

The First 24 hours with your new rescue dog!

By Martin McKenna



I've always adopted rescue dogs myself and think they make fantastic family members! It was actually stray dogs in Ireland who taught me dog language when I was a boy. Since then I've fostered hundreds of rescue dogs and helped prepare many more for re-homing.

Here's some simple ideas I learned along the way....

Before you go and pick up your new rescue dog, let's spend a moment exploring how dogs think...

The secret game all dogs play against us:

All dogs instinctively play a secret game against humans and other dogs and animals. From the moment they wake up in the morning, they're trying to work out who the Boss is.

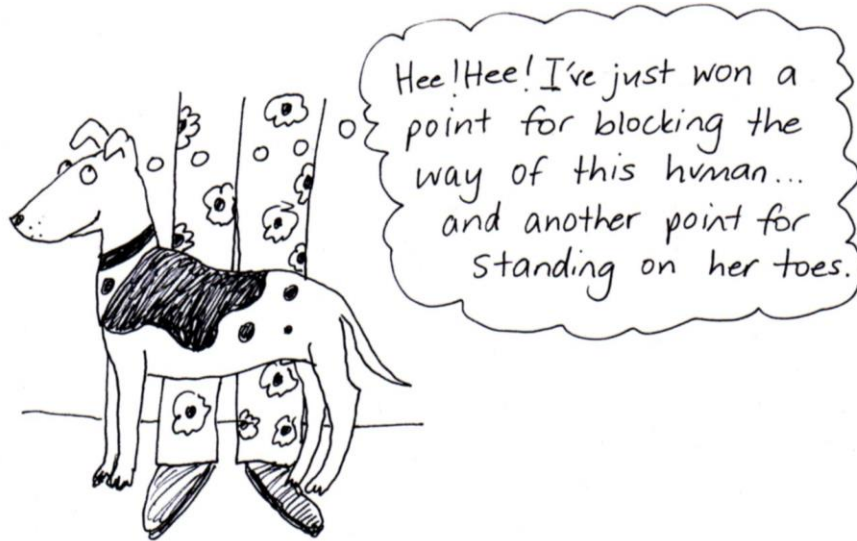
Throughout the day, dogs toss around lots of challenges at everyone. If they win the challenge – they win a point.



Dogs are ingenious at winning points from humans. They have about 25 really simple challenges that they practice until they're brilliant at winning them. You can learn more about these in my free info sheets, "**The 25 secret ways dogs become our Boss.**"

I really recommend you read these sheets and learn to recognize when a dog's trying to score points off you!

Here's a few other ways dogs win points from you. Do any of these look familiar?



Whoever has the highest point score gets to be the Boss. Life is pretty simple in the Dog World.

Dogs always know everybody's score around them. They know exactly how many points they've won. They even watch other dogs winning points off their owners and keep count. I'll never stop being amazed at how brilliant dogs are at remembering all the points in the day they've won!



"Naughty rescue dogs" are just dogs who are throwing out lots of challenges – and winning far too many points from their human owners.

All dogs obsessively play this secret game. It rules their life and you'll never change it. All you can do is win as many challenges as calmly as you can.

Remember – if you have a higher point score than your new rescue dog, it'll give in and let you be the Boss. It will want to please you.

However, the moment you lose lots of challenges – then look out – your dog will quickly start winning points and misbehaving!



Luckily, once you know what you're doing, it can be pretty easy to win more points than your rescue dog. Here's some short cuts I've learned over the years. You may like to try them.

Can you recognize a stressed, confused rescue dog?

Warning! A rescue dog jumping all over you and licking you in an excited way is not showing happy, affectionate behavior.



I guess I should break a few myths here.

If a new rescue dog is nudging you for pats, jumping excitedly all over you, mouthing you in a frenzy, barking at you for attention, leaning all over you or licking you manically – then it's *not* showing you happy, affectionate behavior.

This is all very pushy, dominant behavior. It's the way rescue dogs score massive amounts of points against their new humans as fast as they can. Each time they touch your body in a demanding way with their tongue, body or claws – they score a point. An excited dog can quickly win 150 to 200 points against a human within 10 minutes!



Why do some rescue dogs throw a lot of challenges at us?

Some rescue dogs toss a *lot* of challenges at humans because they're so stressed and don't trust a human to be their leader.

Why are they stressed? Rescue shelters can be pretty scary places for dogs. No matter how great a rescue shelter is and believe me – rescue volunteers do everything in their power to make these places as comfortable as they can, there are dogs in pens who are continuously calling out for help.

Understandably, all those anxious noises and smells make your new dog very worried too. An anxious, stressed dog will try and gain control of you by winning as many points as possible. A dog will throw much less challenges at you if you can calm it down.

The more manic a dog is behaving, the more stressed it's feeling. It might be barking a lot, pulling itself so hard on the leash that it almost chokes itself, racing around in all directions or trying to jump up on people as it tries to invade their personal space.

This manic behavior might be because it's bursting with teenage hormones. Maybe it's been caged up for a while without enough exercise. Or it might be getting excited by your own enthusiastic energy. Perhaps it's learned to dominate all the humans who come near it. No doubt it's also freaking out being at a shelter near lots of other stressed dogs.



What signals can you use to relax your new rescue dog?

Here's some relaxing signals I've learned from watching older, wiser dogs who had to settle new dogs into the pack...

1. Don't stare at your dog all the time.



Staring at a new dog is very bad manners in the Dog World. You'll confuse and stress your dog if you watch it too much. Learn to occasionally look at your dog by letting your eyes drift over it in a leisurely, bored fashion.

2. If you do make eye contact with your new dog, simply close your eyes sleepily and look away in a bored way.



This is Dog Language for, "Just relax, you're safe now."

3. Don't keep facing your feet or body towards your new dog.



It's very confronting for your new dog if you have your body directed at it all the time. Learn to turn your body and feet slightly in another direction from your dog. Even turn your back on your dog every now and again. This allows your dog to switch off from you and not feel like it's under the powerful spotlight of your gaze all the time. No dog likes being studied non-stop. I know you're just fascinated by your new dog – but your dog doesn't understand that!

4. Lift your chin nice and high.



This says in Dog Language, "I'm in charge of this situation so you can relax now." The higher you lift our chin, the more you're saying you're in charge. Most people are too embarrassed to lift their chin but just experiment and try it!

5. Give lots of sleepy yawns.



Your yawns say in Dog Language, "We're all safe so relax. There's nothing to worry about."

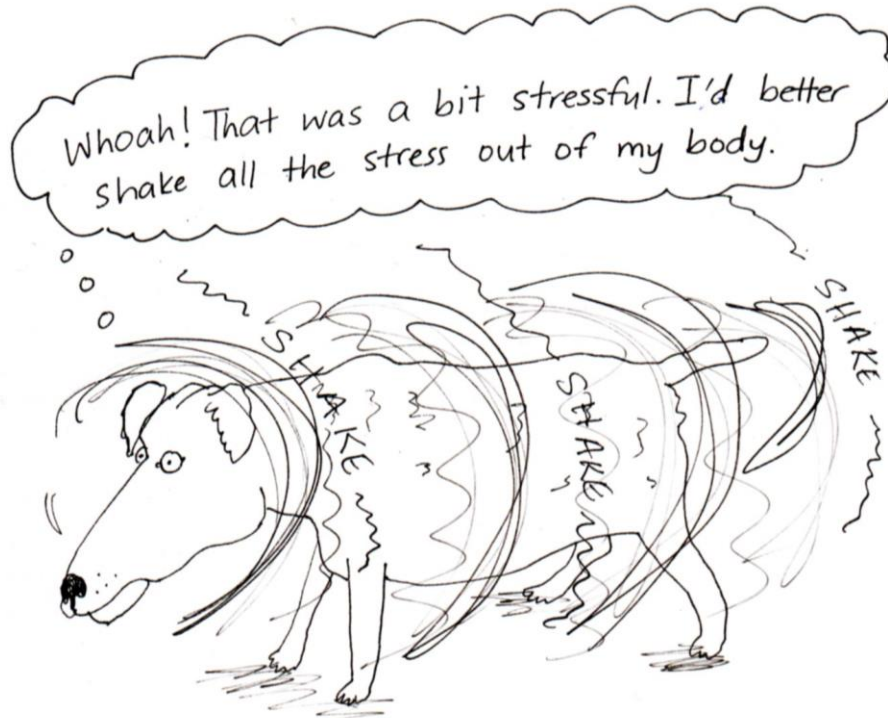
6. Learn to really slow your energy down to sleepy, relaxed levels.

This also says in dog language, "I'm relaxed so you should relax too. Nothing's happening that you have to worry about."

