

# Caring for Your New Dog

A guide for adopters





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## Congratulations!

You are a hero! Not only have you helped save the life of your new furry companion but there is now one more space at the SPCA for another deserving dog.

Bringing home a new dog is very exciting. We ask that you read through this guide and keep it handy as a reference. You will find helpful information on everything from house training to chew toys. We hope you find your new dog's companionship as rewarding as we did while he or she stayed with us.

On behalf of all the staff, volunteers and, of course, the animals, thank you for making adoption your option!

### To get started, here is a list of basic supplies you will need:

- Dog food (for recommendations, see **Feeding and Nutrition** section)
- Food and water dishes
- Collar and ID tags
- Leash
- Chew toys such as a “Kong” or “Nylabone”
- Dog treats for training and reward (avoid treats containing BHA)
- Dog bed with washable cover or blanket
- Crate or kennel
- Dog brush
- Coat (depending on breed and time of year)

## Coming Home & Getting Acquainted

Bringing home a new dog is a very exciting time for everyone, including the dog. First impressions are important for dogs—early experiences in a dog's new home can have a lasting impact. You can do a lot to help your dog feel secure in their new home.

When you first arrive home, leave your dog on-leash and explore your home together. It is very important that the dog remains on-leash especially if there are children or other pets already in the home. Show your dog each room in your home, where the food and water bowls are, and where the bed or crate/kennel is located. Let your dog take their time to sniff around and check things out.

After the tour of the inside of the house, it is time to go outside. Take your dog around the property of your home to the spots they will be using for bathroom breaks. Until your dog's bathroom habits have been established, it is recommended that you take your dog outside every hour when you first bring him home, as well as after any play sessions, meal time, nap time or drinking a fair amount of water. Puppies have much less bladder control, which you can accommodate by taking your puppy out every 30 minutes or after the above-mentioned activities. Check out the **House Training** section of this guide for more advice about house training.





The Nova Scotia SPCA supports the use of *positive* reinforcement techniques for training pets, which means rewarding behaviours you want to encourage your dog to repeat in the future. When you first bring your dog home, follow these initial house training and safety tips:



- **Do** fit your dog's collar snug enough so that they cannot back out and slip away. "Martingale" style collars can be fit so they are slightly snugger than a flat buckle collar when pressure is applied, but not tight enough to choke the dog. These collars should not be used for correction-based training.
- **Do** use the buddy system! Make sure your dog is always supervised by a mature member of the family. Dogs are social animals and want to be with their family members. A dog wandering away on it's own is a signal to let your dog out or that the dog is searching for it's own "amusement," which can differ from what the human family members find amusing.
- **Do** use a leash or create a barrier to ensure your dog can't slip away when answering your door to visitors or delivery people. Attach a leash to your dog and the other end to your belt or belt loop. Baby gates to help block doors and entryways can be useful for house training and receiving guests or visitors at the door.
- **Do** take your dog outside after every event, such as eating, drinking, playing or waking up from a nap, after the arrival of guests or visitors, or if you see your dog "searching" for a spot.
- **Do** acknowledge and reward your dog anytime they relieve themselves in an appropriate area
- **Do** acknowledge and reward your dog for any appropriate behaviour you wish to encourage, such as greeting guests politely or walking mannerly on a leash.
- **Don't** rub your dog's nose in a "mistake" or make them nervous about relieving themselves in your presence.
- **Don't** punish your dog for a mistake or if you find something they have chewed or otherwise damaged. No matter how guilty your dog may look, he or she is responding to your voice and body language, which is clearly telling the dog you are not happy. If your dog is having accidents in the house, the dog's supervision needs to be increased until you can clearly read your dog's signals for needing to relieve himself.

If your dog starts to relieve himself in an inappropriate spot, it can be hard to stop, so it is often less messy to let your pet finish, take them out and then tackle clean-up.

## Establishing a Routine

Consistency is the key to helping your dog feel settled and secure. Establishing a routine as soon as possible will help the dog learn what is expected of them and what they can expect in return. It will typically take 3-12 weeks to develop this routine. Your dog will need exercise, food, training, potentially grooming and, of course, love and attention everyday. Regular feeding times will be an asset in house training, and for people working the typical eight hours away from home, establishing routine is a must. Every dog needs some form of exercise,





whether it is a walk around the block, a hike in the woods or a game of fetch at a local park. The amount of exercise required will depend on your dog's age and physical condition.

