

# STARTING OFF ON THE RIGHT PAW

Presented by Pawsitive Transformations, LLC

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*Bringing out the best in our best friends*

Congratulations on opening your home to your newest family member! We hope this will be the beginning of a long and beautiful friendship. To facilitate success for you and your new best friend, we are providing a few tips to aid in the transition of your new dog joining your family, which will benefit both you AND your dog. Even if you've had dogs in the past, it can't hurt to brush up on a few things to help everyone achieve the best possible outcome. Good luck!

~ Bob Ryder, B.S. Psych., PMCT, CPDT-KA

## Before bringing home your dog.

### Must-have supplies/shopping list.

- Food: Everyday meals (consider a high quality dog food). Chews.
- Equipment: Long and short leash. A flat collar for home, head halter or no-pull harness for walking. ID tags.
- In-home management: Crate. X-pen or baby gate. Kong and treat ball.
- Toys: A variety – rope, plush toys, soft and hard rubber toys. Food toys such as a "Kong."
- Dog care tools: Canine toothbrush, rinse, and toothpaste. Nail clippers. Dog shampoo. Brush.
- Training equipment: Clicker and treat bag. Training treats (Natural Balance, dried liver, baby food).
- Transport: Dog gate or crate for the car, or a doggie harness or seatbelt.

### Home setup.

Before bringing your dog home, set up a confinement area. This is a place for your dog to stay when you can't provide 100% supervision. For example, when you are out or busy around the house and can't keep your eyes on him the entire time. It prevents chewing accidents, potty accidents, and can help you teach your dog to be alone comfortably.

'Confinement' may sound harsh, but having a confinement area is the best possible start for your dog in your household. People often give a new dog the run of the house right away. Then, when he has an accident on the carpet or chews on the couch cushions, they confine him, and confinement becomes a punishment.

Instead, give your dog a safe place from the beginning, and let him make a gradual and successful transition to his new home. He will be much happier and your furniture will remain intact. Where? The ideal confinement area is easy to clean and easy to close off with a door or baby gate. It should be mostly free of furniture and non-dog related objects. The best places for a confinement area are often the kitchen, laundry room, bathroom, or an empty spare room.

What? Furnish the confinement area with a bed or a crate with something soft to sleep on, a water bowl, and several toys, including a chew toy or a Kong stuffed with part of your dog's meal.

## **The first day with your dog...**

### **Home introduction.**

Step 1. When you arrive home, take your dog out for a walk or bathroom break.

Step 2. Introduce him to his new home on leash, including the confinement area.

Step 3. Take off his leash, give him a chew or a stuffed Kong, and leave him alone in the confinement area for approximately 5 minutes.

If your dog howls, whines, or barks, wait until he has been quiet for at least ten seconds before interacting with him. Otherwise, he learns that whining or barking makes you appear or gets him out of the confinement area, and he will bark or cry for longer periods of time.

**Start alone-time training now.** Begin getting your dog used to short absences within the first few hours of his arrival. You will want to spend every minute with your dog when he first comes home, but it is better to prepare him for a normal routine right away. He must learn to be relaxed, calm, and settled when alone – and this doesn't come naturally to dogs, social animals that they are.

**How?** Leave your dog alone in his confinement area while you go out or spend time in another part of the house. Vary the length of your absences, from 30 seconds to 20 minutes, and repeat them throughout the day. If your dog seems comfortable, you can increase the amount of time he is left alone.

Remember, it may take several days or weeks for your dog to make the transition to his new home.

### **House-training 101.**

Potty accidents can happen even with adult, previously house-trained dogs. It is not at all obvious to dogs that the bathroom rules in one place apply everywhere else.

Teach your new family member to distinguish between indoors and outdoors by getting him to go in a designated area and then rewarding him with treats and praise. With a little patience and supervision, your dog will soon be fully versed in toilet etiquette.

**Prevent Accidents.** Supervise your dog in the house. Use a crate when you are not sure if your dog is empty.

**Reward your dog for going outside.** Praise at the right moment, i.e. the second he starts ‘going.’ Reward with a treat after he is finished.

- Until your dog is perfectly house-trained, don’t leave him alone except in his confinement area.
- If you see your dog sniffing and circling in the house, take him out immediately.
- Praise and reward your dog with a treat when he relieves himself outdoors.
- Never yell or punish your dog for a potty accident, otherwise he may become afraid to relieve himself in front of you.