So stop rushing around, start breathing slowly and deeply.

Why does my dog shake itself?

Sometimes you'll see your new dog shaking its head or body all over as though it's shaking off invisible water. What it's doing is shaking all the stress and confusion from its body.



Even the tiniest amounts of stress get shaken off! This is a good thing and you should just ignore it or turn your head away and yawn sleepily. The longer a dog shakes, the more stressed it was.

Sometimes after you pat your dog, it will shake off all the stress and excess energy you passed on to it.

Just keep an eye out for how many times a dog shakes itself a day...it's amazing how often a dog feels the need to keep balancing its energy by getting rid of the bad stuff. I have a feeling we humans could learn something from our dogs here!



Are you giving your new rescue dog far too much attention and affection?

Most new owners make the mistake of flooding their new rescue dog with far too much attention. They can't drag their eyes away from their new dog, they keep touching it and patting it and they talk non-stop to it.

However dogs see humans who behave in this way as very weak. It's like the demanding, annoying behavior of a young pup or teenage dog hassling an older dog.

No rescue dog will allow a person hassling them in this way with too much affection to ever be their Boss. If you act like this, then I have to be honest – your new rescue dog will become increasingly worried. Your new dog wants you to be in charge – not acting like a silly puppy who's trying to dominate it with too much attention!



A worried rescue dog will ignore you as a way of trying to switch off your confusing behavior. Or it will throw lots of challenges at you to make damned sure you don't become their Boss.

Either way, you're not helping your new dog relax if you keep flooding it with too much affection and attention. As tempting as it is to baby a new dog – do try to act like a sensible, wise leader.

What about if I just want to be my dog's best friend and not its Boss?

Dogs have a brain that's designed differently to a human brain. In the Dog World you can never be someone's equal because their mind can't understand this sophisticated human concept.

Dogs always need to know who's the leader and who's the follower. It's a survival mechanism Mother Nature put in most animals as a clever way of stopping them from fighting non-stop.

You can be your dog's best friend but you also have to be your dog's leader too. *Don't worry – dogs adore great human leaders!* They find them reassuring and very, very fascinating. Your dog will like you so much more if you make the effort to be a great leader as well as a best friend. A happy dog is a dog with a great human leader.

New rescue dogs desperately ask their new humans to stop giving them so much attention...but are you listening?

Dogs try to communicate with us all the time, but unfortunately not many humans understand the International Language of Dogs yet. Here's some simple things dogs say to us in dog language to ask us not to give them too much attention.

1. When your rescue dog yawns loudly, it's saying...



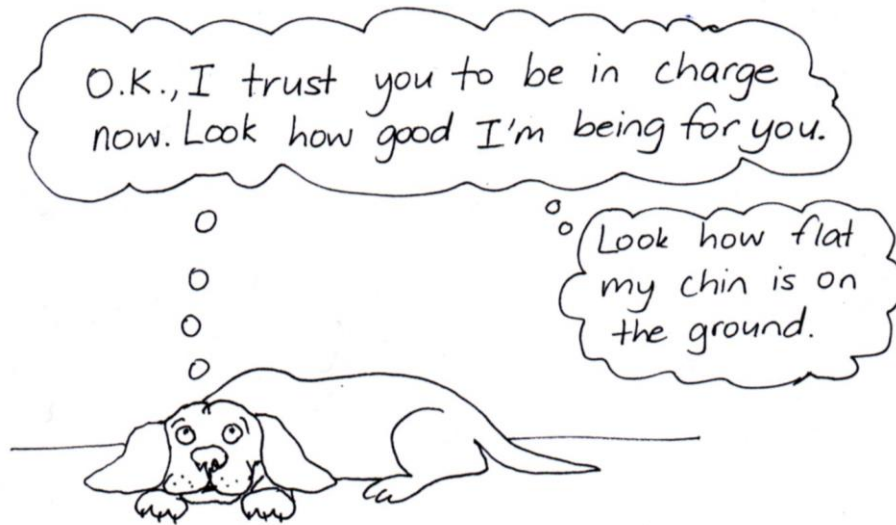
What you can do: Discreetly observe your dog to work out what it's trying to tell you.

2. When your rescue dog turns its head away from you and holds the pose, it's saying...



What you can do: If you want your new dog to trust you, respect its wishes to be left alone for a while.

3. When your rescue dog lies down with its chin flat on the ground and looks up at you, it's saying...



What you can say back: Yawn sleepily and ignore it. This means, "Well done." Don't worry – your dog isn't sad, depressed or sulking. It's just showing very polite manners by exaggerating how willing and submissive it's being for you.

4. When your rescue dog is panting heavily, yet it hasn't done heavy exercise, it's saying...

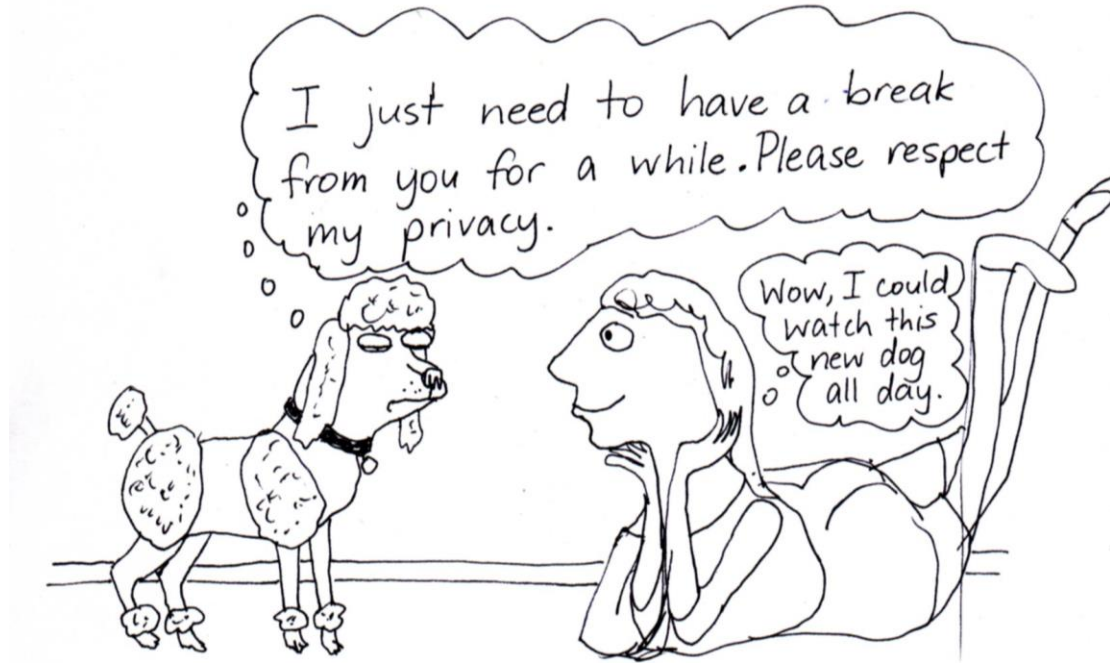


What you can say back: Move away and give your dog some space and stop looking at it.

Often dogs pant very heavily when you invade their personal space by grabbing them around the neck and placing your face near theirs. This is very confrontational to a dog. You'll see a lot of dogs panting heavily in photos and during videos. Not only is someone usually wrapping an arm around them, the camera lens is also trained on them intently for minutes at a time which dogs find quite confrontational. Some people mistake a dog that's heavily panting as smiling, but that smile is actually a grimace. It's your dog's way of trying to be as submissive as possible.

If you see your dog heavily panting or grimacing, just move away and give it some space and stop staring at it. It will wet its lips and start to relax. Maybe it'll shake some of that stress off. Shaking the stress off is the moment when your dog really starts relaxing.

5. When your rescue dog keeps shutting its eyes to block you out, it's saying...



What you can say back: Again, if you want your new dog to trust you, listen to what it's asking. Leave it alone and stop staring at it. The kindest thing you can do is just ignore it for awhile.

6. When your rescue dog races around, barking manically, it's shouting at the top of it's voice...



What you can say back: "Sure, let's tire you out by exercising all that pent up stress out of you." Remember—a tired dog is a well-behaved dog—so go grab a leash and take it for a long, tiring walk. If your dog is feeling extremely stressed—put it on a long leash and let it go for a swim. Dogs find swimming very tiring in a good way!

7. When your rescue dog comes and stands patiently in front of you, wagging its tail slowly and looking up at you with pleading eyes, it's begging you...