Dogs do not need a lot of space, but they do need a lot of time. No matter how high a dog's energy level is, they do not need to live on a farm to be happy. Dogs need to spend as much time as possible with you doing different activities that will ensure their needs are met. Depending on your schedule and the temperament of your dog, the activities you could become involved in are endless. A particularly high energy dog may require a moderate walk before you leave for the day, a much longer walk when you return home and perhaps a game of fetch after dinner to ensure the two of you can spend some time relaxing together in the evening. A dog with a moderate amount of energy may be fine with a few minutes of play in the morning and a good walk in the evening. A dog with low energy may be happy with one or two short walks around the neighbourhood.



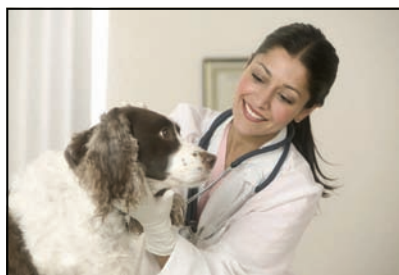
Dogs will thrive with mental stimulation and using this to your advantage is easy. Spend time training your dog, teaching him new tricks, or playing hide-and-seek with their favourite treats or toys. You can also spend time grooming your dog, teaching them to be comfortable when having their nails clipped or their teeth brushed. During the winter, many people find themselves cutting their normal routines down due to weather, short days and irregular access to local parks. If you have completed obedience classes, try enrolling your dog in a tricks, games class or dog sport class—it will be a good way for both of you to get out of the house, keep active and meet new friends.

In most cases, your dog has been observed for about 2-3 weeks at the SPCA prior to your adoption. During this time your dog may have presented behaviours that were documented by SPCA staff and volunteers. You would be advised about these behaviours when you adopt the dog. Once in a home environment with a regular schedule and perhaps the aid of dog obedience classes, these behaviours should improve and in some cases the behaviours will never present themselves in a home environment. At other times, behaviours never observed at the SPCA start to present once the dog is in your home. Sometimes, during the first couple of weeks as you and your new dog get to know each other, you may be scratching your head trying to figure out how such a “perfect” dog ended up in a shelter. Many people involved with animal shelters and rescues refer to this as the “Honeymoon Stage.” Often, dogs do not start to show their own personality quirks or issues until they become comfortable and bonded with their new family. This honeymoon phase typically lasts about 2-4 weeks. When undesirable or fear/stress driven behaviours present themselves, don't be surprised, but take heart that these behaviours can be changed with some work on your part. Refer to **The Honeymoon Ends: Common Behaviour Issues** section of this guide for more information.

## Veterinary Care

Making sure your new companion is in good physical condition should be one of your utmost concerns. It is important that you attend the initial visit and discuss any medical or health concerns you may have with your veterinarian. If you haven't yet decided who will be your regular veterinarian, call veterinarians in your area, or ask for recommendations from your local SPCA.





Dogs adopted from most SPCAs will have received a de-worming and a basic booster that covers common viruses applicable to dogs. Your dog will most likely have been spayed or neutered. Depending on the season, your dog may have also received a flea prevention treatment. All of this information should be documented in your dog's health record, which you should take with you to all of your veterinary appointments.

Veterinary care varies greatly from traditional views and methods, to holistic vets with alternative treatments. Some vets may specialize in certain breeds or skills. Veterinary services, such as hours of operation and cost, may also play a factor in determining which clinic you will attend. It is important to become familiar with the local veterinary emergency clinic. Many emergency incidents involving dogs will occur at the most inopportune times, like late in the evening or on a Sunday when your regular veterinary clinic is closed.

## Spaying and Neutering

Spaying and neutering are surgical procedures performed by qualified veterinarians that prevent pets from reproducing. Female animals are spayed, which consists of removing the uterus and ovaries. Male pets are neutered, which consists of removing the testicles (also known as castration.). The greatest preventable cruelty inflicted upon cats, dogs and rabbits is pet overpopulation, which leads to thousands of unnecessary deaths each year through euthanasia. We can put an end to this by having our pets spayed and neutered by the time of sexual maturity (4-6 months) or earlier as recommended by your veterinarian. Below are answers to common questions that pet owners have about spaying and neutering.