### **Crate training.**

Another good habit to start right away. A crate is a terrific training and management tool, useful for house-training, brief alone-time, settling, and any form of travel. Most importantly, a crate teaches your dog to hold it when he has to go to the bathroom. A crate helps your dogs in many ways – and saves your carpets.

**Get started.** Throw small tasty treats into the crate one at a time. Praise your dog when he goes in to get the treat. When your dog is comfortable going into the crate, practice closing the door for 1-2 seconds, then treat him through the door. Let him back out. Repeat this step several times, gradually building to 10 seconds.

Next stuff a Kong with something very yummy or use a special chew that will take a lot of time to get through. Put the treats in the crate. Shut the door. Move about the house normally. Let your dog back out after 5 minutes or while he is still working on his treat. Don’t make a fuss over him. Repeat this step several times as you practice your short absences, varying the length from 1 to 20 minutes.

### **Bedtime routine.**

Dogs prefer to sleep indoors where it is quiet and warm. At night, put a chew toy in your dog’s crate or sleeping area and leave the dog. He may have trouble settling in at first, but should eventually relax and sleep. It is important not to let your dog out of his confinement area if he cries or barks.

The bottom line is, if you give him attention for making noise, he will keep it up longer next time. Steel yourself and wait it out. (It’s normal for your dog to cry a little for the first few nights, but he will quiet down more quickly each night.)

## **4 keys to long-term happiness with your dog...**

### **1. Exercise.**

Give your dog plenty of exercise, and you get a happier, healthier, better-behaved dog. Well-exercised dogs bark less, chew less, sleep more, and rest easier if left home alone. They are also much less likely to rummage through the trash or attack the couch cushions.

Leash walks are great, but your dog needs to run, swim, or do something else that gets his heart pumping for at least 30 minutes every day. For example: Chasing a ball or Frisbee. Swimming. Playing tug. Active play with other dogs. Off-leash romps or hikes.

Remember: A tired dog is a well-behaved dog.

## 2. Mental stimulation.

**Toys galore.** Toys are a great way to engage your dog's brain. Dogs have distinctly individual toy preferences, depending on the day, time, and situation. Do some detective work and find out what truly tickles your dog. Rotate toys every few days to maintain their value to your dog.

**Work to eat.** Biologically speaking, your dog is not supposed to have a bowl of kibble plunked down in front of him. He is a hunter by nature, meant to work for his keep. Mimic this by serving your dog's food in a Kong or treat ball. Your dog will spend the first part of the day figuring out how to get at his food and the rest of it recovering from the mental effort. Perfect!

**Kong stuffing for pros.** Don't just throw in a few cookies – take your Kong stuffing prowess to the next level. But start with easier Kongs and then make them tougher, so your dog succeeds while developing perseverance.

Easy stuffing = Loosely packed food and pieces small enough to fall out.

Difficult stuffing = Tighter packed food, with some big pieces that take effort on your part to get into the Kong.

Stuffing tips:

- Use a matrix (peanut butter, cream cheese, baby food) to hold in smaller bits
- Stuff with meat and mashed potatoes and freeze
- Stuff with cheese cubes and then microwave briefly to nicely coat the inside
- Plug the small hole with peanut butter, then fill the cavity with broth and freeze to make a 'Kongsicle' (can be messy, so give it to your dog outside)

A sample recipe for an advanced Kong (courtesy of Jean Donaldson):

Layer 1 (deepest): Roasted, unsalted cashews, blueberries, freeze dried liver bits

Layer 2: Kibble, cookies or liver biscotti, cheerios, sugar/salt-free peanut butter, dried banana chips

Layer 3: Baby carrot stick(s), turkey and/or leftover ravioli or tortellini, dried apples, dried apricots

Pack the layers as tightly as possible. The last item in should be a dried apricot or piece of ravioli, presenting a smooth finish under the main hole.

If your dog has lots of energy, give him all his food this way. And remember to clean your Kongs regularly with a bottle brush and/or in the dishwasher.

(For more recipes, see [www.kongcompany.com](http://www.kongcompany.com))

## 3. Preventing mistakes.

**Chewing.** Chewing is normal and healthy canine behavior, but it can still be a problem – for you and your furniture. You need to teach your dog what is and isn't okay to chew. In other words, give him plenty of appropriate things to chew right away to get him hooked on those instead of your shoes.

