

Information for Adopters

SEPARATION ANXIETY

Congratulations on adopting your new family member!

Dogs with separation anxiety may bark or howl, be destructive, and urinate and/or defecate in the house when left alone. These behaviors usually occur when the dog is home alone. The destructive behavior tends to be centered around doors and windows because these lead to where the owner left or may be. Dogs often chew doorways and windowsills or pull up carpeting by the front door. Many dogs display signs of separation anxiety shortly after arriving in their new homes but most get over it. Here are some things you can do to help your dog adjust sooner.

- Practice short departures. On your dog's first day in your home, start to leave the house for very short times. It's very important to pay no attention to your dog when you do the departures. First, just go in and out the door. If your dog doesn't panic, take the trash outside or pick up the mail. Then, leave the house for five-minute intervals. Then try ten minutes. If you take your car to work, make sure you drive your car away. Over the first two days, try to progress up to 30 minutes. Make sure you allow your dog to relax between departures. If your dog panics, slow down! Wait a couple of hours before doing another departure and make it short. The goal is to have your dog relax when left alone. If you are patient and don't go faster than your dog can tolerate, both of you will be happier.
- Ignore your dog when you come and go. Making too big a deal of your departures will teach your dog to make a big deal of departures. Ignore your dog when leaving and don't have a party when you get back.
- Don't let your dog be a Velcro dog. Discourage allowing your dog to follow you everywhere. Staying in another room will help your dog learn that being alone is not dangerous. Don't allow your dog to sit next to you all the time. Resting and sleeping while not touching will help your dog feel more confident when alone.
- Give your dog a delicious and long-lasting chew before you leave. Although many anxious dogs won't eat when left alone, some will, and when they do, their anxiety is reduced. Leaving a very delicious chew may be something a dog just can't refuse! Try a Kong toy or hollow marrow bone filled with cheese spread, peanut butter, or treats. Only give this toy before you leave. Pick it up when you come home.
- Use the "Say Please" program. This is a program to teach your dog to politely ask for things before they are given. This is an easy way to become your dog's gentle leader and to decrease your dog's "Velcro" tendencies. All you do is ask your dog to sit before you do anything for him or her and give praise after he or she sits. For instance: sit before being pet, sit before being greeted, sit before putting a leash on, sit before opening the door, sit before putting the food bowl down, sit before giving a treat, sit before throwing a ball, sit before getting in the car.

Some dogs do better alone in a crate; others are more comfortable in a more open area in the house. For more information on crate training, see [this website](#).

If you are not successful in minimizing or managing your dog's separation anxiety, PLEASE CALL your adoption counselor! He or she will be able to direct you to a person who can help you.

HOUSETRAINING MADE EASY

Congratulations on adopting your new family member!

As your adoption counselor explained to you, your new dog has had previous problems with housetraining. Some dogs have had housetraining issues in their previous homes and many shelter dogs have had their housetraining disrupted by their stay in the shelter. Housetraining issues are very common in dogs. In fact, it is the number one behavior problem seen in dogs after adoption. Luckily, most dogs can be easily housetrained.

If you follow the guidelines below, your dog will have an easier time adjusting to your home and schedule and you will be able to have a safe, happy, and long-lasting relationship with your new friend.

MAKE IT EASY FOR YOUR NEW DOG TO USE THE TOILET AREA

- Select one toilet area outside for your dog. Not only is this aesthetically more pleasing but it will speed up the housetraining process. Paper training may be beneficial for small dogs. Put the papers in one area that is always accessible.
- Take your dog to the toilet area several times daily (every two to three hours to start) on a leash. Do so especially after waking up, five to ten minutes after eating a meal, after greeting new people, after active play, and right before you go to bed.
- Take delicious treats with you to your dog's toilet area. When your dog eliminates, immediately reward him or her with a treat and praise.
- Do not spend too much time waiting for your dog to perform. Five or ten minutes is sufficient. If nothing is produced during that time, confine or tether your dog for five minutes inside and then bring your dog back to the toilet area. If you let your dog free during this time, he or she will pick an area inside.
- Have a regular schedule for your dog's meals to encourage more predictable elimination patterns. To make it easier for your dog to make it through the night, make the last feeding before 6:00 PM.
- Teach your dog to eliminate on command. When you take your dog to the toilet area and the search begins for the right spot, say the cue word "hurry up", "do your business", or another phrase. Soon the phrase will bring on elimination.
- See your dog as an individual. Dogs are housetrained at different rates. Some dogs have great holding ability and become housetrained quickly; other dogs may not have that same holding ability and may become housetrained more slowly. This is normal!