### Does it hurt my dog?

Your dog will receive general anaesthetic and will not feel anything during the surgery. After the surgery, some pets show signs of mild discomfort for the first day or two. Many veterinarians will recommend that you keep your pet quiet for the first few days or up to one week, depending on your pet's sex, age or other factors.

### Will my female be nicer, more mellow, or healthier if she has a litter of puppies first?

There is no scientific proof that letting a female animal give birth to a litter will do any of the above. Allowing your female to reproduce is a risky and often complicated undertaking. Breeding and whelping is **very** time and financially intensive when done correctly. It requires around the clock care, and complications could lead to the death of the puppies or even the beloved mother, costing you thousands in medical care and leaving you emotionally drained.

### Will it change my dog's personality?

Generally, no. For female animals there is typically no change aside from no longer experiencing heat cycles. For male animals there is generally a reduction in aggressive behaviours. Some pets will be more relaxed without the drive to reproduce.





### **Will it affect my dog's health if I don't have them spayed or neutered?**

Yes. Unaltered female dogs run an increased risk of life threatening medical problems, including uterine infections and mammary tumours. Unaltered male dogs run an increased risk of life threatening testicular and rectal tumours. An intact male dog can travel far and wide in search of a female in heat. A wandering dog is not only illegal but will endanger their own lives and create problems for you and your neighbours.

## **Fleas and Parasites**

Frequent vacuuming of your house, laundering of your dog's bedding, and regular brushing of your dog with flea combs are all great ways to help reduce the potential of fleas in your home. There are many medical options available to help reduce and prevent the spread of parasites. The Nova Scotia SPCA recommends you consult a veterinarian about your flea and parasite concerns, maintenance and prevention plans, and only use or apply those prevention treatments provided by your veterinarian.

## **Feeding and Nutrition**

Proper nutrition is very important part of pet care—it will help keep your dog healthy and is important in managing disease. By understanding your dog's nutrition needs, you can prevent disease and extend your dog's life so you can enjoy their unconditional love longer. Your dog's diet should include 6 basic groups:



### **1. Water**

Just as humans are told to drink 8 glasses of water, your dog needs a generous supply of water at all times. A good way to do this is to buy a pet fountain where the water circulates and provides filtered, fresh, non-stagnant water.

### **2. Protein**

Protein builds, maintains and replaces muscle in animals' bodies. Younger pets are usually very active and need protein to help build heart muscles and maintain their immune system.

### **3. Carbohydrates**

Carbs help break down sugars, which in turn is a source of energy for the body.

### **4. Fat**

Fat an important part of a healthy diet for pets. Fat is another energy source, especially for younger pets. Vitamins in food need fat to be absorbed into the body. Fat also makes food tastier.

### **5. Minerals**

Minerals have an important function in food as they help the body grow, develop and stay healthy. The body uses minerals to perform different functions—from building bones, to transmitting nerve impulses. Minerals commonly found in pet food include calcium, phosphorous, potassium, sodium, magnesium, iron, zinc, copper, manganese, iodine and selenium.





## 6. Vitamins

Vitamins and minerals will help your dog's body work and grow. There are two groups of vitamins: fat-soluble (A, D, E & K) and water-soluble (thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, pantothenic acid, folic acid, vitamin B, choline, and vitamin B12).

## Reading Food Labels

In Canada, the Consumers Packaging and Labelling Acts and Regulations only require product name, net quality of food and name of manufacturer or dealer to be printed on the package. Most manufacturers include more details such as guaranteed analysis, a list of ingredients, and a nutritional statement:

### Guaranteed Analysis

Guaranteed Analysis shows the minimum and maximum levels of crude protein, fat, ash (minerals), fibre and moisture (water) in the food. Remember, this does not guarantee the availability or digestibility of the ingredients.

### Ingredient List

Ingredients can be listed in any order, thus you will not be able to determine how much of an ingredient is in the food. This also gives no indication of quantity or quality of the ingredients.

### Nutritional Statement

This displays the purpose of the food, for example, dog food or puppy food. If you see a CVMA logo (Canadian Veterinary Medical Association), then the food is being inspected by CVMA. In Canada, there are no government regulations pertaining to the quality and consistency of pet food.

