give your puppy treats to create a positive association.

Get your puppy used to new places, loud noises, different people and different animals through controlled exposure to these scenarios over time.
Potty Training

Your puppy is coming into a new environment and is learning, so expect accidents. But, with a plan, patience, and consistency, you and your puppy can successfully master house training!

Here are some tips:
Supervise your puppy when they are out of their crate or confined area.

Set up a bathroom schedule – for example, take your puppy outside every hour, then decrease frequency as they learn the time and place to use the potty.

Wait until your puppy uses the bathroom before beginning your walk or playtime.

Reward them with treats when they go in the right area! Positive reinforcement is key.

When accidents happen (and they will), use an enzymatic cleaner to dispel the smell so puppy won’t be inclined to go in that spot again.
All puppies will go through mouthing and play biting as they develop and learn. They will learn the appropriate behavior and pressure by getting feedback from you and other dogs.

Don’t allow your puppy to chew on hair or clothing! A simple “ouch” and ending play will give your puppy feedback.

If mouthing continues, stop the play or give your puppy a timeout – e.g., back in crate, bed, a down-stay (if trained) or other confined area. If chewing or biting is inappropriate, trade whatever it is with a chew toy.

Monitor your puppy’s play with other dogs to make sure everyone is safe and playing appropriately.
Set your puppy up for success!

Puppy proof your home so temptation isn’t at puppy level (electrical cords tied up, shoes put away, food items secured in cabinets, etc).

Provide your puppy with the right things to chew on – bones, toys (like Kong), etc. Avoid consumable items like rawhides, greenies, or plush toys unless they are supervised.

Provide non-consumable chew toys when your puppy is alone to keep them occupied.

You can fill a Kong with treats or food to keep puppy engaged.
Grooming

All dogs need regular grooming, and the earlier you introduce them the easier the adjustment.

Bathing, brushing and nail trims are important but your puppy should be introduced slowly to each.

For example:

Try introducing your puppy to a wet cloth wiped over their body – use lots of positive reinforcement – before putting them into the tub or sink for bath time.

Your puppy should be brushed regularly, but start first by showing them the tool – go slowly and give them treats during those first brushes.

Let your puppy get comfortable with having their feet picked up and toes touched before starting on nail trims.

Dental care early on can prevent expensive dental bills later in life. Teach them to accept a doggy toothbrush and enzyme toothpaste slowly and with plenty of positive reinforcement.
Health and Wellness

Your puppy needs regular checkups just like you do!

By adopting at a Pawsitive Alliance event, you know your puppy has already received some veterinarian care, has already been spayed and neutered, and has already received their first vaccinations!

But maintaining your dog’s health from puppyhood through adulthood is equally important.

Regular wellness exams, keeping vaccinations current and proper nutrition are keys to a healthy and happy pet. Find a veterinarian or clinic that you like – ask friends and neighbors for referrals or contact the American Veterinary Medical Association.

Exercise and stimulation are also an important part of your puppy’s health and wellness – and yours! Taking walks, playtime, proper chew toys and training will help ensure a happy and healthy pet for years to come.
Nutrition, exercise and veterinarian care are important for your puppy’s health into the future, but there are also a few key safety tips to keep your pet healthy during all seasons of the year:

Never leave your dog in a parked car on a hot summer day – not even for a few minutes, and not even with the windows cracked. A dog’s body temperature can reach fatal levels in as little as 15 min in a hot car.

Holidays can be a wonderful time for you, your family and your pet. But plan for safety – keep holiday food away from your pet, keep holiday plants like holly and lilies out of reach (also tinsel!), and watch out for anything your dog might excitedly bump into.

Many dogs don’t like the loud noises associated with The Fourth of July or New Year’s Eve. Provide a safe place for them to escape the noise and reduce their stress.

These are just a few common sense things to be aware of to keep your pet safe and healthy. With training, consistency and the building of your relationship with your pet, you can navigate these and other potential issues with success.
Resources

If you’d like assistance or more details on any of the topics in this guide, you can refer to the Pawsitive Alliance website at www.pawsitivealliance.org/education

A few additional resources:
The Art & Science of Animal Behavior by Dr. Sophia Yin: www.drsophiayin.com
Puppy socialization checklist: www.info.drsophiayin.com/puppy-socialization-checklist
American Veterinary Medical Association: www.avma.org
Dr. Ian Dunbar: www.dogstardaily.com
ASPCA, Pet Care section: www.aspca.org/pet-care

Pawsitive Alliance Education Committee Partners:
Canine Behavior Center: www.caninebcenter.com
Great Dog Daycare: www.gogreatdog.com