



# HELP YOUR NEW DOG ADJUST TO YOU and YOUR HOME

*Congratulations on adopting a rescued dog!*

**TODAY IS THE FIRST DAY OF A LIFE-LONG COMMITMENT AND THE BEGINNING OF A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR DOG**

Your new dog may have been abandoned, found as a stray, abused, surrendered by a previous family, and/or neglected in a puppy mill. The dog then had to adjust to life in a foster home and is now going to another new unfamiliar place with strangers. Dogs can be “shell shocked” with these changes and need a lot of kindness, patience and time to adjust. No dog is going to be "perfect" and due to their past history, rescued dogs require special consideration; some may be very friendly while others may be reserved until they get to know you.

Dogs are NOT little people with fur; do not expect any dog to fit immediately into a new home and with a family without an adjustment period. In order to ensure a successful, long-term relationship, we strongly recommend considering the following:

## DO:

1. Take the dog straight home after the adoption papers are signed. Do all shopping prior to picking up the dog.
2. Transport the dog in a crate (not on someone's lap or sitting loose on the seat).
3. Take the dog for a long walk outside before taking him into the house for the first time. It will help the dog relax and allow bathroom duties to be completed.
4. Stay outside with the dog until he has urinated/defecated to avoid an accident in the house.
5. Take the dog around the house on a leash initially for at least the first few days so you can correct any leg-lifting or squatting immediately.
6. Expect accidents, at least during the first week or so! Even a housetrained dog can make mistakes in a new home. He doesn't know which door to go to or how to tell you what he wants. Dogs do not generalize - even if they were previously housetrained, they need to learn *your* house rules.
7. Keep a very watchful eye on your dog for the first few weeks and confine him when you can't watch him to assist with housetraining. The worst thing you can do is to physically reprimand a dog when he has an accident in the house. This teaches the dog to go where you can't see him eliminate. A firm "no" when caught in the act and placing him outside (or on papers) will teach him where it is appropriate to eliminate. Reward good behavior and use firm verbal cues for bad behavior, not physical.
8. Feed pets in separate areas until they show no signs of aggression or jealousy at meal time. A dog that was starved or forced to give up food to other dogs in the past may be protective of his food. Try to feed them in the same place about the same time twice daily.
9. Leave the dog alone while he is eating or chewing on a toy.
10. Understand that changes to a dog's environment are stressful. This may cause loose stools, which can be fixed with canned pumpkin (not the pumpkin pie mix). Mix a few spoonfuls of pure pumpkin into their daily meal.
11. Allow the dog 30 days to settle in and learn what is expected of him. Be patient!

12. Let the dog come to you. Don't force him to do anything until you better understand his personality and behaviors.
13. Expect behavioral issues! Some rescued dogs may exhibit behavioral problems when entering a new home, e.g., house soiling, destructive behavior, mild aggression toward other pets or people, submissive urination, clinging behavior, licking behavior, hiding or cowering in bed. They could exhibit issues that were not seen in their previous home(s). Be patient!
14. Establish yourself as the pack leader. Read RMCR's *"Guidelines to Transitioning Your Rescue Dog into Your Home"* for information on being a pack leader.
15. Get the dog into a routine immediately so the dog learns your house rules, schedules and routines. Previously, he may have been allowed to be on a sofa, sleep in bed, or beg at the table. It's up to you to teach him your rules.
  - a. Reinforce housetraining by taking the dog out first thing in the morning, last thing before bed, immediately upon releasing them from their crate, etc.
  - b. Take the dog outside through the same door every time you want him to take care of business. Use the same phrase each time, e.g., "Let's go outside", and also go outside with the dog. Once outside, use another standard phrase, e.g., "Go potty" or "Go duties". As soon as the dog eliminates, say, "Good dog" in an excited voice and give the dog a treat.
16. Use **ONLY POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT** and praise when training the dog basic commands. Use both voice and hand signals.
17. Reward good behavior and use firm verbal cues for bad behavior, not physical touch.
18. Use a friendly tone of voice with lots of encouragement and smelly treats.
19. Allow the dog several weeks with his new family and home **WITHOUT** having disruptions (vacations or travel), grooming or friends/family visit. It's too overwhelming and over-stimulating for a new dog.
20. Introduce new people **S-L-O-W-L-Y** and allow the dog to come up to them rather than having them reach for the dog. Have them hold their hand out for the dog to sniff, then slowly and gently scratch the dog under the chin.
21. Give the dog his own space in the house (preferably a crate) to get away from people and activity. Some may be very frightened and prefer to stay in their crate for a week or more before they will seek attention. Once they do approach, they may run back into their crate.
22. Crate the dog when no human is home.
23. Keep the crate near you during the day (if they prefer to stay in their crate) and with you in the bedroom at night so they do not call out to their pack. Dogs are pack animals that need to be near "their people".
24. Take the dog for several walks daily and play with and gently touch the dog to help him bond with you.
25. Reduce separation anxiety by not making a fuss of your coming and going. Set up a routine, calmly and quietly leave and greet the dog in the same manner when you return.
26. Be gentle, considerate, kind and patient to help ease your new dog into his new life with you.