## Recommended Food

The Nova Scotia SPCA recommends feeding your dog a high quality, premium grade dry dog food. A high quality food will cost you a little more initially, but the benefits are priceless. When the amount of consumption per day is compared, lower quality food ends up costing the same as a high quality food. For example, feeding a dog weighing about 60 lbs, with moderate to high energy levels:



### Food A (High Quality) ~ cost \$60.00 / 40 lb bag

Your dog will eat 2–3 cups a day, depending on their level of exercise and the treats they have eaten.

### Food B (Lower Quality) ~ costs \$25.00 / 40lb bag.

Your dog will eat 5-8 cups a day.

A higher quality food means your dog can be fed less food per meal and while receiving all the nutrition they need. Also, if your dog eats less per day, they will produce less waste. A high quality food will help reduce shedding, dry skin and coat problems, and the chance of allergic reactions. You can find a high quality food at your veterinarian's office or at a local pet supply store. Your veterinarian and/or pet supply store staff should be knowledgeable about the different kinds of food available and be able to recommend what is best for your pet. Keep in mind the most expensive brand of dog food isn't necessarily the best. Learn how to read and interpret dog food labels so you know what to look for. There are also many websites devoted to rating dog foods.





Everybody knows most dogs will do anything to get a little bit of whatever humans are eating. Adding things like fresh veggies, leftover meats, unsweetened apple sauce or some plain yogurt or olive oil to your dog's food in moderation will provide them with variety and may actually improve their health. Consult your veterinarian if you have any questions about what foods are safe for dogs and what foods should be avoided.

## Grooming

The type of coat your new dog will determine the type of grooming they will need. Start slowly in short, quick, positive sessions, providing lots of praise and treats. Many SPCA dogs have never met a brush in their lives and can become nervous about this new experience. With patience and consistency, grooming can be a very relaxing thing to do with your dog and will help make them feel great.

Most dogs only need to be bathed a couple times a year, at most. If your dog doesn't smell, and has a clean and healthy looking coat, leave it be. Frequent bathing can strip away natural oils, causing dry and itchy patches.

Short hair breeds such as American Staffordshire Terriers and Beagles require simple grooming. A quick brush once or twice a week will keep these dogs looking great. In the winter, these breeds may require a thicker coat to help protect their skin against the cold. In the summer, short and fine haired dogs with light colors (e.g. white or tan) may suffer from sunburns. Consult your veterinarian about non-toxic sun blocks you can use.

Medium to longer haired/double coat breeds such as Shepherds, Collies and Huskies require more frequent brushing to ensure they stay free of mats and tangles. Also, trimming the fur around their paws and possibly the anal area may be required. Don't hesitate to take your dog to an experienced groomer. Most groomers can trim excess hair in a matter of minutes.

Very long, curly or wire haired breeds such as Shih Tzus, Poodles, and Terriers may be the most time intensive to groom. Most people choose to visit a groomer a few times a year to keep their dogs looking their best. Taking your dog to be professionally groomed is well worth the money. Many people who attempt to groom dogs at home end up with a bigger mess on their hands than they started with.



## Obedience Training

After veterinarian care, obedience should be your next priority. Obedience training has come a long way in the last 10 years. First and foremost, training should **never** hurt or frighten your dog. A dog that is trained using harsh methods will develop an array of behaviour problems and insecurities while learning that you cannot always be trusted. This will be detrimental in the development of your relationship. Professional obedience instructors who teach using positive reinforcement methods have the skills to help you and your new companion learn how to interact while developing a trusting relationship that will make your dog a favourite of family members, friends and neighbours.





Dogs are as individual as humans are. Your obedience instructor should work with your family to develop a curriculum that will work best for you and your dog. Most owners find the use of food and praise to be the easiest way to start. However, as you and your dog get to know one another, your dog may be more motivated to work for a variety of rewards such as playing or being patted.

Obedience classes can vary greatly from larger class sizes with multiple instructors, to smaller more intimate groups or personal one-on-one instruction in a class-type setting or in your own home. Many factors will determine which obedience classes are right for you including location, time, cost, and the personality of you and your dog.

