



# Strategies the Experts Use

## WELCOMING A NEW FURRY FAMILY MEMBER

by Jennifer Kyzer

**A**re congratulations in order for your new furry family member? Perhaps you're still considering this important decision. With just a few strategies, the integration of a new dog into your family can be a smooth one.

On day one, before entering the house, slowly introduce your pup to the yard by taking him for a calm walk around your property. Let the pup smell around, praise him if he pees or poops, and check in with him every few minutes. Next, take your pup for a short walk around your neighborhood to expend a little energy and allow him to use his nose to get to know his new environment. After the pup has calmed a bit, bring him into your home on a leash. Take him into the room in which he will be spending the most time. It might be helpful to use a series of free-standing gates to create a smaller space, making it easier to keep him close by. Keep things as relaxed as possible while the pup is getting used to his new environment.

Next, introduce your pup to the crate, and where he will be sleeping. It is recommended to crate your pup when you are gone, during crate-training practice, and at night. Keeping the pup close to you the first few days will help with efficient house training and bonding.

Every pup needs rules. Rules are an important part of establishing leadership. Becoming a confident, calm leader to your dog will create a dog who is working for you and eager to please you. With the family, create a short list of commands, behaviors, and rules for your dog. Examples of rules are always relieving himself outside, not jumping on people, staying polite with food, and remaining quiet in the crate.

Notice when your pup is doing a good job or is acting appropriately, and reward him. Rewards can be verbal praise, petting, food, treats, or a combination of these things. In contrast, reprimand your pup with a quick grunt in a low voice if he is misbehaving, and quickly redirect.



To help your pup feel more comfortable and know what is expected of him, it's important to create rituals and routines. Some of the first rituals to establish are usually around feeding, house training, and walking on the leash. Establishing a feeding ritual can include hand-feeding, respect of your hands, and working on calming, arousal, and no jumping. Scoop out a handful of food and as the dog gives respect, reward him by opening your hand and offering him food. A pup can show respect by backing up, sitting, or laying down. Continue with each scoop of food. As your pup learns a higher level of respect, you can develop and add to the ritual.

A pup needs more than love, especially if he is modifying unwanted behaviors or developing new ones. Earning trust and respect from your pup includes the pup knowing you are keeping him safe, you are in charge of things, and you will support and calm him when needed. To earn trust, you should be in charge of your pup's daily schedule and routine. You should initiate interaction with your pup, and his day should be predictable. Your pup should learn that you are consistent. The main way to establish consistency is to follow through on commands. If you call your dog to come

and he does not come right away, continue until he does.

A simple exercise to foster respect is to teach your pup to back off of objects to earn them. Begin with a simple "respect of hands" exercise. Place one treat in each fist and make hands accessible to pup, without offering it to pup. Now wait until the pup leaves your hands alone, then reward by opening one hand to offer treat. The pup will learn to investigate by smelling and then back off to earn the reward.

Dogs need both mental and physical exercise. When you can combine the two, it leads to healthy exhaustion in your pup. To combine mental with physical, you will need to master the walk.

Having your pup walk on a loose leash beside you is the goal. Dividing the walk into parts can add diversity and mental stimulation as well. For instance, begin your walk inside by calming him as he is leashed. Practice respect going out the door. Give your pup a brief smelling time to relieve himself. Walk your pup for a few minutes back and forth, then pull out a few treats and practice obedience commands (sit, down, stay). End with a heel walk. Remember, it is not how many blocks or miles you go with your pup that matters, but rather the time spent on leash training, respect, mental, and physical exercise.

Along with the above guidelines, remember to have fun! Training should be fun for you and your dog. Add in tricks and commands to the rules, rituals, and exercise to develop the connection with your pup. Combine obedience, behavior, rules, and rituals from the start to develop a well-balanced relationship with your new pup for a peaceful, happy home. ■

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