USE A COMFORTABLE AREA OF CONFINEMENT WHEN YOU CAN'T SUPERVISE YOUR DOG

- When you cannot supervise your dog, confine him or her to a safe, comfortable area, or tether him in a safe place. Your dog will be unlikely to eliminate in his area of confinement due to the canine instinct of not soiling where the dog sleeps and eats. You can use a crate (see [this web page](#)), exercise pen, or a

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ON-LEASH REACTIVITY TOWARD OTHER DOGS

Congratulations on adopting your new family member!

As your adoption counselor explained, your new dog has shown reactivity toward other dogs either in the shelter or in the previous home. Dog-reactive dogs may lunge, pull, whine, bark or growl at other dogs while on leash. Some of these dogs may even snap or bite the other dog if they get close enough. When off-leash, however, many of these dogs are friendly toward other dogs. Walking these reactive dogs is difficult though! If you follow the guidelines below, you will be able to safely walk your new dog and have a happy and long-lasting relationship.

- Fill your pockets or treat bag with delicious treats before every walk.
- Use the walking tool that your adoption counselor recommended: Gentle Leader or one of the front-leading harnesses (Easy-walk or Sensation). Make sure you know how to apply the device properly. If not, call your adoption counselor right away.
- To help your dog focus on something else, teach your dog to "look" or "the name game". To teach "look", train your new dog to look at your face by holding a treat next to your eye or on your nose, whichever you prefer. Ask your dog to "look" or "this way." When he or she does, say YES! and give the treat. To teach "the name game", practice having your dog turn his or her head when you say their name. See [this handout](#) for more information. Practice these first inside and then on walks when there are no other dogs.
- Try to avoid dogs for the first week after you take the dog home. Practice the "look" or "name game" exercises many times on your walks. Also ask your dog to move with you as you put the treats in front of your dog's mouth. After your dog moves with you, then ask your dog to sit.
- When you see your first dog, use your treats to lure your dog away from the other dog and keep walking. Do this even if your dog is not reactive. When you see that your dog is not being reactive, ask your dog to look at you and sit; then, praise and treat.
- If your dog is reactive to every dog you see, most likely you are getting closer to the other dogs than your dog can tolerate. Try to increase the distance from the other dogs so that your dog is not reactive.
- Until you get to know your dog's off-leash behavior, do not attempt to go to dog parks. If you have a safe fenced-in yard, you can try to plan play time with one of your friend's dog-friendly dogs.
- Sign up for an obedience class with a trainer who can handle reactive dogs. Make sure you let the trainer know about your dog's reactivity.

If you are not successful curbing your dog's dog-reactive behavior, please call your adoption counselor! He or she will be able to direct you to a person who can help you.

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TERRITORIAL OR WATCHDOG BEHAVIOR

Congratulations on adopting your new family member!

As your adoption counselor explained to you, your new dog has shown territorial behavior (watchdog behavior) while in the shelter or in the previous home. Dogs who show territorial behavior may growl and bark when defending their home and family from strangers. If not controlled, some of these dogs may bite. Most dogs who show territorial behavior are very friendly to family members.

If these guidelines are followed, you will be able to safely manage your dog and have a happy and long-lasting relationship with your new canine family member.

- Keep your dog within a reliable, conventional fence (not invisible) while on your property.
- Supervise your dog when outside. When supervising, you should be able to see your dog at all times.
- If your dog begins to bark, immediately call him or her into the house.
- Keep your dog leashed at all times when off your property.
- If your dog continues to show territorial behavior when a visitor comes to the door, leash your dog and take him or her away from the door before you open it for the visitor. Either tether your dog away from the door or put him or her in another room or crate. Allow your dog to greet your visitor after he or she is seated.
- If your dog is not friendly to your visitor, give your guest delicious treats to toss to your dog.
- Let your dog see that you clearly welcome your visitors (shake hands).
- Enroll your dog in a humane dog obedience class.

If you are not successful in curbing your dog's territorial behavior, please call your adoption counselor! He or she will be able to direct you to a person who can help you.

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HIGHLY EXUBERANT DOGS (Jumpy Mouthy Dogs)

Congratulations on adopting your new family member!