#### **Larger class sizes with multiple instructors**

These classes are made up of larger groups of dogs and handlers and should have multiple instructors. A good ratio is one instructor for every three to five dog/handler teams. These classes are great for a person who hopes to allow their dog off-leash at dog parks or similar situations and gain a reliable recall (“come”) command. The larger class sizes simulate life-like scenarios where your dog will learn to avoid distractions and focus on you. Also, having multiple instructors to work with provides a wider variety of skills and knowledge at your fingertips.



#### **Smaller class sizes with one or two instructors**

These classes still give you the benefits of training your dog around other dogs (one of the biggest distractions for most), but on a smaller scale. This can make it easier for handlers and dogs that are easily distracted, or for anxious dogs.

#### **One-on-one training**

Whether it is in a classroom or in your own home, receiving individual instruction gives you and your dog undivided attention and can really catapult your training. This type of training is great for owners who may be feeling a little unsure or need help correcting specific behaviours.

## **Introducing your New Dog to Other Pets**

Dogs are very social creatures, and often enjoy the company of other animals. A dog with a playmate can get more exercise, mental stimulation and companionship. Sometimes it can take a while for a dog to realize the advantages of having a companion.

### **Dogs and Dogs**

Most SPCAs will want your resident dog and your prospective dog to meet prior to adoption to observe how they interact. Many dogs view the arrival of another dog as an invasion of their territory. To get everybody off to a good start, let the dogs meet in neutral territory, like a nearby park or field. Have short fun sessions with your dogs and be generous with your praise and rewards.





It is a good idea to initially monitor all interactions between your dogs. If you cannot be there to supervise, separate the dogs by putting either one or both in their crate/kennel or in different rooms.

When you introduce your newly adopted pet to the family, your resident dog may revert to some long forgotten behaviours like chewing or marking their territory. Punishment for these behaviours will only make your dog more upset, creating a bad cycle. Be careful to always make sure the resident dog knows they are still loved. Tip the scales in favour of the resident dog, making sure they are the first to receive extra hugs and kisses or an extra treat. Your resident dog has earned this and needs to feel secure about their relationship with you.

## Dogs and Cats



Your new dog should absolutely be on-leash when meeting the resident cat(s). Make sure you are there to supervise the encounter. You want to prevent a chase scenario, where the cat becomes scared, takes off and your dog chases. More often than not, your new dog will have little emotional control and watching a fleeing cat makes for a great game in your new dog's mind, but is not a good time at all as far as kitty is concerned. This is why it is so important that your new dog be on-leash with you holding the other end. Set up gates, barrier systems or room door(s) so that your cat can easily get to a safe place that your new dog cannot access.

Curiosity is normal and can be a good sign of things to come. However, a dog that lunges at a cat is a warning that the dog should not be allowed off-leash or left alone with the cat unsupervised, until you and the dog have developed the obedience skills to control such behaviours or the relationship between cat and dog starts to change. Most often, both cats and dogs will choose the flight option (running away) instead of the fight option when they feel threatened. It is important that both cat and dog have room to manoeuvre without feeling confined and there is a clear escape route to your cat's designated safe area(s).

## Dogs and Kids

Many people regard the relationship between kids and dogs to be as natural and idealistic as Lassie helping little Timmy out of danger week after week. Sadly, this is not the case for many dogs and children. Bites inflicted from dogs remain one of the leading causes for facial disfigurements in children. It is crucial that adults in the home make every effort to first and foremost teach children how to properly interact with a dog.

As a society we are constantly bombarded by stories about dogs with such great temperaments that children can climb all over them, pulling on their ears and tails. While many dogs have and do display very high tolerance to children and their antics, this is not something you should expect from your dog. Each and every dog is capable of biting no matter the breed, size or personality—it is just a matter of having the necessary combination of factors. What if the dog developed an ear infection or injured his tail unnoticed by you? The next pull or poke from your child could be more than any animal should be expected to tolerate. Your dog is just that—an animal, not a human. Dogs have a completely unique way of expressing their emotions. Growls, teeth baring and snapping are all ways a dog is telling you that they are not comfortable with the situation. Do these behaviours mean you have a bad or dangerous dog? Absolutely not! But it does mean you have to make serious decisions to either manage or learn how to change the offending behaviours, before they lead to a bite.