***Call us to discuss any issues: 303-617-1939. We'd love to help!***

## DO NOT:

1. Expect a new dog to walk into your home and know exactly what is expected of him.
2. Invite your family and several of your friends over immediately to meet the new dog. Introductions need to be made after the dog is comfortable and well adjusted.
3. Groom the dog until the dog has settled in and relaxed for at least a few weeks.
4. Leave the dog loose in the house unsupervised for any length of time. The dog should be confined to a small room or a crate until you are convinced the dog is housetrained. Dogs love to explore and get into things to check them out, so they need to know toys from treasures and what is off limits. (If you ignore this advice, you can expect to come home to a mess in the house and perhaps some destruction as rescue dogs can and frequently do experience separation anxiety.)
5. Leave your pets unsupervised with your new dog until they are used to each other.
6. Allow children under the age of 10 to be unsupervised around the dog.
7. Allow children to pull on the dog's ears, tail or collar...EVER.
8. Allow children to bother the dog if he is afraid; fear can result in nipping.
9. Allow children or anyone else to pet the dog while the dog is eating a meal or chewing on a treat or its favorite toy. The dog will not know your intention and may respond by growling or biting.
10. Over-stimulate a new dog by rough-housing because you may get bitten.
11. Expect a new dog to immediately give you kisses – going nose-to-nose may result in getting bitten by a frightened dog.
12. Grab a dog by the collar and pull on it.
13. Surprise a dog by grabbing him from behind or quickly putting your hand on top of his head. Instead, slowly reach with an open palm up and scratch his chest or under the chin, then scratch behind their ears or under their collar (all favorite touch points). Let them learn to trust you before you start reaching for the collar or top of their head to avoid bolting or snapping.
14. Give a dog a toy or treat, then attempt to take it away from him.

Allow several weeks for your new dog to adapt to his new surroundings and up to four months to fully adjust (older dogs may take longer than young ones). We assume you will make a patient and concerted effort to achieve a successful placement. Most of the time, bad behavior is of very short duration while the dog becomes familiar to his new surroundings. The foster parent will advise you regarding any behaviors that have been observed while the animal was in foster care.

These are some of the situations you may possibly run in to with your rescued Cocker. For the majority of adopters, however, after an initial few days of adjustment they find that they have adopted a truly wonderful dog that wants nothing more than the touch of your hand, the sound of your voice, and the love of your heart. You may find it hard to believe that someone in the past treated your new friend with cruelty and malice. It is difficult for us also but because of you that will never happen again.

**Failure to follow these suggested guidelines may result in someone getting bitten or the house being destroyed if the dog experiences separation anxiety.**

***Trust us...it's better to be safe than sorry.***