

JAY PRATTE FOR LOVE UNDERDOGS PART 2

Introducing your new dog to your home

For any animal, particularly one that is being adopted and may come from an unknown or potentially traumatic background, coming into a new home can be an overwhelming experience. As their caregivers, we want to give them every chance to fit in and learn a new routine quickly, while feeling safe and protected. Make sure you plan ahead, and do not let the excitement of a new furry family member override some basic planning.

1. YOUR DOG'S NEW HOME!

- **Keep the first day calm; no trips, celebrations, or “parties”. Make it as relaxing as possible.**
- **Spend as much time as needed outside to go “potty”. Always praise for doing it outside.**
- **Dog proof your home ahead of time and supervise exploration of the home.**

So you have your dog on the new collar and lead, you have already been to the pet store and purchased new food and water dishes, a bed, an appropriately sized crate (store staff can help recommend an appropriate size; also see the section on *Crate training*), and likely a plethora of toys (stuffed, nylon, tug: get a variety as your dog will have more choices). It is probably best NOT to immediately take your new dog to the pet store with you. You might think “I’ll let him choose a new toy” and that it will be an adventure. Truth is, you don’t know HOW the dog will react in contained spaces, surrounded by novel items. And remember, you are likely going to run into people that will want to rush up and meet your dog (stranger danger!) and other dogs. Since you cannot predict how either your dog OR someone else’s will act, it is better to avoid the potential stress involved, along with possible aversive interactions, and save the well-intentioned trip for once you know your new family member a little better. Along with this, do not make a huge deal (no “new puppy parties!”) when you get the dog home. Make the transition and welcome as calm and relaxing as possible.

Once home, go for a quick walk in the garden or neighbourhood, allowing time to potty. Encourage your dog to follow you, but don’t drag or scold them for not listening. They do not know what you want. Once they have gone potty, welcome them into your yard and let them explore a bit, while you talk to them and encourage them.





When it is time to go inside, call them and encourage them to come, rewarding any responses with praise and treats.

Your home is full of new smells and objects, and your dog is going to want to investigate all of it. Make sure you have thought ahead, and your trash and food storage areas are secured, and there are no objects or art pieces that can easily be knocked over. Be aware of potential hazards, such as drop offs in the garden, ponds, sharp fence areas, etc. Keep an eye on the dog, talk in a friendly voice and encourage exploration. If the dog begins to engage in a behavior you do not want, gently steer them away, tell them “Leave it”, and reward them for doing so with praise and treats. For the first few weeks, to also build YOUR trust and keep the dog safe, try to keep the dog in the same area of the house that you or other family members are, and try to anticipate unwanted behaviors, replacing them with other options (toys, play, training with treats), and this way you will help the dog feel more comfortable in the new environment, while building trust and understanding of the new house “rules”.

2. IDENTIFICATION

- **ALWAYS keep a collar on your dog with contact information.**
- **Have a plan and know the numbers to call in case dog is lost, including local animal control and Love Underdogs.**
- **Teach a recall (“Come”) early so that the dog knows what to do if someone tries to help it.**

Thinking ahead, if you know what you are going to name your dog, get a collar tag made before you pick up your new friend, and include your name, address and fastest contact phone number on the tag. Your dog will be microchipped, but this is of little benefit unless anyone who finds your dog (if they get lost) thinks to have them checked. A collar ID tag tells anyone that might come across a lost animal where he belongs and who to contact immediately. This is not to create worry that your dog is constantly going to try and escape, but things happen (gates blow open, leash slips out of your hand...). It is better to be prepared and know you have done everything you can ahead of time, rather than panic as you stare at the empty yard, worried that the dog got out the opened gate...

We will also discuss the importance of rewarding Recall early on; see the Training handbook.

3. DO YOU ALREADY HAVE OTHER DOGS IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD?

- **Clean the house and garden to minimize territorial scents.**
- **Let the new dog explore new areas alone.**
- **Introduce new pets one at a time in as neutral a manner as possible.**
- **Be prepared to intervene in case of a dog disagreement; have a plan ready just in case.**
- **Do not leave animals unattended with each other.**



If the answer is yes, you have a few more steps to consider. You would be bringing your new family member into your current dog's home and territory. This may potentially threaten your current dog, and cause a lot of stress for your new pet. Remember, most times aggression in dogs is based out of fear, so setting the situation up for success can minimize the dogs' fear and stress levels.

First, make sure the house is cleaned up before bringing the new dog home. While the new dog will be hyper-aware of the current dog(s)' scent, you can try and make it less powerful and overwhelming. Put all of the old dog toys away and secure them for now. They can come back out later while you monitor play, but for the first few days you do not want your current dog to begin resource guarding and being possessive of "their" stuff. Also clean the dog beds, and have at least one comfortable place/bed to rest per animal. Ensure any and all food-based treats (rawhides, etc) are put away.