What you can say back: "Yes, you can always come to me for help." Check out the situation. Does the dog need to go outside to the toilet? Have some water? Is there another dog nearby annoying it? Or a child acting in a way that worries it? Always help a dog that comes to you for help because this is a great opportunity for you to win its trust! This will also help stop dog fights or children getting nipped. It's the fastest way to get dogs to trust you.

Remember – dogs love humans who try to communicate with them in Dog Language!

How can you relax a stressed rescue dog?

The best way to relax a stressed rescue dog is to give it relaxed, sleepy calming signals. Turn your head away, raise your chin, yawn slowly and close your eyes in a sleepy manner.



What do rescue dogs think of human hugs?

I know this will upset some people, but dogs don't see human hugs as gestures of affection.

In the Dog World, hugs are wrestle holds. It's a way of proving who the stronger and more dominant dog is. In a serious dog fight, it's a way of holding your opponent still so you can deliver a winning bite.

We humans are related to the ape group of animals and because we once carried our young around, we see hugs as signs of love and affection. Dogs will never understand this way of thinking. It's simply not in their instincts. They may politely endure your hugs – but they'll never enjoy them as signs of affection.

I know some people will completely disagree with me but please keep an open mind about hugging dogs. Watch dogs being hugged in future and look for the ways dogs ask you to stop.

The different ways dogs ask us to stop hugging them.

Dogs do many things to try and escape from human hugs. They "accidentally" bump people hard under the chin so they'll be released. They "excitedly" scratch you to make you move away and drop your arms. They can lean all over you to dominantly invade your personal space and win the wrestle that way.

They can energetically lick your face to push you away with their tongue. Sometimes they dart in and lick you straight on the lips so you move backwards in surprise out of reach. They can even pretend to turn around and nibble at the base of their tail as a way of cleverly ducking out from under your arms.

If your dog gently licks your arm trapping it, then it's a polite plea for you to stop.

Some dogs just stay still, hoping you'll soon get bored and stop hugging them. They reveal their stress by panting heavily. Have a look at dogs in photos being hugged. Many are heavily panting. This isn't a happy smiling dog – it's a stressed dog politely asking to be released from the person's wrestle hold.

Even if you just lay one arm around your dog's shoulders, it's a half wrestle hold. Dogs still don't see this as a sign of affection. They just see it as you testing them before locking them in a full wrestle hold.

Pulling a dog's face to your mouth for a kiss is dragging that dog's muzzle to your own. It's an extremely confrontational thing to do. Kissing is also confrontational. It's like a dog mouthing another dog in warning, touching the spot where he'll bite it next.

Remember, I didn't make these ideas up. I love human hugs and being hugged myself – but I do feel I have to be honest about what dogs are trying to tell us.

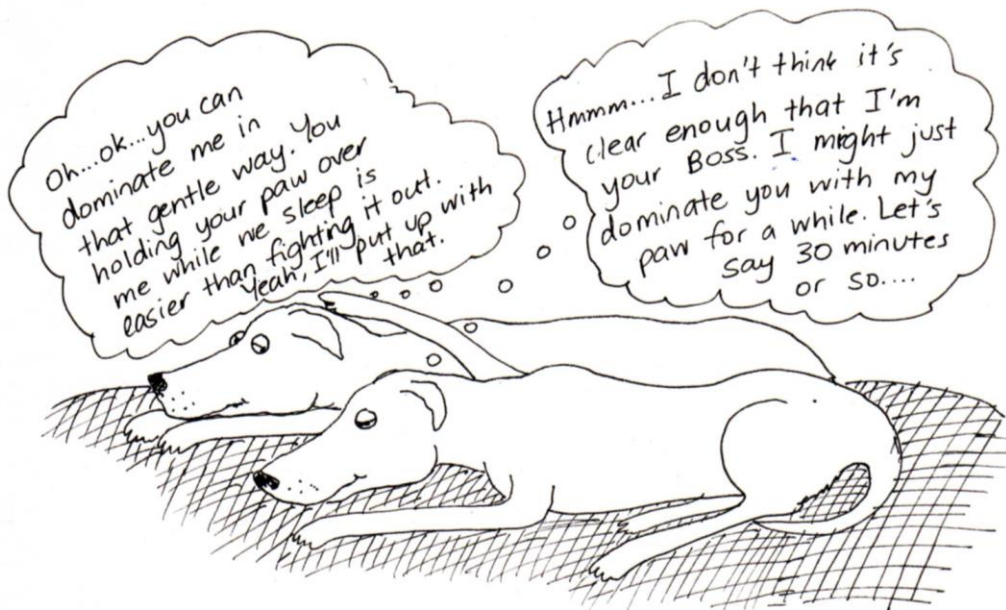
I wish I hadn't seen so many dogs being euthanized because they'd protested at being trapped in a wrestle hold by an over-affectionate human who meant well.

If you completely disagree with this whole idea, please try to keep it in a small corner of your mind. I think over time you'll start translating dog language a little differently than how you are now.

I know it's a very big change to take in. We've been brought up with movies, TV shows, books and TV ads where we keep seeing people hug dogs.

Watch dogs "hug" other dogs. It's a way of testing each other's strengths and energy. Sometimes it erupts into a play fight, or even a more serious fight.

Even when you see two dogs "hugging" in their sleep, it's a way of one dog gently dominating the other in a non-confrontational way.



When you hug a rescue dog, you're forcing it into a wrestle hold against its will. Your dog will find it extremely confronting and stressful. It will keep thinking you're trying to dominate it by holding it in a gentle wrestle hold for a few moments. This will not build trust between the two of you.



Pushy dogs, especially hyperactive teenagers, will eagerly agree to a wrestle with you if you hug them – but prepare to get hurt because they play hard to win! They have the added advantage of sharp teeth and claws. As they see it, your hugs are a clear invitation that you want to play rough wrestling and play-fighting games with them!

Even if you don't agree with this idea about dogs disliking hugs, please never allow a child to hug a rescue dog. Many children are bitten or attacked every year when they hug a dog.

Dogs really don't want a young child or a teenage human holding them in a wrestle hold for minutes at a time. It's an incredibly disrespectful thing in the Dog World to do and an older dog will discipline a younger dog (or human pup) for trying it.

If your dog does allow a child to hug it, this is a very patient, passive, polite dog. Please start watching for the clear dog signals as it politely asks you to remove the child.

This might be heavy panting, grimacing that looks like a smile, slumping on its side showing how submissive it's being. Turning its head away. Gently licking the child to ask to be left alone. Gently hitting the ground with a wagging tail to show how confused it is.



What's a great way to show my rescue dog affection?

Dogs love it when you just hang around together. They love lying near you when you're relaxing. They love following you around and watching what you're up to. You don't have to touch your dog all the time to show it affection!

If you want to touch it – call it calmly over to you and stroke it around the top of its head, neck and shoulders. Don't stare at it. Sleepily close your eyes as you stroke or rub it calmly.

Ask pushy dogs to sit – and stay sitting – while you touch them. Raise your chin high as soon as a dog gets pushy. Sleepily close your eyes to relax them and breathe deeply.

If your dog's leaning on you, then it's winning points for invading your space, so don't let it!

The main things to remember when you pat a dog:

Don't pat or rub a dog under the chin or on the chest as these two places are extremely submissive places for you to touch. They win lots of points for every pat they can get in these areas – and that's precisely why they love being patted like this so much!

Also, don't let your dog "accidentally" move its head around to try and trick you into patting it under the chin or on the chest!

Dogs are *ingenious* at getting you to pat them under the chin and on the chest. Touching these places makes dogs feel very pushy and challenging!



What if my rescue dog needs extra love after being abused or neglected?

I know some people will be concerned that an abused dog needs extra love if it's to heal. However, in the Dog World, all that gooey human love stuff is just seen as weakness.

Trust me when I say the kindest thing you can do for even the most abused, shy, anxiety-ridden dog is to be a calm, capable leader. Frightened dogs want you to be in control because then they can relax and shrug off all the responsibilities of being the leader of your pack.

They want to see you calm and relaxed because that means they're safe, so use lots of yawning and deep, sleepy breathing. Best of all, even the shyest, most frightened dog wants to see you happy and having fun! It may just watch for a while from a distance, but it will help it heal.

Fun is a very infectious thing in the Dog World...but let your abused dog come to slowly trust you. When it's ready it will come and tell you so with a nudge or a sniff. This is when it's ready to start making friends slowly with you. This may take a while. It certainly won't happen within 24 hours!



Gee, I like my new humans. It took me a few months to trust them enough to be my Boss...but they're so calm and happy and they always win more points than me... I think they're wonderful! I also like how they speak my language!

Now you know the basics of how dogs think and communicate...it's time to go pick up your new rescue dog.



Hello... are you my new human?

