



## **Transport**

It's important to always be prepared for the dog to “run away.” Make sure a collar or harness is secure and the dog won't slip out before leaving the shelter. Keep vehicle windows closed enough that the dog can't jump out. The dog can be crated inside of the vehicle, or a safety buckle should be clipped between the dog's collar or harness and a buckle in the backseat. Keep the dog on leash whenever you're not at home.

## **Introducing a Dog to the Home**

Dogs are learning your habits/routine, maybe hearing new noises (washer, vacuum, doors, etc.), learning where certain activities take place (eating, sleeping), and just generally learning what to expect. Allow them to do it at their own pace, allowing them to feel in control of their situation can help settle their anxieties and build confidence. Although you may not see it, a new environment is always stressful and confusing. Give positive reinforcement for things they find scary. You should start your normal routine the day they get home or the change will shock them. “Firsts” are very important to a dog and have the strongest effect on their behavior.

## **Building a Relationship with a New Dog**

For any dog leaving the shelter environment, it's best to allow them at least a few days to settle in; they may be extra tired or energetic initially going home. Some of our dogs may not have had healthy interactions with humans before. Dogs build the most meaningful relationships with humans when they feel their boundaries are respected, they trust you, and interacting with you is fun (from their perspective). If you want them to have secure relationships with humans, it's important that you allow a dog to initiate the relationship. If you allow the dog to have made the decision to seek love from you; they will love you even more. If the only love they're willing to accept is food, that's okay. You can always pause petting a dog to see if they seek more petting or move on from the interaction. This is a simple way to be able to tell when a dog wants to play and when they don't; sometimes a dog will allow you to pet them even when they don't *want* it. Dogs are highly social creatures and yearn for social contact. It can take months for some of the most traumatized dogs. Dogs almost always DO NOT want to bite anyone and only do so as a last resort when they feel they have no other options. Dogs show warning signs such as growling, side eyeing, and tensing up before escalating to snapping and biting. A dog understands that biting someone means they might “bite back.”

## **Introducing a Dog to Other Dogs in the Home**

Meeting and living with a new dog can be stressful for both your resident dog and the shelter dog. Understand that dogs do not have a universal language between them, they use emotions to communicate. Dogs can ONLY use aggression to set boundaries with other dogs. During this time, they are learning how to communicate with each other. “Corrections” are very short expressions of aggression to set boundaries (less than 3 seconds). Some examples of corrections include snapping, snarling, and growling. You should never yell at a dog for giving a correction. This can increase anxiety about the other dog. It's important to understand that dogs can't form complex “cause and effect” thought processes and use their emotional state to learn. If

they are generally experiencing fear, they may attribute that to the things that are going on around them; whether or not it makes sense to a human. When things are tense between dogs, use distractions and positive reinforcement (shake a bag of treats if they are getting tense, call them over excitedly, etc.). You do not want to *allow* aggression; just redirect them positively. Be mindful of creating jealousy between dogs with things such as high value treats, special privileges, and attention. Although the dogs may like each other, they do not trust each other yet. Do not leave dogs together unattended for at least a few days. Then start with short periods of time and build gradually. Separating the dogs (such as in different rooms) helps prevent you from “throwing too much on their plate” all at once, giving them time to settle as well as adjust to the other things they are adjusting to. It’s important that they get lots of positive reinforcement for interacting or even sniffing each other. Shared positive activities (walks, play) can help to tell the dogs that they are companions now.

## **Resource Guarding**

Resource guarding is when a dog uses aggression to protect their food/resources and can be both an instinct or learned behavior. Dogs can guard anything – toys, treats, people, other dogs, blankets, beds, areas, etc. It's important to understand that although we do tests in shelter, the dog may still resource guard in the home. Do not attempt to take food away from a dog without tossing a treat or something to the side to get them to leave the bowl AND turn away from the food. Dogs are most likely to “guard” when they are stressed and/or unfamiliar with you.

## **Training**

Training is a complex way of communicating your needs/wants to a dog. Many training techniques that are commonly used create “learned helplessness.” Learned helplessness is when an animal accepts they have no other options and give up control because they are motivated by fear. This is harmful to the human-animal bond and WILL make your dog more afraid of you than if you used purely positive-based techniques. It’s important to note that these techniques will “work” and the dog will still be bonded to you (simply because dogs are just that loving), but that doesn’t make them good. Some examples of these techniques are rubbing their nose in pee, kicking dogs when they jump up, shock collars, etc. A loud and firm “no” is the most aversive you should ever have to get with a dog. Instead of the dog doing what you want as a “last resort,” positive-based training revolves around the dog thinking what you want them to do is what they want, making it more effective. Contrary to the thinking of dominance-based theory, dogs aren’t motivated by the desire to obtain power over another individual. There is no reason to believe a dog even understands the concept of “power.” In fact, dominance-based theory is widely considered false. The studies that developed the idea of “dominance” are 50 years old and weren’t even done on dogs. Dogs are motivated by what they *believe* keeps them safe and happy; it’s literally that simple.