This does not mean that your children and your dog will never become the best of friends. Dogs can live in very intricate social circles and learning how they communicate is important. Almost every dog will give warning signs before a bite occurs. Know what to look for and what signs to heed.



### Do's and Don'ts

- **Do** stand quietly and allow the dog to approach first.
- **Do** wait until the dog sniffs the child's outstretched fist (hand).
- **Don't** stare at, lunge at or chase your new dog.
- **Don't** squeeze, poke or pull on any body parts.
- **Don't** approach or disturb a dog that is eating or sleeping.
- **Don't** approach a dog when they are with their favourite toy or any other item that may be of high value in the dog's eyes.

### Dog bites ARE preventable! Know your warning signs:

- A dog that is barking or growling
- A dog that is showing the white's of their eyes
- A dog that is baring or showing their teeth
- A dog with ears hung low and tail between legs
- A dog that is stiff like a statue

### Understanding the dog's perspective

Let's look at a common scenario. To understand how to meet and greet a dog, we must first think like a dog to see things from their point of view.

A child greets a new dog by running up with eyes wide and a broad smile, squealing with excitement and flinging arms around the dog's neck, giving the dog a warm or loving hug. If that dog snarls or snaps many people believe that dog attacked without warning or provocation, followed by a confused parent exclaiming "but she was just trying to give him a hug?!?"

However, things can look very differently from the dog's point of view. Let's break down how a dog interprets this behaviour.

1. The child came charging not running, the first sign to the dog that they may need to be on the defensive. When dogs meet, mannerly dogs will approach each other slowly, offering plenty of time for sniffing and room to move around; they may also exhibit play bows or tilt their head to the side before they come nose to nose.
2. To your dog, a child's smile can be interpreted as your child baring their teeth, another reason to be on the defensive. The child may also be squealing with excitement or whispering words. Both of these verbal communications will be difficult for your dog to interpret. Squealing can trigger a prey drive reaction in your dog similar to a squeaking squirrel or a squeaky toy, and whispering may be interpreted as growling. At this point the dog may be feeling very threatened and most often will look for an escape route.
3. No escape route or no time was available for the dog to escape. Now the child throws their arms around the dog's neck. A snarl or a snap from your dog is simply telling the child "hey back off, that was not





polite.” A dog is not necessarily exhibiting such behaviours to hurt anyone but to defend himself and to communicate that the situation is threatening.

Until your dog becomes comfortable with all the members of the family, new people and especially children should follow some basic guidelines:

- Stand quietly and allow the dog to approach first.
- Do not stare directly into the dog’s eyes.
- Wait until the dog sniffs an outstretched fist (hand).
- Gently pat the dog’s cheek.

With children in the home, it is also good for your dog to have a safe spot. A crate is ideal but this can also be accomplished with a bed or blanket that is placed outside of the main traffic areas in your home. When your dog is in their safe spot, all family members are to respect that and leave the dog alone.

If you live with a dog or have children, visit the Dog Gone Safe website at [www.doggonesafe.com](http://www.doggonesafe.com) for tons of great resources on bite prevention.

## House Training

Most adult dogs will catch on to the idea of house training with relative ease. Remember, human babies are usually not introduced to the idea of using a toilet until they are at least 2 years old. Furthermore, most human babies are not reliably toilet trained until they are around 4 years old. Even then, accidents will happen. The age of your dog and any possible medical issues they may have will also affect your house training. Situations such as stress, change in diet, intestinal upset, intestinal parasites and urinary tract infections can make house training difficult to impossible. It is important to talk to your veterinarian if you have these concerns.

When dealing with a puppy or a young dog, a good rule of thumb is to relate their age (in months) to the number of hours they are physically capable of controlling their bladders and bowels. A puppy at two months should be capable of controlling their bladder for about two hours. A four month old puppy can manage about four hours. If you have adopted a puppy or a young dog, there will be some time before you may be able to manage a full night’s sleep.

Just like every other aspect of your dog’s life, consistency is key when it comes to house training. The more consistent your feeding and walking schedule, as well as crate training (see **Crate Training** section for more information), the more successful you will be house training with your new dog.