Here's your three main goals for the first 24 hours with your new rescue dog. You're going to keep its point score as low as you can. You're also going to show how willing you are to communicate in Dog Language. Most of all, you're showing your new dog what a safe, happy and relaxed person you are.

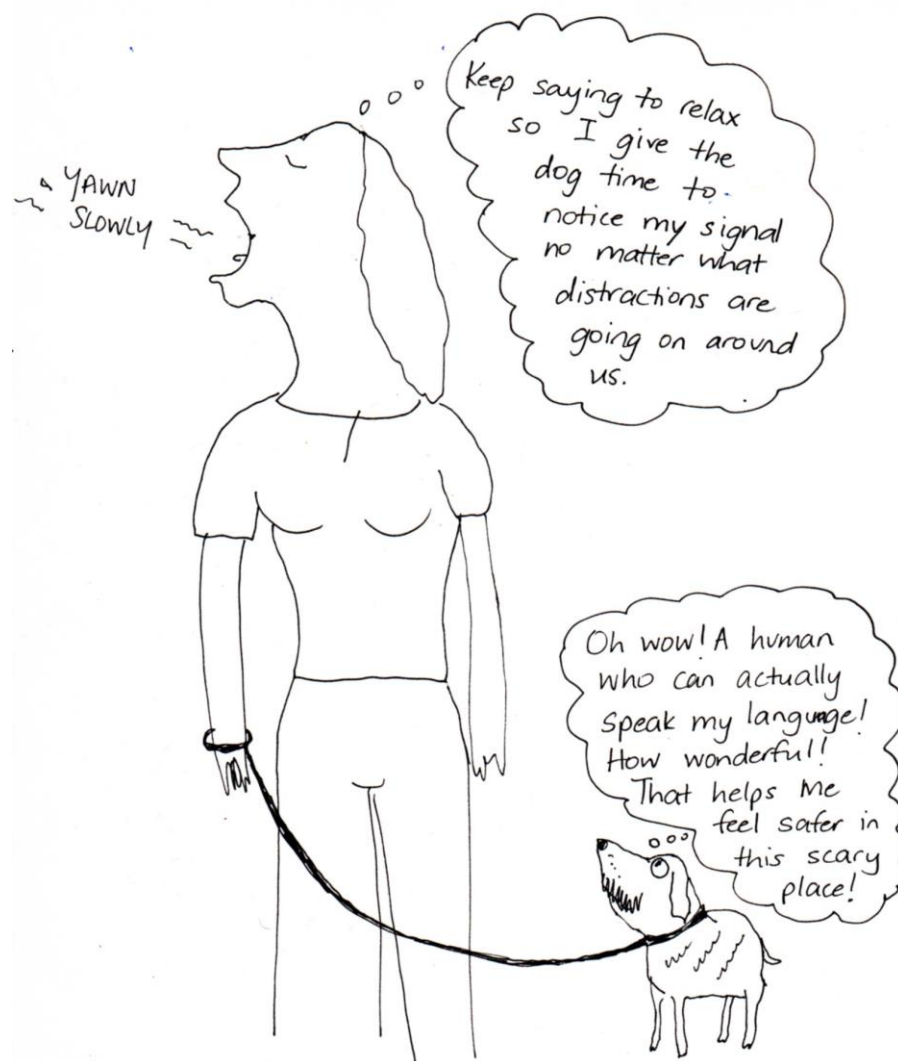
The pick up:

Make picking up your new dog as calm an event as possible. Ignore the dog as much as you can and keep it on its leash. Speak in a low, calm, relaxed voice. Walk in a slow, bored way. Act in a sleepy, bored way too. Dogs will find this reassuring. They find sleepiness very contagious!

Let your new dog see you know basic dog language. Relax it by doing this:

Turn your head away, lift your chin high and yawn sleepily.

This says in dog language, "You can relax now. I'm in charge of this situation and I'll keep you safe."



I suggest only one or two adults go to pick up your new rescue dog. Bringing lots of people or kids along will be far too overwhelming.

Let it go to the toilet on the leash before you put it in the car. Smoothly and confidently use the leash to put it in the car. Don't look at the dog and keep your chin raised high and act relaxed. Maybe use some nice food treats to get it inside if it's reluctant. The sweet smell of BBQ chicken soon distracts even most nervous dogs!

Remember every pat you give a demanding dog is a way you'll keep losing a point, so don't be tempted. Just ignore all its naughty behavior and keep your chin raised nice and high and keep sleepily yawning which tells it, "I'm the Leader around here so relax."

Tie it up in the car while you drive. Personally, I close the door on a fairly short leash so the dog can't race around.

The drive home:

Don't keep staring at your dog. Don't talk in a high excited voice. Don't keep touching it.

The kindest thing to do is to just ignore it. If it looks at you just blink sleepily, yawn and act as though the dog simply isn't there.

Coming to a new home is very strange for any dog so just give it a chance to absorb these strange new people who are crammed inside the car with it! You can hear how stressed your dog is by its heavy, loud panting. Every now and again just yawn sleepily.



Arriving home with your new dog:

Try and avoid the whole family running out towards the dog as it hops out of the car on its leash. Instead, ask everyone to stay inside and do something that will help them ignore the dog. For instance, they could watch a DVD together.

One person should be in charge of the dog to avoid confusion.

This person should keep the dog on a leash and walk it around the garden so it can go to the toilet. Then bring it inside and clip it on the leash so it can sit on its mat in a corner of the room. Now it can't run around winning points from everyone.

Just pretend it doesn't exist for a while! Go and do something relaxing where you sit down. You might like to watch TV or a DVD.



Meeting the family:

Ask everyone to just ignore your new dog until you're ready to go for a walk. Let it relax and take a breather from strangers. Give it a chance to observe everyone. Ask everyone to be calm, very sleepy and relaxed. Sleepiness is so contagious in the Dog World! Make sure it has some water it can't knock over.

If you want your new dog outside, have it on its mat on the verandah and tie it on a leash. Give it a raw bone to chew to help it relax.

Keep reminding everyone not to keep staring at the dog or it will quickly feel very uncomfortable.



Let your dog observe your family quietly watching TV from its leash mat in a corner of the room. Ignore any protests it makes and ask everyone to sleepily yawn. After 15 minutes or so it will relax and lie down – but only if you haven't lost too many points to it.

If it won't settle then it's time to take it for a very tiring walk!

Why can't I just let my new dog be free inside?

The main reason I suggest you clip your new dog on a leash when it's inside is because it's a simple, calm way to keep your dog's point score down very low.

A dog clipped on a leash in a corner of the room can't walk around scoring endless points from your family.

New dogs simply can't help themselves from challenging everyone. If they're free, they walk around trying to win as many points as they can from everyone in your family, even your children. This method of clipping your dog in a corner of the room on a mat stops dogs from ambitiously becoming the Boss in the first 24 hours of being in your home.

If you do release the dog and it starts misbehaving, simply clip it back on its leash again in the corner of the room.



Using the mat and leash is also a very simple way to teach a new dog how to be calm, quiet and polite when it comes inside.

What does our dog think of this mat and leash in the corner of the room?

Although your new dog may protest to begin with, it will soon accept this mat if you keep it tired with plenty of exercise and don't keep looking at it.

Before long your dog will come to see this mat as a safe place. A sort of island of tranquility where it knows everyone in your family will leave it in peace.



This is important. Make sure your kids and other dogs leave your new rescue dog alone when it's on its mat. Everyone needs a place where they can just relax, feel safe and switch off. Rescue dogs *really* need such a place because it's very exhausting being in a strange, new environment.

I find it's handy to have these leashes and mats in different places around the house. You might have one in the living room, as well as one where it will sleep at night. I also have one out on the verandah or covered patio and in any other room you use a lot.

When can we release the dog from its leash and mat?

This will depend on the dog. Some rescue dogs are so placid, they can be unclipped after 24 hours whenever you bring them inside. Others need a week. Some dogs need longer.

When you think you can trust your new dog off-leash, unclip it and ignore it. Pick a relaxed time, say after dinner when everyone's watching TV quietly.

As soon as the dog walks over to sniff everyone – simply pretend it doesn't exist and don't touch, look or talk to it. This will help keep it calm and well behaved.

If you leave it alone, the dog may wander around a bit, then settle down again.

If the dog is feeling pushy and wants to dominate everyone by scoring points, just ask everyone to do this: **fold your arms, raise your chin high and turn your head away.** This politely says in dog language **"Please go away and leave me alone."**



If the dog keeps rudely annoying everyone, it means you haven't won enough points yet to tell your dog what to do. Simply clip it back on its mat leash again. It will soon learn to be calm and polite inside if you keep clipping it back on its leash in the corner of the room every time it keeps misbehaving.