- *Prevent chewing mistakes.* When you can't supervise, put your dog in his confinement area with a sanctioned chewie.
- *Interrupt chewing mistakes.* If your dog tries to chew the wrong thing, interrupt and trade him for something he can chew on. Praise liberally when he does.

**Barking.** Generally falls into five categories:

- *Boredom barking.* Happens when a dog is left alone often and doesn't get enough exercise or mental stimulation.
- *Barrier frustration barking.* Mostly happens on leash, in cars, or in backyards.
- *Demand barking.* Dogs that bark to get something, e.g. to have balls thrown, doors opened, or for attention.
- *Watchdog barking.* Triggered by passersby, slamming car doors, a cat on the lawn, etc.
- *Separation anxiety barking.* A symptom of underlying anxiety about being alone.

To cut down on any kind of barking, give your dog plenty of exercise and arrange for mental stimulation when he is left alone. Feed him using puzzle toys or stuffed Kongs. If any type of barking is becoming a problem, **give us a call**.

**Jumping.** Dogs jump up to say hello, quite simply. They don't know how humans prefer to be greeted, and it never occurs to them that they might knock us over or ruin our clothes. Thankfully, consistent anti-jump training can quickly solve the problem for good.

*Anti-jump training.* Whenever your dog greets you by jumping up, gasp as though he were radioactive, say "Too bad" and turn away. When he stops jumping, turn around to face him. If he jumps, turn away again. When he stops jumping, pet and praise him.

*Arriving home.* Open the door a bit. If your dog jumps up, close the door. Repeat until you can step through the door without your dog jumping up. Once inside, if your dog jumps on you, turn away. If he keeps jumping, go back outside. When he stops jumping, re-enter and pet and praise him.

*Outside the home.* If your dog jumps up on someone approaching you on the street, tell him "Too bad" and walk a few feet away. When your dog settles, try again – if the person is willing.

#### **4. Preventing aggression.**

The majority of canine aggression can be blamed on poor breeding, medical issues, or a lack of socialization. All require professional help, **so call us for advice** if you think that's your dog. But aggression is a normal response to stress even in well-adjusted dogs, which is why avoiding stressful situations is crucial in the first few weeks and months. Some pointers:

**Don't overwhelm your dog.** Give him time to settle in. He doesn't have to meet the extended family, all your friends, and the neighbors on day one.

**Provide enough downtime.** Give your dog plenty of quiet time, especially in the beginning. It will help him adjust to his new environment. Yes, take him out on a nice walk, but skip the block party.

**Monitor interactions.** In the beginning (and always with kids), don't leave your dog alone with new people or dogs. Be there to supervise and step in to end the interaction if your dog appears uncomfortable (tail tucked, ears flat, crouching, backing away/avoiding contact).

**Use treats liberally.** Sweeten all introductions, scary noises, and new sights with a tasty treat. That will help your dog form positive associations with these things.

**Never force the issue.** If your dog shows fear or reluctance in any situation, don't force him. For example, don't make him submit to being petted or to being jumped on by another dog. Allow him to withdraw and try another day.

**Let eating dogs be.** Possessiveness of food bowls, bones, toys, garbage, sleeping locations, etc. is natural dog behavior. To us humans it seems less than polite if our dog snarls when we reach for his food bowl, but it makes perfect sense to the dog.

To avoid problems, don't approach your dog when he is eating or chewing on something particularly good. If you need to take something away from him, offer something better. Toss a couple of tasty treats on the floor away from the contested object and remove it while he eats the treats. Remember you are new to the dog and he may not be willing to share until he knows you better. **(If the behavior worsens or there are children in the household, call us.)**

**Hold the hugs – for now.** Allow time for you and your dog to get to know each other before you try to handle him completely. Dogs can be just as particular as humans about being touched by strangers and as long as your relationship is brand new, proceed with respect. You wouldn't ask for more than a kiss on a first date, right?

To make it a pleasant experience for your dog to be touched, offer a treat every time you touch him in a new area. Any kind of grooming or holding should be minimal at first and always combined with lots of delectable treats. If your dog is on medication of some kind, be extra gentle and careful. A good rule of thumb is to let the dog initiate petting sessions until you know each other well.

*I hope this information has been helpful to you. If you need further assistance, please feel free to contact me for an in-home consultation for basic "good manners" training, or behavior modification if problems arise. Our goal at Pawsitive Transformations is to help bring out the best in our best friends, so if I can assist you and your family in any way, please be in touch. ~ Bob*

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