### Designating a Relief Spot

When designating a relief spot, certain factors should be considered. Will this area be easily accessible all year round, including during the winter months? What about garden areas and walk ways? Once you have designated a relief spot take your dog on-leash to the designated toilet area. Stand quietly, so that the dog can sniff around. Most people may instruct “go do your business” or “potty time,” but do not repeat this request and distract the dog. Do not praise the dog during their search. If after about 5 minutes your dog hasn't gone to the bathroom, return them to the house, keeping a close eye on them for about half an hour, then try again. Once your dog has completed their business outside, praise and make a fuss about how smart they are and, of course, don’t forget a treat!





### **Good Morning!**

When people wake up in the morning, their first stop is usually the bathroom. If another family member already has the bathroom occupied, we know how uncomfortable it can be to wait. Your dog will appreciate access to relieve himself as much as you do in the morning. Take your dog out to use the bathroom as soon as you can after you wake up.

### **Scheduling**

Create a schedule that is practical for you to maintain. If you cannot stick to your schedule, you cannot expect the dog to adhere to it. Try to feed your new dog one to two hours before you have to leave them. This should provide your dog enough time to digest their breakfast and ensure they have an opportunity to use the bathroom before you leave for work. Schedule your dog's bed time and waking-up time. Adhere to these times as closely as possible. If you have a puppy or young dog and will be away from your home for more than a few hours, you will need to arrange to have somebody come in to take the dog out to their designated relief spot. Keep track of your dog's routine. Some dogs will "potty" two or three times per outing in the morning, but only twice per outing in the evening. Even if the weather is foul, do not let your dog know that you don't want to be going outside with them. By teaching your dog that even in bad weather going outside is "the thing to do," they will be more willing to convey their needs to you.

### **Supervision in the House**

Any mistakes your dog makes while you are at home are due to your inattention. You should always know where your dog is and what they are doing. If you realize it's almost time for a potty break, don't delay by thinking "after I finish the laundry." After the laundry may be too late and you will have missed an opportunity to positively reinforce your dog's bathroom habits. By observing your dog you will quickly learn to tell the difference between a dog exploring his new home and his searching for a location to relieve himself. If you cannot supervise the dog for a period of time, put the dog in a confined area such as a crate or room where you are. Have the dog on their leash if it will help. When you are relaxing, watching TV, reading or on the computer, have your dog with you as well. Try giving your dog some of their toys to play with.

## **Crate Training**

Crate training has many benefits when used appropriately. A dog "crate" is the general term referring to a rectangular enclosure. Crates can be constructed of wire, metal, molded plastic or a combination of these materials. Be sure that the crate is of adequate size. Most people with puppies will opt to buy a crate that will accommodate the dog when it is full grown, but can be partitioned off to help with house training when they are young. A dog should be able to stand up straight, turn around and stretch out in their crate. A dog that is properly crate trained will enjoy their crate throughout their lives and will use it for refuge from a busy household.

Crate training has several benefits, including:

- Puppies and dogs that are being house trained to eliminate (urinate and defecate) outside are less likely to eliminate in their crate unless left for inappropriate amounts of time or before the dog has had a chance to eliminate outside.





- Dogs that suffer from separation anxiety and destructively chew or otherwise endanger themselves or damage household items during the times they cannot be directly supervised cannot practice these behaviours in a crate.
- In cases of travel or illness, crates can be a necessity. A dog that has been trained to be comfortable in a crate is at an advantage in these situations.
- For dogs involved in dog sport functions like agility and flyball, crates provide a much needed resting spot during break times.

The crate's location needs to be somewhere inside the house where the dog is comfortable. The location should be in a quiet space close to family areas but just outside of heavy traffic zones. Make it clear to all children living or visiting the house that the crate is not a "playpen" for them. You should, however, get your dog used to people reaching in and out of the crate to avoid your dog guarding his crate (see **Resource Guarding** for more information).

While puppies (8-16 weeks) will normally adjust more quickly to crating since they are being introduced to this new world only a small portion at a time, crate training adult dogs should start in smaller steps. If possible, have your crate purchased and set-up prior to bringing your new dog home for the first time. Secure the door open, so that it cannot accidentally shut and frighten the dog. Encourage the dog to explore the crate by placing treats or toys in the crate and rewarding the dog with praise every time they go in the crate. Feed the dog all their meals in the crate, start closing and latching the door, working up the time until their meal is done. Slowly increase the time they spend in the crate, perhaps during your supertime or while going out to run errands.