Taking away a dog's freedom quickly slides it into a more submissive mood because it doesn't feel so self-important anymore.

After a few weeks, you'll only have to point to the mat and say, **"Go to your place"** and your dog will go over and lie down on its mat when asked to.

Meeting your other dogs:

I never force dogs to meet each other.

Pulling two dogs together to sniff "and make friends" is asking for trouble. It's like you're dragging them together to fight and your dogs will find this very stressful and confrontational.

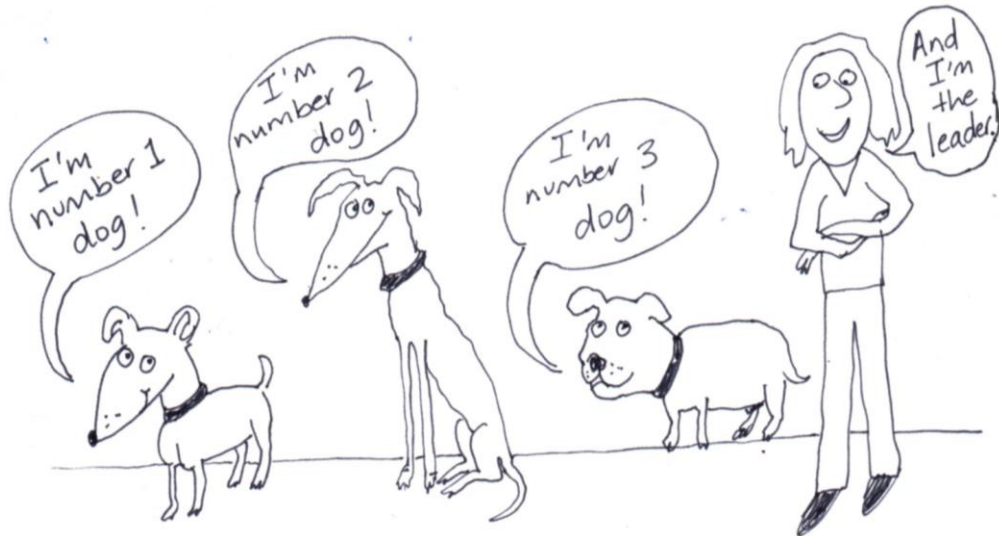
If the dogs are pretty friendly, let them go over and sniff the new dog for a few minutes. Before anyone gets any ideas of challenging each other – tell them to go away and leave the new dog alone.

If there's friction in the air, play it safe by tying up all your dogs in different corners of the room. They can all meet later when they're out on the walk. This is safer because outside on the walk the dogs are meeting on neutral territory.

Taking everyone's freedom away will help calm everyone down. Clipping your new dog in a corner of the room will help your other dogs feel less threatened too. If you ignore your new dog a lot, your other dogs will feel relieved and not so aggressive.

Never treat your dogs as equals.

If you have more than one dog, decide which dog is naturally more dominant and treat that individual as the most important lead dog. Give it everything first and treat it as the most important animal.



From now on, make sure you always feed your dogs in this pecking order. Also pat them in this order and give them treats in this order.

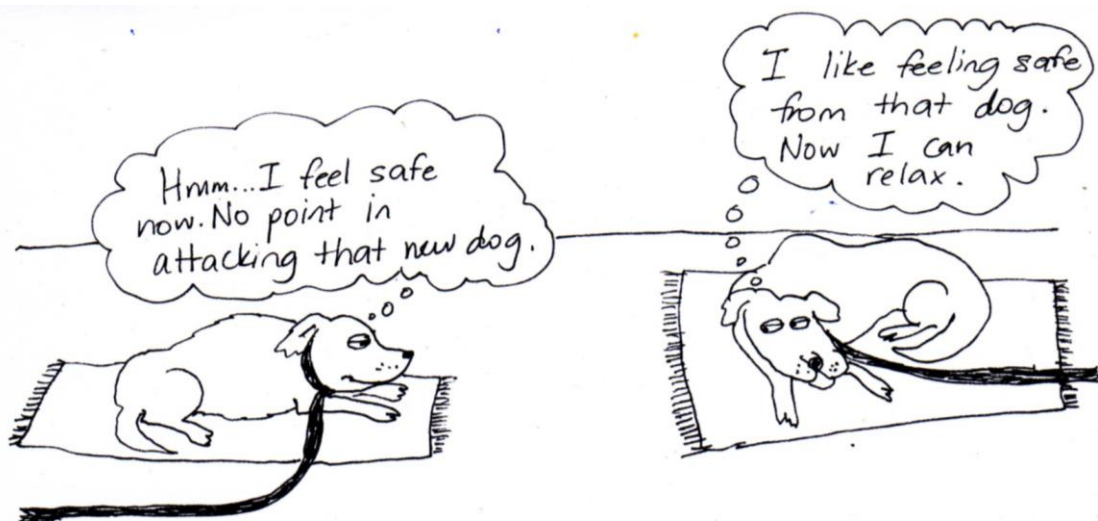
Your dogs fully understand this system and don't find it unfair at all. In fact, they find it very reassuring because now they don't have to sort this pecking order out among themselves with lots of fights! Never treat dogs as equals otherwise you'll have some serious fights to deal with in future. If your dogs have a fight, then you're not making this pecking order clear enough and you're not yet winning enough points. The dogs are fighting for the Boss position!

What can I do if my dogs look ready to argue?

If there seems to be too much aggression in the air, play it safe by tying all dogs to separate mats. Put them in different corners of the room and ignore them all. Make sure your lead dog is closest to you and your new dog is furthest away.

Every now and again lift your chin and yawn sleepily to tell everyone to relax. *Otherwise pretend they don't exist.* In the Dog World, this is how a wise lead dog gets everyone to calm down and get along quietly. Keep half closing your eyes sleepily and do something that keeps your attention off the dogs – like watch TV.

Dogs are very impressed by humans who act in a very sleepy, calm manner in new situations. This is a simple way you can prove you're a great leader!

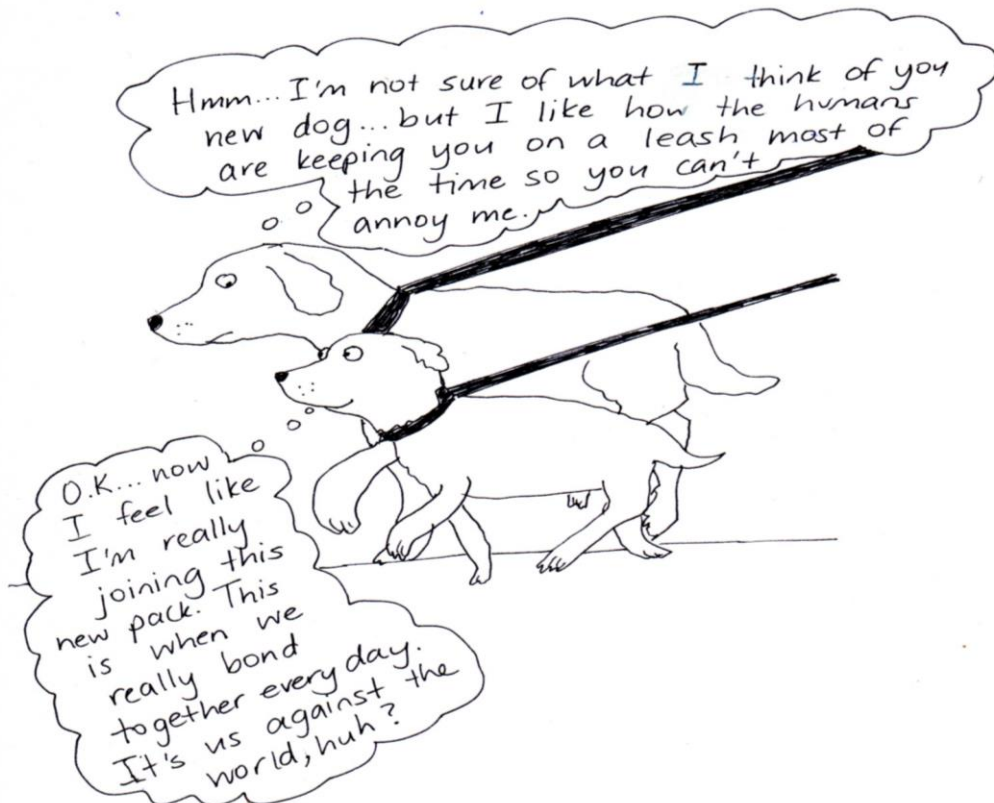


Everyone go for a pack walk together!

