

What to do with a Shy Dog

The first few weeks are stressful, both for the dog and usually for the human! You need to be mindful that everything is new to the dog – including yourself – and they don't understand that you adopted them to give them a great life. Best are simple routines, and don't take anything personally if the dog is weird or shy. They will settle in, and so will you. Every week will get better and you will all learn to enjoy living together.

So be patient and don't force anything. You can't force a dog to trust you. You must earn it.

Giving Attention

- ❖ **Constant attention is very overwhelming, especially for shy dogs.** If you spend a lot of time at home, don't feel like you need to entertain the dog all the time. Really, do the opposite and mainly ignore the dog so she/he can settle in and learn to relax!
 - Of course, if they come up to you, you can pet them a bit, but don't try to force it on them, or to encourage play or cuddling, as all that can be overwhelming. Better to ignore them and let them watch you as you go about your day, and process that on their own. They'll soon realize there's nothing to worry about.
- ❖ Once the dog is comfortable with you, great!, but don't let them be all over you all the time, or glued to your side, as the dog will then think that is the norm and will become needy. This is very important as it can easily lead to separation anxiety. Even for shy dogs → practice leaving them home alone! (see below)

Socializing/Meeting People with a Shy Dog

- ❖ **Avoid walking towards or reaching for the dog**, as you will "invade their space". Encourage her/him to come to you instead, and introduce your touch slowly.
- ❖ Watch our video: [Meeting a Shy Dog](#)
 - Crouch down and turn your body sideways, which is less confrontational than facing them front on or leaning over them. Let them come up to investigate. Don't spook them by reaching for them!
 - If the dog can be petted, start by touching under the chin or their side of the neck, NOT from above on the top of their head or back - this is a very dominant move.
 - Keep it short! YOU remove your hand *BEFORE* the dog becomes overwhelmed and moves away. You want them to want more - that is how they will overcome their shyness and come to you more. The dog will quickly start trusting you, knowing you will not make them uncomfortable with "too much too soon", and will start to want more petting.
- ❖ If there is more than one person living in the household, both (all) should **share the tasks** of feeding and walking the dog. It is simply for the dog to get used to both (or all) of you and not fixate on one "safe" person.
- ❖ The first few weeks, everyone can also give the dog a few tiny treats each day, just for them to warm up and associate you with nice things. If the dog won't take it or shies away, don't take it personally or try to force it on them, just walk away and try again later.

- ❖ **Correct your dog** if they do something you don't want (like, jump on the bed, or go into the trash). Just because they're shy doesn't mean there are no rules. In fact, setting a few boundaries will help a shy dog settle in quicker than if it's a free-for all or (worst of all), inconsistent rules!
 - A correction can be a sharp verbal "No!" or "Sshht!" or "Eh!-Eh!", or you can clap your hands or stomp your foot for emphasis.

- ❖ **Do not isolate your dog**, it is best to very quickly have people come over to your home, but ask them to completely ignore the dog (*this is very important*). The dog will learn that people/strangers coming over is normal and non-threatening.

Walking

- ❖ The first weeks, **walk your new dog in calm, quiet areas**, where you can concentrate on each other in a relaxed environment.
- ❖ Take the lead, show your dog that you are confident and relaxed. All dogs need a leader, but shy dogs need one more than most! They need to feel secure and protected walking with you, and if you don't act like a leader they will think they must fend for themselves.
- ❖ Don't expect too much too soon, keep it calm. **DO NOT MEET OTHER DOGS ON LEASH**, it may freak your dog out. First, allow your dog to get used to walking with you and the new neighborhood and feel safe and unthreatened.
 - As of the second/third week you can start expanding the areas your walk to busier areas (more people, more dogs, more traffic), but observe your dog and take things slowly.

Socializing/Meeting Dogs

- ❖ Even the friendliest dog can become reactive and anti-social if they do not get to socialize with others of their species on a regular basis.
- ❖ Furthermore, shy dogs especially can build confidence by interacting with other confident, friendly dogs / other dogs can help shy dogs come out of their shells and relax as they start to run and play and forget their fears for a few moments.

- ❖ After a couple of weeks, once you have gotten to know each other you can start socializing them with other dogs.
 - Arrange individual playdates with dogs you know are calm and friendly.
 - Take the dog to doggie daycare a couple times per week.
 - Go on walks/hikes together with other people and their dogs.

- ❖ If your dog is *really* social, after a month or so you can start taking them to the dog park, – **ONLY IF** your dog is suitable! This is great for the dog's social skills, both meeting new dogs and people, and to build their confidence.

Other important advice

Leaving your dog alone in the house - do this from Day 1:

- Day 1, crate her/him and leave your house for 30min, twice. Also crate them overnight.
- Day 2; again, leave the house at least twice and you can up the time to a couple of hours.
This is crucial for the dog to learn that being home alone is ok and they are much less likely to develop separation anxiety.
- After a couple of weeks of practice, it should be perfectly normal that you leave. In our opinion, a dog should not be crated for more than 4 hours home alone during the day.
- As time goes by, you will no longer need to crate your dog when you leave the house, but in first month at least, you should crate them when gone and at night. Remember: everything is new and strange for the dog, and the crate is the safest place for them while you are not there to supervise.

Potty breaks:

- It is very common that dogs have pee/poop accidents in a new home, but with a regular routine they will get the hang of things quickly.
- **By crating your new dog at night for the first month, house-training will be a lot easier.**
 - In the morning, take the dog from the crate straight outside so she/he can go to the bathroom. Whether in a yard or on a short walk - they'll need to pee/poop!
- A dog living in an apartment will need two good walks per day (at least 30 min each, plus midday bathroom break and pre-bed nighttime potty break).
- It depends on the dog's energy level, but two walks is the minimum. And remember that exercise is not the only interaction you should have with your dog - provide them with enrichment and attention otherwise also (teach tricks, take them along to run errands, hang out in the yard, throw a ball, etc.).

→ On our website, read the section **New Dog Help**, which covers many different things around having a new dog, including House and Crate-Training, Leash-Walking, Toys, Socializing etc. We have many handouts under **Training** that are customized for different topics such as House Training, Crate Training, Dogs & Kids and so on.

Congratulations on your new dog!

We wish you and your dog a smooth and successful transition, and if you have *any* questions, don't hesitate to reach out.