As your adoption counselor explained to you, your new dog has a lot of wonderful energy! He or she has been jumping up on people and/or putting his or her mouth on them in a friendly way. Dogs who jump up and mouth are either trying to play, saying hello, or trying to get attention. They are usually adolescent dogs who have not been trained to have good manners.

If you follow the recommendations below, you will be able to teach your new canine family member not to jump on people and mouth them. It's pretty simple! Encourage your dog to play and greet politely and discourage the unacceptable behaviors of jumping up and mouthing.

ENCOURAGE your dog to play and greet politely. Make sure you praise your dog each time he or she does what you ask.

- Teach your new dog to play fetch with either a ball or a plush toy (see our [retrieve training handout](#)). Praise for picking up the toy. Praise for bringing it to you.
- Teach your dog that you will not greet him unless he sits. Praise your dog for sitting. (See "[Say Please](#)" handout.)
- Whenever you do things that bring on jumping or mouthing (petting, leashing), offer your dog a favorite toy. To make the toy come "alive", toss it away from your dog.
- Make sure your dog gets plenty of exercise. An easy way to do this is to set up play times with other dogs. A game of fetch or tug is also a good way for your dog to burn off energy. See our [handout on safe ways to play tug](#).

DISCOURAGE unacceptable jumping up and mouthing behavior.

- Let the dog clearly know that you are not interested in this form of play by:
 - Turning your back on your dog and becoming a "statue" (stand still, cross arms, and close eyes).
 - If your dog does not get the idea, give him a three- to five-minute time out. Either walk out of the room, crate/tether the dog, or put him in a quiet room alone.
- Avoid wrestling games with your dog. Although both of you may like this kind of game, it encourages your dog to play roughly with people.

NOTE: Some frequently recommended methods to stop jumpy/mouthy behavior such as "kneeing", grasping the dog's feet and squeezing, grasping the dog's muzzle or scruff, often make matters worse. Many dogs misinterpret these behaviors as play and think that they are fun. As a result, the jumpy/mouthy behavior gets worse instead of better.

If your dog's exuberant behavior continues to be a problem, PLEASE CALL your adoption counselor. He or she will be able to direct you to a person who can help you.

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GROWLING OVER FOOD AND CHEW BONES (POSSESSIVE BEHAVIOR)

Congratulations on adopting your new family member!

As your adoption counselor explained to you, your new dog has shown possessive behavior while in the shelter or in the previous home. Possessive behavior is very common in dogs. When a dog is possessive, he may show teeth, growl, snap, or even bite when things that are important to him are touched or approached. Common things that dogs possess are food, chew treats, resting or sleeping areas (couches and beds), and favorite people. We have found that many times, the possessive behavior does not occur in the home after adoption, but there is about an equal chance that it will. However, either way, if you follow these guidelines, you will be able to have a safe, happy, and long-lasting relationship with your new friend.

- Don't touch, pet, or disturb your dog when eating from the food bowl or chewing on a rawhide, bone, or toy. For the first month after adoption, only feed dry food.
- Don't give your dog delicious chews such as rawhides or pig's ears. Instead, give less delicious chew toys like non-edible Nylabones or Boodah Velvets. Your dog will be less likely to be possessive over them.
- When your dog's food bowl is empty, pick it up and put it away. Feed meals instead of leaving the dog food out all day.
- Do not touch your dog when sleeping. If your dog has a history of growling when resting or sleeping, do not allow your dog on your bed or furniture. Give your dog a dog bed instead.
- If you need to move your dog while resting or sleeping, don't physically pick up or push him or her. Instead, wake up your dog with your voice, then call to come. If this doesn't work, toss a delicious treat (like cheese) away from the dog and resting area. When your dog follows the treat, praise him. An alternative is to allow your dog to wear a lightweight leash in the house only when you are home. When you want to move your dog, just pick up the leash and walk away.
- If your dog steals something, don't chase or reprimand. Instead, toss a delicious treat away from the dog and stolen item. When your dog drops the stolen item, praise him or her.
- If your dog is not possessive over toys, teaching a game of "fetch and drop" is a great exercise and helps to teach your dog to release items on cue. See [this cheat sheet](#) for how to teach your dog this great game.
- Advise all family members and visitors to follow the same rules. Do not leave food or chews around when visitors are at your house.
- Practice "Say Please." All family members should ask your dog to sit before they do anything for him: Before petting, greeting, leashing, opening the door, playing, putting the food bowl down, or giving a treat.