The best way to bond with your new dog is to go for a nice long walk together. I know the dog may be pulling on the leash to start with, but you can work on that problem over time. What we want to show our new rescue dog on this first walk is how relaxed we are as a pack.

After a few walks together, your dog will stop thinking of you as "that new, strange human". Instead, it will start thinking, "Hey! It's us against the world, huh? We're such a great pack together, aren't we?"

Dogs naturally bond together as a pack on their daily walks. This is why I introduce my new rescue dogs to my other dogs out on the walk. We put everyone on leashes and just walk together as a group.



In my own family, when we get a new dog, our whole family goes on a walk together with all the dogs on leashes. After a few days, they naturally bond together as a pack. It's such an easy way to introduce dogs!

I keep a new dog on a leash when I take it out in public for at least the first 3 weeks until I get to know the dog better. This way I avoid silly accidents happening.

On the first walk, my kids don't touch the new dog. *This really helps the dog relax faster because it learns the children won't force themselves on it.* It will sniff them but they pretend the new dog doesn't exist. Dogs feel very safe around kids who don't touch them all the time.

If a dog is being very pushy and wants to jump up on my kids, they simply have to stay out of its range on the leash and ignore it. They keep their chins high and sleepily yawn. This soon calms the dog down. Before long the new dog learns to walk along nicely beside the kids in a polite way.

Remember – if a dog keeps nudging you for pats out on the walk – it's not being friendly – it's trying to win a point per pat from you – so simply ignore it!

Why keep your dog on the leash when you take it for walks for the first week?

New dogs can win so many points off their humans if they get walked off the leash for the first week or so. They can score big points every time they ignore you. They can win 50 to 100 points for running off! Every time they stop and sniff something they're deliberately making you wait and winning a few points each time.

They could also run away, run out on the road or get in a dog fight. The safest way to avoid drama is to keep new dogs on a leash for at least a week or so.

After that time, listen to your instincts. If you don't trust this dog off leash – keep it on the leash for longer. You have a responsibility to other dog owners and children to always be fully in control of your dog.

When the pack returns after the walk, it's time to relax:

After the walk, everyone can just go and relax quietly. Your rescue dog gets clipped back on its leash and mat in the corner of the room and ignored so it can relax in peace.

If your dog got enough exercise it should just want to lie down and snooze. After all, it's been a big, eventful day! Spending time together in the living room helps a dog bond with the rest of your family in the evening. This is the important inner den area of your territory where the pack bonds together by resting as a group.

Letting the family touch the dog after the walk:

Let the dog have a bit of a snooze after the walk. Later, if the dog is nice and calm, one person at a time can walk over to it. Stand at the edge of where the dog's leash can reach and call the dog to you.

If your dog is excited, calm it down like this: Turn your head away and yawn slowly. Stroke it on top of the head and shoulders – but only for a few minutes at a time. Remember not to touch it in submissive places like under the chin or on the chest.

Try to imagine strange giant strangers patting you. How long would you like to be stroked by them? Not long I bet. At least until you knew if you could trust them!

Make sure an adult is there to supervise children around the new dog. All dogs can bite – especially if they're nervous or over-excited.

Leave some relaxing time between each new person and don't stay for long. This is just a meet and greet moment.

What if the rescue dog is too frightened to be touched?

If a dog is very nervous and moves away from me, I leave the dog alone because it's politely asking you to respect its personal space. If you force yourself on a reluctant dog it may feel like it has to growl or nip you to be left alone. What we're trying to say to this dog is, "You can trust me. I understand what you're trying to say to me. You want to get to know me first."

Some dogs just need time to trust new owners and I respect that.

Just move away in a bored manner, yawning sleepily and go and relax. Act bored instead of watchful. Bored, relaxed people reassure anxious dogs very quickly because they don't give off the energy of someone who's suddenly going to attack you.

To a dog, a quiet, watchful person seems like they may start creeping up on it when they're asleep and vulnerable! So simply pretend the dog isn't there at all. This will help your dog trust you faster than anything else.

I like leaving anxious dogs clipped alone on their mats so they can watch you and the rest of the family. They'll judge you by the way you interact with others – so now's the time to calmly show what a marvelous person you are by the way you communicate with your family and visitors!

Why can't I tie the dog up next to my armchair?

If you live on your own, you *can* place your new dog's mat next to your armchair and clip it on a secured leash at your side. This is because there's only you and the dog. However, make sure you encourage it to spend at least half its time further away from you or outside, otherwise it will over-bond with you.

If this happens it will panic if you leave it home alone. Make sure you encourage a healthy sense of independence in your new dog.

However, if you live with other people, especially children, you can't have your new dog constantly beside you, especially in the first 24 hours.

Why? Because your dog will quickly start to feel more important than the rest of the family.



If you have another dog it will also feel threatened by this newcomer resting so close to you and will feel the need to fight with it. Avoid this by placing the dog you already have closer to you and your new rescue dog further away.

This is why I suggest you clip your rescue dog in a corner of the room in an unimportant area. It clearly tells the dog, "You may join our pack, but you're the most unimportant member here. Just relax and we'll take care of everything." This is very calming and reassuring to a new dog and helps it settle into a new home much faster.

If you allow your dog to become the center of attention by clipping it in the middle of the room, you're sending it the message, *"You're obviously the most important member of our pack now so we'll let you be in charge. Behave how you like!"*

How much affection and attention should my new dog get compared to the other people in my household?

I know this is definitely going to be a real issue for some people! Dogs should always get *less* attention and affection than everyone else in the family. This is extremely important with rescue dogs – especially in the first 24 hours.

Sure, you can give affection and love to your new dog – but make sure you give at least 2 or 3 times *more* to your partner and children!

If you ignore this advice then your dog is going to start feeling very ambitious. Before you know it, your new dog will be openly challenging everyone to be the Boss! This is when problems start appearing like growling and nipping.

When can I start lavishing attention and affection on my new dog?

Believe me – your time to be best friends with your new dog will come – just not in the first 24 hours! Allow at least 3 weeks settling in time for a new dog and gradually increase the attention you give it.

If your dog starts being "naughty" – you know you're giving too much love for this particular dog to cope with. All you have to do is give it less attention and affection for awhile.

If a dog starts behaving very manically when you give it attention, just calm it down with sleepy yawns, act in an aloof, bored way and ignore the dog more.

Different dogs can cope with different amounts of human attention. Some dogs can calmly take lots of patting, while for some dogs, just a few minutes is enough.

If you've rescued a teenage dog...

Some pushy teenage dogs can barely cope with human affection. It just triggers all their challenging instincts and makes them act in crazy, manic ways. If you have a dog like this – don't panic! It's just a passing phase and there's some simple ways we can deal with it.

Instead of pats and gazes of love – give a teenage dog lots of great, exhausting walks and raw bones to chew. Don't look at it much at all. Keep leaving it in a pen or on a dog run outside after a walk so you get a rest from it's exhausting energy. Toss it a bone to wear itself out on.

Think about dog daycare where it can play with other dogs and not get bored. If you work long hours, think about investing in a professional dog walker. Swimming is also a great way to exhaust teenage dogs!

A bored, under-exercised teenage rescue dog has far too much energy and spends its day throwing challenges at everyone and destroying things! It's simply trying to get rid of all its excess energy.

As it matures, your rescue dog will be able to cope with more of your affection like pats and sweet murmurs. Dogs are teenagers from 6 months to 2½ years old. Don't take all that boisterous behaviour personally – they're just popping out of their skin with powerful teenage hormones.

Remember – the more challenges you win – the higher your point score will be – and the calmer your dog will behave.

Give your new dog plenty of quiet time to absorb everything.

Most people don't let their new rescue dog have enough time alone. **No matter how friendly a rescue dog is, it will desperately need some quiet time.**

This gives it a chance to absorb all the information of being in a new environment with humans it doesn't know.

If you keep crowding a new dog, giving it non-stop attention, it will start acting in a manic way. This is a sure sign of stress.

