

## **Bringing a Dog Home from HSCC**

When a dog leaves HSCC, they are experiencing another big transition in their life and will need your help to feel secure. It is important to allow your dog to have time to get to know you and your family, their new environment, and your routine at their own pace. Here are some tips to help the transition go smoothly for you and your dog.

**Three days, three weeks, three months.** The “Rule of Three’s” is a way to think about the timeline of your dog’s transition from the shelter into your home. Even though it may seem like you’ve had your new friend forever after only a week or two, it is vital to remember that you will continue to see new aspects of your dog’s personality emerge over the weeks and months to come. The following advice is designed to help you maintain positive progress over the course of the adjustment period, however long it takes!



**Use only reward-based training methods.** Using corrections, or aversives (i.e. spray bottles, shock collars, prong or choke collars), when training your dog will add to their anxiety and can create fear of you and/or their new environment.

**Keep your household calm for the first week.** Spend this time getting to know your dog and allowing your dog to get to know you. Inviting people over to meet your new dog or taking your dog to explore new places will go best after a week or two of settling in with your family.

**Follow a schedule right away.** Dogs are creatures of habit and feel most comfortable when their schedule is predictable. This doesn’t mean you need to change your schedule to fit their needs, but try to keep things such as feeding time, exercise time, and bedtime as consistent as possible.

**Establish the rules right away.** It is easiest for a dog to learn the house rules right away rather than to have to learn new rules later. If your goal is to not have dogs on the furniture, don’t allow them on the bed or couch “just for the first week”. Instead, encourage your new companion to get comfy on a cozy dog bed and offer them plenty of rewards (treats, chewy bones, praise) when they do.

**Avoid Dog Parks.** While you are using this time to get to know your new friend, avoid visits to the dog park. While often a lot of fun, dog parks are very unpredictable. It is best to wait until you and your dog know each other well before interacting with a lot of dogs.

**Exercise is key.** Providing regular on-leash exercise for the first couple of weeks will help your dog feel less anxious and will aid in the bonding experience with you.

**Keep your dog on leash** when outside. In the beginning we encourage you to keep your dog on leash whenever you are outside, even in a fenced in yard, until you have established a bond and you feel confident you can get their attention easily.

## **Bringing a Dog Home from HSCC (Continued)**

**Use management tools to set your dog up for success.** Using crates, baby gates, and keeping the leash attached in the house are all helpful tools to manage your dog while they learn about their new home. Set up the crate in a quiet location and use crate games and food puzzles while confined to help your dog enjoy their crate. For the first two weeks, crate your dog *with food puzzles* when you cannot watch them, when you have people visiting, at night, and when you are not home. Using baby gates is another option for confinement depending on what works in your home. Leaving the leash attached to your dog gives you the ability to easily move the dog without reaching for or pushing/pulling their body (which can be scary for them). You can also stand on the leash to prevent unwanted behaviors like jumping up on people or counters.

**Redirect anxious behavior.** If your dog is pacing, excessively panting, or showing other signs of anxiety give them something to do such as taking a walk, working on a food puzzle, or learning a new behavior.

**Don't try to take objects from your dog.** While you are still getting to know your new dog, use plenty of delicious food to encourage them to give up objects. If you find this does not work, contact HSCC right away so that a trainer can help you.

**Get some professional guidance.** Find a reputable reward-based trainer and sign up for some training, even if it's just for basic obedience! This will help you bond more quickly and you will have the help of a professional to assist you with your dog's transition. You will likely notice that your dog's behavior develops and changes as they acclimate to their new home (remember the Rule of Three's!), so it will be incredibly helpful to have a dog behavior expert on hand to spot trouble before it starts. Not to mention, training is fun!

### **Recommended resources:**

#### **Books**

*The Other End of the Leash: Why We Do What We Do Around Dogs*, by Patricia McConnell

*Don't Shoot the Dog: The New Art of Teaching and Training*, by Karen Pryor

#### **Web**

Positively by Victoria Stilwell: <https://positively.com/>

Fear Free Happy Homes: <https://www.fearfreehappyhomes.com/>

#### **Video**

Dog Adopter Playlist: <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLKJNy9Fs78W4flUsrzaK4tbgVTqkfKUG1>