If your dog's possessive behavior becomes a problem, PLEASE CALL your adoption counselor. He or she will be able to direct you to a person who can help you.

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FEAR OF PEOPLE

Congratulations on adopting your new family member!

As your adoption counselor explained to you, your new dog has shown fears of some people. Fear of people is very common in dogs who have not grown up with certain types of people. For instance, dogs who have not grown up around children may be afraid of them. Dogs who have only lived with women may be afraid of men.

Dogs who are afraid of people may look away, put their tails down, hide, cower, or tremble when they see some people. Some may even growl and bark. If the person they are afraid of reaches out to pet them, they may snap or nip to keep the person away. Dogs who are afraid of people tend to be very friendly toward the people they know. By following these guidelines, you will be able to help your new dog be less afraid of new people and not react to them by growling, barking, or nipping.

- Provide the dog with a safe place, such as a crate, so that the dog can choose to avoid contact with people.
- Have all people your dog is afraid of sit whenever possible and not look directly at your dog. Then have the person toss delicious treats to your dog. If your dog eats the treat readily, then the person can hold a treat to see if your dog will approach and eat it.
- Ask all new people not to look directly into your dog's eyes or approach. These actions can be very scary to fearful dogs.
- Ask all new people not to pet your dog unless he or she approaches them and asks to be petted. A dog may ask to be petted by leaning into or nudging a person.
- If your dog likes to play, give a favorite toy to a new person. Ask the person to throw the toy for your dog.
- Sometimes it helps to ignore your dog's fearful behavior. Let your dog seek their safe place if he or she needs to, or to approach and stay near you but with a minimal of fuss and attention from you.
- Don't push your dog! Forcing the fearful dog to accept petting from people before being ready can increase the dog's fear, and, worse, end up with the dog snapping or biting the person. Let your dog tell you when he or she is ready. Look for approaches, eating treats, tail wags, and willingness to play.
- Don't take your new dog places where there are many people you can't control (parties, parades, ballgames). Most likely your dog will be more afraid and neither you nor your dog will be able to have a good time.

Many people may tell you that your dog just needs to be "socialized." However, the best time for socialization is between the ages of three and sixteen weeks. You can still "socialize" your dog, but now that your dog has become fearful, the socialization must be done slowly and carefully.

If you are not successful in curbing your dog's fearful behavior, PLEASE CALL your adoption counselor! He or she will be able to direct you to a person who can help you.



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Shelter Dogs

A PROGRAM OF THE ANIMAL RESCUE LEAGUE OF BOSTON

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ESCAPE BEHAVIOR

Congratulations on adopting your new family member!

As your adoption counselor explained to you, your new dog has shown escape behavior while in our shelter or in the previous home. Dogs commonly learn to escape to get to desirable things outside of their home or yard. Common things that dogs seek are people, dogs, other animals, food, and fun! Very often the home environment is not interesting enough for the dog and the dog easily learns to seek a better life elsewhere. Some dogs who escape are suffering from fear and/or separation anxiety. If your dog shows signs of separation anxiety when you are not home (chews, cries, barks) and escapes, please see our handout on separation anxiety and/or see your veterinarian, dog trainer, or a behaviorist for help.

If the following guidelines are followed, you will be able to safely manage your dog and have a happy and long-lasting relationship with your new dog!

- Keep your dog within a reliable, conventional fence (not invisible) while on your property.
- Supervise your dog at all times when outside. When supervising, you should be with your dog.
- Keep your dog leashed at all times when off your property. Use a limited slip collar, like a martingale, that your dog cannot slip out of.
- Teach your dog to sit and stay before you open the door. Teach your dog to wait until you exit the door first. Teach all family members to do the same.
- Lock your doors and windows for the next two months when you are not home – and even when you are home.
- Provide your dog with interesting things to do when left alone (stuffed Kongs, other long-lasting delicious chews).
- Exercise your dog before leaving him or her alone. A tired dog is a good dog!
- Enroll your dog in a humane dog obedience class.

If you are not successful in curbing your dog's escape behavior, please call your adoption counselor! He or she will be able to direct you to a person who can help you.

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DESTRUCTION OF HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

Congratulations on adopting your new family member!