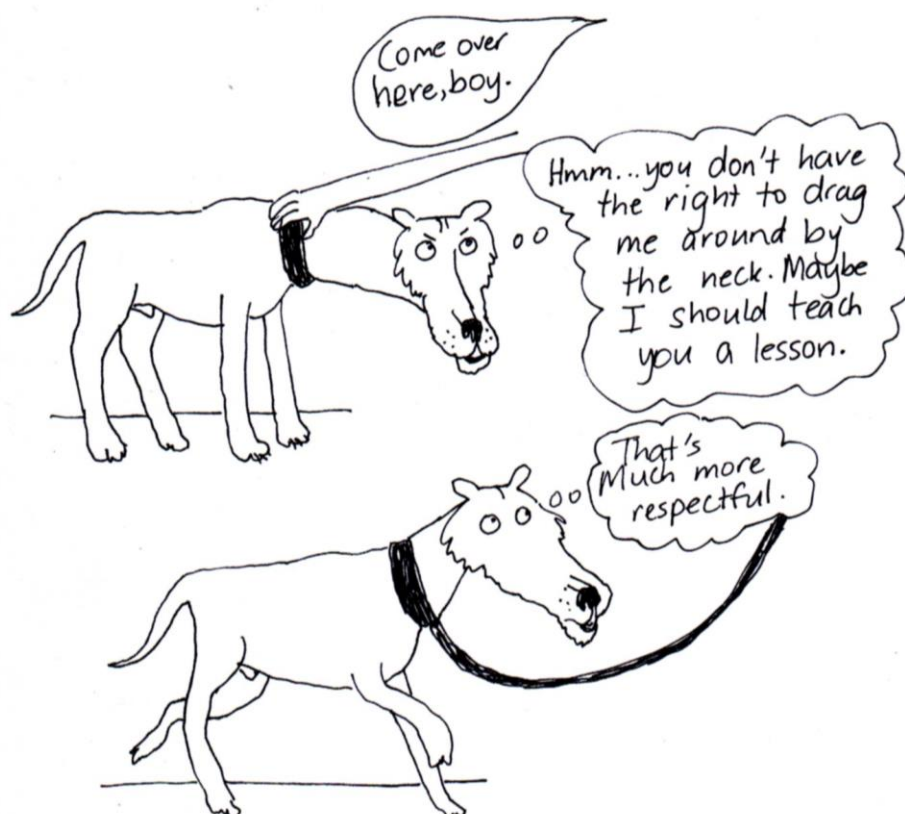
Just give it time to trust you and its new surroundings. You can't become best friends in 24 hours. Dogs take weeks not hours to trust people so give your new dog time and space to observe you and work out what sort of person you are as you walk around the house doing your usual things.

I can't emphasise this enough! **Give your new rescue dog plenty of quiet time when everyone completely ignores it.**

Allowing a dog to sit or lie in a corner of the room clipped on a leash with a mat is the fastest way to relax a new dog. Just leave it alone and let it watch you!



Never drag your new dog by the collar!



If you have to move your dog around – never drag it around by the collar in case it nips you in protest. Grabbing a strange dog by its collar and dragging it anywhere is very confrontational.

Instead, clip it on a leash and move it where you want. Use a food treat if you have to move a reluctant dog. Don't face it and drag it toward you, just raise your chin and walk in the direction you want to go.

Is your new dog going crazy?

Don't worry – we can do something about this. Crazy behavior is a sign of a stressed dog. Get it out for another long brisk walk on the leash and well and truly exhaust it!



Swimming will exhaust a very energetic dog! However, I suggest you keep it on a long leash for the first week at least in case it decides to run off. If it doesn't come back it will win lots of points from you. 50 to 100 points for racing off and having to be followed!

When it returns home, toss it a raw bone to chew to relax.

Ask everyone to act nice and sleepy and calm. Don't excite it by looking at it, talking to it or touching it. As it gradually relaxes over the next few days, you'll be able to gradually increase the affection you give it.

If your new dog won't stop barking!

Barking non-stop is a sign of stress. Your dog is confused and this is how many dogs get rid of stress – by barking it out! It also wins dogs valuable points because it's a way of invading your territory space with its noise.



Exhaust a barking dog with a good long walk. Toss it a raw bone to relax it. Clip it on a leash inside and clip it on a dog cable outside. You can buy these from pet shops. Taking away its freedom will help make it feel less important and demanding.

Be firm about stopping a dog from barking. Make your whole yard and home a bark-free zone.

If a dog won't stop barking when you firmly say, "*Be quiet*", then it's telling you clearly that you're not the Boss yet. You'll need to win more of those 25 secret challenges before it will obey you, so work out which challenges your dog's winning!

What if your other dogs start misbehaving more?

Sometimes a new dog can make your other dogs misbehave more. Don't panic! Simply act very calm and sleepy. Take away everyone's freedom. Clip everyone on a leash and mat. Increase everyone's exercise so they only want to sleep and have no energy for all this challenging nonsense.

What's all this naughty behavior about? Your dogs are tossing non-stop challenges at each other to decide which dog should be the most dominant.

If you make the pecking order of your dogs very clear, then they won't need to challenge each other so much and their misbehavior will dramatically lessen.

Remember, it's your job as the leader of the pack to keep order and peace. Chaos is very stressful for dogs and makes them challenge everyone even more!

Feed time:

Feed time is your big moment every day as the Leader. This is when you make it very clear why you should be the boss – because you provide the food!

At feed time, clip your rescue dog on a leash and put down the food. Then walk away and ignore the dog until it's finished. It's extremely rude behavior in the Dog World to watch a dog as it eats. Prove you can be trusted by leaving it to eat in peace.

If you have more than one dog, clip them all on leashes and feed in order of dominance. This is when you make it very clear who is Number 1 dog, Number 2 dog, Number 3 dog and so on. By being very clear, calm and organized at feeding time – all your dogs will be very impressed by your leadership qualities.

What if I want my dog to go outside for awhile?

Of course, your new dog will have to spend plenty of time outside too. Make sure you have an escape-proof pen or back yard. Dogs who freely wander the neighbourhood win huge amounts of points!

If your dog is destroying your yard or fly-screen doors and you haven't got a pen, you can clip it on a dog cable. This is plastic coated wire available for dogs from pet shops. A cable that's 2 1/2 meters long is OK as long as your dog gets plenty of exercise on two good walks a day and has somewhere it can run free every day. Make sure it has shelter, shade and lots of water.

If you give your dog a raw bone when it first goes on this outdoor long cable, it will simply sit down and chew the bone in a contented way.

Evening settling down time:

As the day winds down, act calmer and sleepier. This is your job as the leader – to lead by example. Bring your new dog inside and clip on its mat in a corner of the room. If it's to stay outside, bring it up on to the verandah and clip it on its bed or mat.

I love dogs inside watching TV with the family of an evening as it's a great natural bonding time. Just make sure that to begin with, it doesn't get too much attention. It should be lying around, dozing – not racing around trying to dominate everyone.

Bedtime:

If you've won more points than your dog, then you're going to be fine as you settle your dog down for the night. Be calm and act super sleepy. Now is definitely not the time to go patting your dog and making a fuss of it! This just hands your dog points and gets it over-excited!

The more you ignore your dog now and keep yawning in a sleepy way, the easier your job will be to get it to sleep.

Where should your dog sleep? Hopefully indoors on a mat, tied on its leash so it can't wander. If not inside, what about the garage or laundry? If outside, what about on a covered verandah? Even dogs sleeping outside I like to tie up. This will stop your dog running around barking. Remember, if your new dog sleeps inside, it'll feel safer. Putting a dog outside, especially at the front of your property is asking it to go on guard duty and it will bark at any new, strange noises.

Please don't expect a new dog to feel safe and happy chained up at the bottom of your back yard, living in a dog kennel. Dogs love feeling like part of your family, living up around the house.

I'm also uneasy about allowing a new dog to sleep free outside for the first few weeks. Dogs can escape out of yards and go roaming. They can learn to run around barking. They may go and annoy your other dog.

I know some people may think this is a little confining, but I've found dogs settle in faster if they know exactly what you want. That rug they're tied up to becomes their safe place that they learn to really love. In other words, their security blanket. It becomes a safe island where they understand all the rules. They'll soon feel very safe and calm there.

Any night protests:

Hmm...if your dog is barking in protest at night, it's probably because it's won a high score off your family during the day and now thinks it's the Boss. It's probably had too much attention and affection all day and is still over-excited.

The solution: Tell it, "No barking!" Yawn and act sleepy. Lift your chin like a leader and turn your head away. Don't pat or touch the dog. Just ignore it and walk away.

If this doesn't work, and the dog is still barking, give it a raw bone to chew. Chewing bones is a natural sedative in the Dog World. If this doesn't work, go out with a rolled up towel and whack the ground near it as you firmly say, "No barking!" If the dog won't obey you, then it has more points than you and believes it's your Boss. Be as firm as you feel comfortable with. Don't keep doing this if the dog shows any aggression.

Tomorrow make sure you give your dog much more exercise and also make sure you win more points!

I've learned over the years to just get up and stop any sort of barking, whuffling or soft growling first time, every time. Basically have zero tolerance to any dog noise or it will steadily grow louder and louder. Every bark your new dog gives is scoring a point – so stop that point score from growing!

