MaKs Dog Training

Connection - Not Correction

Bringing Home a Rescue Dog

How long settling in takes - and what helps most at the start

The short version: Your new dog does not need everything at once - they need time, quiet, and a routine they can count on. Expect the first days to feel unsettled, the first weeks to start making sense, and the first months to build real trust. A calm, predictable start settles a rescue dog faster than lots of new people, places, and excitement.

How long it takes - the 3-3-3 guide

First 3 days

To decompress. Your dog may sleep a lot, hide, eat little, or seem shut down - or be restless and clingy. Keep things quiet, offer food, water, and toilet breaks, and let them rest.

First 3 weeks

To learn your routine. Your dog starts to relax, shows more of their real personality, and learns when meals, walks, and sleep happen. Small wins and small setbacks are both normal.

First 3 months

To feel at home. Trust and confidence keep growing, routines feel normal, and your bond deepens. Many dogs are still settling after 3 months - every dog moves at their own pace.

Set them up to settle

- **A quiet safe spot** - a bed or crate in a calm corner where your dog can rest undisturbed and choose to come out.
- **The basics ready** - food, water, bowls, a collar with an ID tag, and a leash. Keep the shelter's food at first and change it slowly.
- **Keep their paperwork** - vaccination records, microchip details, and the shelter's number. Update the microchip and ID with your details.
- **See your vet early** - book a check-up in the first week or two, sooner if your dog is unwell, not eating, or on medication.
- **One area at a time** - start with one or two rooms and open up the home gradually.

Go slow at first

- **Let your dog come to you** - sit nearby, offer treats gently, and let them choose cuddles. Avoid looming, hugging, or picking them up.
- **Keep introductions small** - meet household members calmly, one at a time. Hold off on visitors and crowds.
- **No dog parks yet** - start with short, quiet walks near home. Skip busy parks and greetings with unknown dogs for now.
- **Supervise pets and children** - introduce slowly, keep meetings short and calm, and always give your dog a way to walk away.
- **Expect accidents** - even a housetrained dog may slip in a new home. Take them out often and praise them for going outside.

What is normal at first: shyness or hiding, sleeping a lot, a picky appetite, following you everywhere, startling at everyday sounds, and the odd accident. These usually ease as the routine becomes familiar. If fear or not eating lasts beyond the first few days, or growling, snapping, or guarding is getting worse, ask your vet or a professional trainer for help early.

Steady habits that build trust

- **Same routine every day:** meals, walks, toilet breaks, play, and bedtime at steady times - predictability is what makes a rescue dog feel safe.
- **Feed meals during training:** use part of their regular food for short, gentle training - name, come, sit, and settling on their bed - kept easy and positive.
- **Reward what you like:** calm praise and a treat for calm behaviour, coming to you, and going to the toilet outside.
- **Give rest and alone time:** plenty of sleep, and short, calm practice being left alone, so your dog learns you always come back.
- **Be patient with setbacks:** a hard day after a good week is normal. Go back a step, keep the routine, and let trust rebuild.

General information only - please talk to your vet first: This handout is general information only. It is not veterinary or behaviour advice and is not a note from a vet. Please talk to your veterinarian about your dog's health, vaccinations, and feeding - and contact your vet promptly if your dog will not eat or drink, keeps vomiting, or has ongoing diarrhea.

MaKs Dog Training - Private, Individualized In-Home Dog Training
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