As your adoption counselor explained to you, we suspect that your dog may be destructive after joining your home. Dogs destroy things for different reasons: sometimes just to play, and sometimes because of anxiety. By following these guidelines your dog's adjustment will be faster and easier.

PUPPY PLAY DESTRUCTION

You know your dog's destruction is out of fun when he or she destroys things both when you are at home and also when you are not at home. What's more, the things a playful dog destroys look like fun (ripping up pillows, chewing your favorite shoes). This is the most common reason for destruction in young dogs. To help curb your dog's playful destruction, provide:

- Exercise. Tired dogs are good dogs! Try to supply enough exercise to get your dog tired. Every dog is different, watch your dog for what activity level seems to satisfy their exercise needs and keep them healthy. Make sure you get an OK from your veterinarian. Easy and effective ways to exercise are brisk walks or jogs, playing fetch, and arranging playgroups with other dogs.
- Play and training exercises. The mental stimulation and exercise that play and obedience provides will not only help with your dog's adjustment but will also help to make you a leader and a better best friend. Fetch, chase games (where your dog chases you), hide and seek, sits, downs, and stays are fun games.
- Interesting and long-lasting chew toys. Most dogs have an inherent need to chew. Safe and interesting toys are Knucklebones, bully sticks, and Kong toys filled with cheese spread, peanut butter, or treats. All of these are available at pet supply stores. Try not to give your dog your shoes or clothes to chew on.
- Dog-proofing. Keep things out of your dog's reach (put your shoes in your closet). When you are not home, confine your dog to a safe place, such as a "boring" room, crate, or exercise pen.
- Supervision. If you see your dog start to chew on the wrong thing, say no, and gently exchange for the right thing. Try to remember that to an untrained dog, all things are chewable. Be patient as your dog learns right from wrong in a human world.
- Bad-tasting products on things you don't want chewed. Bitter-tasting sprays and ointments are available at pet supply stores. These are safe and deter most dogs from chewing. But because they don't last, they may have to be replaced daily.

SEPARATION ANXIETY

Dogs with separation anxiety are only destructive when left alone. These dogs may also cry and urinate or defecate in the house when alone. The destructive behavior tends to be centered around doors and windows because these lead to where the owner left or may be. They will chew doorways and windowsills or pull up carpeting by the front door. Many dogs display signs of separation anxiety shortly after arriving in their new

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RESISTANCE TO HANDLING

Congratulations on adopting your new family member!

Your new dog has shown some uneasiness when certain parts of the body are handled. Common places where dogs do not like to be touched include feet, hind end, tail, and mouth. Your dog's "handling" issues may show up when you are brushing your dog or wiping off his or her feet. Dogs who do not like to be handled may show their teeth, growl, or even snap and bite.

If you follow these guidelines, you will be able to teach your dog to be more tolerant of handling and have a safe and long-lasting relationship with your new dog.

- Make a list of all the necessary things that you must do to your dog for health which might be uncomfortable. Your list may include brushing, wiping feet, cleaning ears, trimming toenails.
- Starting with the LEAST uncomfortable activity, gradually begin to associate bits of the activity with your dog's FAVORITE treat.
- So if it's wiping feet, just touch a foot with a towel and then give the treat. Touch each foot with the towel, then give a treat. Now touch each foot three times and give a treat after each touch. Now pick up a foot and give a treat. Pick up another foot and give a treat. Go through all four feet three times. Next, pick up a foot and wipe, give a treat. Do the same with all four feet and do each foot three times. If, at any time, your dog shows teeth or growls, SLOW DOWN. If your dog growls when picking a foot up, then go back to touching. Keep your sessions short and always end when your dog is less bothered.
- Now head off to grooming. Show your dog the brush and give a treat. Touch your dog with the brush and give a treat. Run the brush down the back of your dog upside down (bristles up) and give a treat. Turn the brush over and give a treat. Finally, run the brush down the back of your dog with the bristles down. If, at any time, your dog shows teeth or growls, SLOW DOWN. If your dog growls when brushing, then go back to touching. Keep your sessions short and always end when your dog is "happy".
- SAY PLEASE: Ask your dog to "Sit" before you do anything for your dog: Before petting, before greeting, before leashing, before opening the door, before playing, before putting food bowl down, before giving a treat.

If your dog's behavior continues to be a problem, PLEASE CALL your adoption counselor. He or she will be able to direct you to a person who can help you.