One of the big reasons rescue dogs are returned is because of barking, so sort out this problem in the first week, hopefully on the first night. It will never fade away, so stop it now! Once you fix it, you'll rarely have to deal with it at this level again because your dog knows you can stop it.

If you sound weak, frustrated, miserable, exhausted and annoyed – your dog will think, "Yippee! Keep barking so my human gives up and let's me bark whenever I want to score some easy points."

The secret to your success is to feel calm and firm, with huge amounts of perseverance. This is a simple battle of wills – who deserves to be the Boss here – you or your dog. Some dogs have worked out that humans are easy to score points off when they're half-dead with exhaustion!

That's why I suggested you really tire your dog out with exercise earlier!

Worthwhile tip: Remember – an exhausted dog is a well-behaved dog. So during the day make damned sure that your dog gets plenty of exercise so all it wants to do at night is one thing – and that's sleep!

Expect an early morning wake-up call:

A new dog will be hyped up by waking up in a new environment. Be prepared and give it a raw bone and crawl back to bed. If your dog is tied up, it can't race around your house or yard being naughty. For energetic pups and teenagers I give frozen raw bones so it takes a long time to chew. Stop any barking demands by getting up and being firm.

As your dog gets familiar with your routine, this annoying behavior should fade away. If your dog is a natural early riser, put it in the pen outside with a raw bone to keep it occupied.

It's your first breakfast together...but remember to ignore your new dog a bit:

I know it'll be tempting, but don't give your dog too much attention today.

Try and ignore the dog quite a bit – yes, I understand how hard that's going to be for some people! Too much attention, however, is going to over-excite your dog and get it in a real challenging mood today. But what's going to happen when you need to go out? Or go to work? Your dog is going to panic when all that addictive attention suddenly disappears.

Don't worry – over the next few weeks, you can gradually give your dog more attention

Start your new routine with a morning walk together:

Today is about showing your new dog what your routine is going to be like every day. Be calm and firm and ignore your dog a lot. Go for a morning walk together. Return home and toss your dog a raw bone to relax with.

If you have to go to work or leave the house:

Don't fuss with the dog or get anxious as you say goodbye. Simply raise your chin very high and leave your dog in your back yard or a secure dog pen with a raw bone to chew.

If a dog is anxiously barking and howling, you can leave it your laundry with a radio on and a raw bone to chew. The radio will help calm its nerves. A very tired dog should very quickly fall asleep.

If you've let your dog win too many points, it will feel scared now you're leaving it at home alone. This is because it has the burden of being the Leader on its own. This really freaks some dogs out so make sure you keep your point score much higher than your dog.

Also, if you've spent too much time interacting with your dog you'll now have to pay the price because it's over-bonded with you. It's time to ignore it much more and let it spend time away from you even when you're at home. Teach it a greater sense of independence.

I can't say this enough – a tired dog is a well-behaved dog. *Really* increase the exercise of a dog that panics when left alone. Exhaust it then give it a raw bone to chew and turn a radio on!



If possible, have 2 good walks a day with your new dog:

A new dog will relax a lot more and behave if it realizes that you can be relied on to take it for two good walks every single day. Now it can relax quietly between walks.

Expect lots of protest barking if you miss walks. Dogs need those two essential walks per day! If you work long hours invest in a professional dog walker.

Oh no! I made so many mistakes when I brought my rescue dog home! What can I do now?

The first thing to do is stop panicking! Dogs can smell all our emotions and if your dog smells you panicking or being anxious, it will lose even more confidence in you.

The great thing about dogs is how adaptable they are. If you suddenly start winning points in a calm, aloof way and acting like a true leader, your dog will just accept it.

Just pretend that you've only just brought your dog home and start following these sheets through, step by step. Your dog may test you a little longer to see if you can be trusted to be in charge – but dogs *have* to obey the point score game. It's a survival mechanism embedded in their instincts and they can't change this way of thinking. If you have a higher point score than your dog then you get to be the Boss. It really is that simple.

Personally, I prefer the word "Leader" instead of Boss. It's a word that reminds you of all the great leadership qualities you need to prove you're worth following.

What makes a great human leader?

Here's some qualities I believe will make you into a great leader.

Be a good communicator who listens to your dog. Respect your dog's polite requests. Respect your dog's personal space when it's being well-mannered. Make an organized routine about exercise and don't be lazy. Keep an eye on situations and assist your dog when it asks for help. Dogs are also very impressed by humans or dogs who are calm. They are totally fascinated by confident people who genuinely smell confident. So work out how to increase your self-confidence.

Most of all be kind, honest, loyal and I think inspiring. If you're a wonderful human being your dog will be proud to walk at your side!

Warning! Be prepared for your dog to start really testing your leadership after a week or so.

I should mention here that your dog will start to really test your leadership after it's had time to settle down and observe you and your family. After closely watching everyone, it will think it knows how to win points from everyone and will toss challenges at each member of your family as a test.

This is why some rescue dogs seem to get naughtier after a week or so. The solution is just ask everyone to calmly keep winning as many points as they can. You'll have to help you kids and visitors – but clipping your dog on a its leash and mat should solve most issues. If you do lose a challenge, just shrug and work out how you can win it next time.

After awhile your new dog will stop testing you all the time with so many challenges. It will give in and ask to be your true friend in a gentle manner.

If you have an extremely pushy dog who's driving you to distraction, don't suffer in silence – just contact your rescue group again and ask for help!

How to have a problem-free dog in the future:

Here are some great ideas.

Get in the habit of patiently and calmly winning more points than your dog. Have a good routine for your dog that stays the same. Learn some basic dog language. Exercise your dog enough. Nip any new problems in the bud before they become habits. Teach your dog some basics manners inside and out in public on the leash.

I guess that's pretty much it. All of these things will make you a great leader who any dog would love to follow. In time, your rescue dog will learn to trust and admire you. Believe me – dogs love great human leaders!



If a behavior problem starts to develop:

Do something about it straight away! Read my book, *“What’s Your Dog Telling You?”* It’s full of great ideas for solving all sorts of behavior problems. I believe in communication, not domination. I find if you can communicate together, your dog will ask you politely for help if an issue comes up. That’s when you know you’ve won your new dog’s trust!

The incredibly magic moment when your new rescue dog asks to be your true friend...

My favourite moment with a new rescue dog is when it decides that it wants to be your true friend. This happens about 3 weeks after it comes to stay in your home – but only if you’ve successfully earned it’s trust. Maybe it’ll take longer with a shy, anxious dog. You can’t force this moment – your dog has to decide when it trusts you.

This moment definitely feels special.

It’s a quiet moment when the dog comes over to you very calmly and waits for you to touch it in a gentle way. There is a very quiet, still energy surrounding the whole experience.

This is your new rescue dog saying, *“I trust you now. I trust you to be my leader and my friend and my human. I place my life in your hands.”*

I call this moment when you start to find Dog Zen with your new dog. It’s pure magic and an unforgettable moment! It’s probably the reason I love helping rescue dogs so much. They’re incredibly appreciative when they meet someone who finally understands them. As well as loyal. Honest. Honourable. Generous with their spirit and energy. Sympathetic. Friendly and fun.

What can I say? I really love rescue dogs!



If you found these sheets helpful, here’s two great books to help you learn more about dogs...

“What’s Your Dog Telling You?” is an absolute must for all dog owners. For rescue dog owners it’s essential! It was a bestseller in its first year. It covers so much – dog language signals, behavior problem solutions and how dogs think in different situations.

“What’s Your Dog Teaching You?” is a fascinating book full of real life stories. Meet people who’s lives were transformed by their dogs. It has inspiring ideas of how dogs can help you change your life for the better and help you achieve your dreams. Dogs certainly transformed my life in so many amazing, wonderful ways! From a freakish street-kid to a man who loves helping people communicate with their dogs – I was definitely inspired by dogs to be a better, happier person.

Both these books are available from **HarperCollins Australia** or **ABC Shop** on-line or from any book store in Australia. If you can’t see it on the shelf, the staff will gladly order it in for you. It comes in paperback or e-book.

If you live outside Australia, you can buy on-line from HarperCollins Australia and they’ll send your book anywhere in the world.

Many people tell me they buy my books as great gifts for other dog lovers. You may also like to share these free sheets with other friends who have dogs. I believe in sharing free information around as much as possible!

I love hearing from people about their dogs on Facebook at www.facebook.com/martinmckennadog

Martin McKenna learned about dog behavior in a very unusual way. As a boy growing up in Limerick, Ireland, he escaped from family violence by running away from home and living in a barn with a pack of stray dogs for three years. By observing these street dogs at such close quarters, he learned the unique psychology and language shared by dogs all over the world. Now he’s passionate about helping dogs and humans communicate more successfully with each other.