Once you arrive home, have your new dog securely on a lead and then bring your current dogs out, one at a time (also on leads), to meet. Let them greet one another outside, on neutral ground (park, sidewalk, etc..) to reduce the possibility of territoriality. See how they react, and if it looks like they will get along, take your current dogs back inside, and introduce the new dog to your outside garden or space. Let them explore and smell your current dog's territory. Then take them out of the space, and let your current dogs come out and explore and smell where the new dog has marked and played. While this step is happening, you can let the new dog explore inside, unharassed by the original dogs. If you live in an apartment/flat, take the original dogs out for a walk while the new one explores. If it looks like things are proceeding well, you can introduce the dogs, one at a time (friendliest first), and see how they all do.



Monitor the situation constantly, and be ready to intervene if things get a little aggressive. Again, think ahead. If your current dogs will listen to you in most situations, have treats ready to reward them for good behavior. Always have a back-up plan just in case things don't go as expected. I recommend a heavy towel or blanket which can be thrown over a dog's head. Another easy method is to have an air horn or something that will make a loud, sudden noise handy. If (and only if) the dogs begin fighting, you can sound it to startle them, and then quickly separate the dogs and reassess. Depending on their personalities, introductions can go easily, or take some time. Be patient, be friendly and rewarding. Give all of the dogs new toys to play with, give your older dogs a lot of attention to remind them they're still loved, while giving the new dog attention to increase their comfort. Feed separately (at least a good distance apart) at first to minimize feeding

aggression, and reward friendly behaviors with praise. Try to anticipate and avoid issues ahead of time to avoid scolding or yelling out of frustration or worry. The more encouraging we can make the environment, the faster and easier we can integrate the new family members.

Do not leave the dogs together unattended (possibly several weeks) until you are comfortable there will be no incidents. *Crate training*, discussed in this packet, is an excellent way to safely contain your dogs and minimize risks.

4. HOW ABOUT OTHER PETS? (birds, cats, rodents...)

- **Put food bowls, caging, aquariums, etc.. out of reach and be sure they're secure.**
- **Have an "escape route" available for smaller dogs or cats.**
- **Encourage friendly, calm interactions.**
- **Always supervise introductions.**

First, be sure that any foods, toys (cat, bird, and small mammal toys are major choking hazards for dogs) and other access areas (litterboxes) cannot be reached by your new dog. If you have an aquarium (fish or reptiles) make sure it is up and secure, away from where the dog can get to it.



Birds, small mammals or other "caged" pets should likewise be out of sight in a secured room. Until you know the dog and can safely supervise them, anything that could trigger a play, chase or predator response should be kept away. Provide a way for cats (or even other smaller dogs) to get away if play or stress get to be too much. Cats should have a high perch provided, and a door can be cracked for them to come and go as they please. They are going to need to be able to observe the new addition, but safely so no immediate antagonistic reactions are formed. As the new dog is introduced visually to new animals, praise calm or more gentle play behavior, and use treats to reward what you want to see. If the dog freezes, growls, lunges, or looks frightened, provide an alternative behavior. This is exceedingly important for not only this step, but for ongoing training and relationship building. If you need to say "no" and want to stop a behavior, you need to replace it with something else. There is energy there that needs to be channeled. So have treats and toys ready, and distract the dog and subsequently reward any behavior incompatible with the



one you are concerned with. We will discuss incompatible behaviors more extensively in the Training section, but for now just always be aware of something “good” you can get the dog to do, and then reward and make a big deal when they do.

Slowly allow introductions to occur, rewarding desired social behaviors (or the pets ignoring/not responding to one another is fine), and always supervised. Animals are not people, and react to a much wider range of stimuli. We may think something is fine, and early on triggers we are unaware of could cause stressful interactions. Until some time has passed and you and the new dog are comfortable and have learned each other’s mannerisms, err on the side of caution.

5. CRATE TRAINING AND SEPARATION ANXIETY

- **Be sure crate is appropriately sized.**
- **Make crate a comfortable refuge with bed, toys, etc.**
- **Always reward the animal for entering the crate when asked.**
- **Do not leave dog(s) alone for more than 4-5 hours.**

One of the main reasons people become frustrated with their pets, and often either return them if recently bought/adopted, or even abandon them, is separation anxiety. The dogs bark, whine, chew, urinate, or whatever other undesirable behavior may happen while you’re away, when they’re in

their crate, etcetera. You are driven to distraction and cannot deal with the stress. So what do you do? Start thinking ahead.

One of the best things you can do is teach your dog to willingly enter a crate. Ensure it is big enough for the dog to comfortably sit, stand, and turn around in. Place a blanket or dog bed inside of the crate (unless your dog ingests them; destroying is one thing and can be dealt with, you do not want the dog eating pieces of blanket/stuffing and becoming impacted), and keep a couple of safe, favoured toys in there as well. The more comfortable the crate is, the more they will enjoy it. Think about it for a minute, if you had to be contained in a small room for several hours with nothing to lie/sit on or play with, how would you feel?

So now the crate is comfy. Now we make it fun and exciting! Using toys or small treats (some of the dog's dinner is helpful), encourage the dog to investigate the crate and use a lot of praise and rewards. Teach them "Crate" and tap the top or point inside, and when they make any move towards it or go in, instant treats and love! Do this for a while, sit with them while they rest



in it if need be, but keep the experience a rewarding one. When the crate is a "happy" and safe place, then the chances of the dog developing separation anxiety will be lessened. You also minimize the risk of damage to your home early on, until everyone is acclimated over time. Crate training also helps control unwanted urinating/defecating in the house. Most adult dogs (puppies need to build strong bladders as they grow, so might have a few issues) will not eliminate where they sleep. This also leads to easier potty training, as the first thing you do when you let the dog out of the crate is go outside (with treats) and tell them to "Potty" (or whatever cue you choose), and when they do go (which is likely, as they've been holding it) you have an amazing chance to reward them for the desired behaviour! Everybody wins!

Keep in mind, try to leave the dogs unattended in crates for the shortest time possible. A maximum of 4 to 5 hours should be the limit. Dogs do not perceive time the same way we do, and so it feels like we are away from them for an eternity. They get bored and anxious, and so anything we can do to mitigate discomfort will increase their well-being. Always remember, our dogs ONLY have the choices that we make available to them.

If you do decide or are able to leave the dog loose in a room or your entire home, this does not eliminate the development of separation anxiety. Below is a link to Karen Pryor's discussion on how

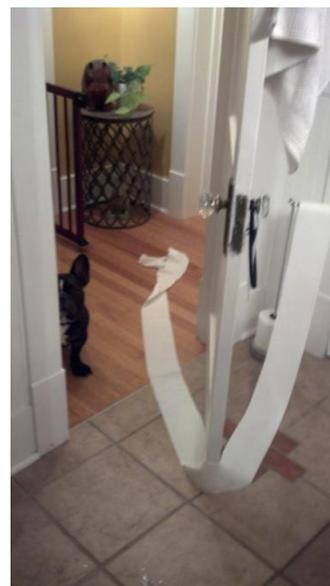
to address separation anxiety, and it is excellent information for any dog lover. The discussion on boredom vs. anxiety is particularly enlightening and worth the read.

<http://www.clickertraining.com/node/3291>

6. DEALING WITH UNDESIRABLE BEHAVIOURS

- Think ahead; identify an alternative behaviour to ask dog for instead of undesirable one
- Teach new behaviours and provide a way to expend energy; don't just scold and say "no".
- **REWARD THE BEHAVIOURS YOU WANT, IGNORE THE ONES YOU DON'T.**
- Be patient and think about what you are **ACTUALLY** teaching the dog, not reacting to what you **THINK** they should know.

So you have adopted a dog. Now, we can look at it as a small person (which it is not), OR we can recognize that it is an intelligent, feeling little being that has learned all sorts of behaviours in his/her life. Some of these behaviours we will appreciate, some we will not. As we spend more time with our new furry family member, we may encounter what we consider undesirable behaviours; for example, jumping up on you, chewing inappropriate items, issues with house training. These are a few examples of frustrating behaviours that may arise, but we need to remember two things. One, the dog has learned these behaviours somewhere, and was NOT taught an appropriate alternative. And two, we can manage any behaviour and turn it around into something we appreciate with a little time, patience, and understanding of the learning process. While we will go into more details about training in the Training handbook, here are some quick things to remember when you are confronted with a behaviour you would like to change.



- The dog has somehow learned that the exhibited behaviour is going to result in something that it wants. We may never figure out what that is or how it happened, but what we can do is identify a **DIFFERENT** behaviour that we would like to see. Just like with people, don't just say "No" without providing an alternative. The energy has to go somewhere, so guide it in the direction you want.
- Think ahead and choose some goals. If you know your dog likes to jump up on you when you get home, plan on rewarding them for an ***incompatible behaviour***. So, for example, have a few small treats in your pocket when you come home. When you interact with the dog (walking in the door, letting them out of their crate, etc) **BE PREPARED**. As they are getting ready to jump up, or even if they are, ask them to "sit" (which you will have hopefully trained already) or teach them "off". When they stop jumping up and do as you ask, immediately reward them with a treat or praise. The dog will learn over time that one behaviour gets rewarded while another gets nothing.



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- **Reward the behaviours you want, ignore the ones you don't.** I cannot stress this enough. Human nature leads us to become frustrated and assume that the dog (or other people for that matter) “know” what we want, and we react according to our feelings. For consistency in messaging while training your dog, you need to think of the goal. Always reward (especially with praise and attention) “good” behaviours you want to see your dog engage in. Try your hardest to ignore the ones you don't like, but ALWAYS provide the opportunity to perform some kind of behaviour. Dogs are not statues or robots. They are going to have energy, want attention, and need to play and exercise. It is up to us to teach them how they can best express these within acceptable parameters. (Incidentally, this reward/ignore approach works well with people too...)

We all have behavioural and emotional triggers, both from our past (“baggage”) and that we learn every day from our interactions with others. Your dog has these as well. So don't give up on them out of frustration, but think of ways to help them learn what you want from them, and be patient as they UN-learn old patterns and adapt to the new things you ask for!