A crate should **NEVER** be used for punishment. It is **NOT** recommended that any dog spend more than 6 consecutive hours at a time in a crate.

As many dogs mature or settle into family routines, regular crating may become unnecessary. If you think your dog is a good candidate for having unsupervised household access, start in with small steps. Leave your dog with limited access in the house while you do some activity close at hand but out of the dog's sight. Leave the dog for no more than a few minutes at a time, gradually increasing your absence to half days then full days when necessary.

For more information on crate training, check out:

- [www.clickertraining.com/node/58](http://www.clickertraining.com/node/58)
- [www.dogstardaily.com/training/errorless-chewtoy-training](http://www.dogstardaily.com/training/errorless-chewtoy-training)
- [www.sfspca.org/Behaviour/dog\\_library/crating.pdf](http://www.sfspca.org/Behaviour/dog_library/crating.pdf)
- [www.hsus.org/pets/pet\\_care/our\\_pets\\_for\\_life\\_program/dog\\_Behaviour\\_tip\\_sheets/crate\\_training.html](http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet_care/our_pets_for_life_program/dog_Behaviour_tip_sheets/crate_training.html)

## The Honeymoon Ends: Common Behaviour Issues

As previously mentioned, sometimes the SPCA is able to observe behaviours with a dog while they are in their care and may be able to advise the new owners accordingly. In the rescue field, you may hear people refer to the "honeymoon period." Within a month or so of welcoming a new dog into their family, many adopters are left wondering how anyone could have given up such a perfect dog. However, once the dog becomes settled in their new surroundings, and comfortable with their new family, undesirable behaviours may arise.





Many dogs coming through shelters and rescues have had traumatic beginnings. The trauma may have been experienced through physical or verbal abuse, or the most frequent form of abuse—neglect. Remember, the legal requirements for owning a dog is that the dog is to be provided with food, shelter and water—nothing more. Many dogs have lived their whole lives without experiencing love and attention. Some dogs come from living outdoors 24 hours a day, all year round, all alone. This can cause serious psychological damage to a dog. Dogs are extremely social beings. Since dogs have been domesticated, humans have been a surrogate family. We all want to have a nice, secure place to sleep as close as possible to our family.

Dogs who have not been raised in a family setting may not behave in this manner. Your dog, being a survivor and an opportunist, has learned to deal with their former mistreatment in some manner. Some dogs may cower in fear, run and hide, or fear pee on the floor, furniture or even their new human companions. Dogs are hard wired to chew, which provides the dog with a relaxing sensation. Unfortunately that relaxation may come at the cost of your late great Aunt Edna’s prized afghan. Some dogs are friendly and confident with all the people they meet in their first month, and then may become shy and fearful of any other new people they meet after that. Whatever the new and unwelcome behaviours are, please contact the SPCA or an accredited behaviourist or trainer right away for help and support if required. Friends, family members and doggy support groups are everywhere—you are not alone and you are not the first person to experience these things. Help is here for you.

Next are some of the more common behaviour issues experienced and basic information on how to deal with these behaviours.

## Separation Anxiety, Destructive Chewing

Many dogs are happy to lounge around their homes all day, perfectly content snoozing on the couch or their dog beds while their family is out working and attending school. Unfortunately, this is not the case for all dogs. Some dogs find the departure of their human companions very stressful. A variety of unpleasant behaviours can occur, including howling and barking all day, destructive chewing or accidents in the house, because of the physical effects of that anxiety. Most dogs with separation anxiety can be helped through behaviour modification on the part of the owner. If your dog suffers from severe separation anxiety and starts causing himself bodily harm, you should consult your veterinarian as well as a professional behaviourist.

A family’s daily absences from the household are a fact of life. Many families are gone from home for at least eight hours. Make your arrivals and departures part of your dog’s routine.

First, we recommend the use of a crate. When introduced properly, a crate can be a safe haven for most dogs and will help provide them with a feeling of security. For dogs that may be chewing destructively, this will not only protect your material and sentimental possessions, but in turn will protect your dog from items that could potentially cause them physical harm. This will help reduce the anxiety when the family returns home, anticipating what their dog may have gotten into. If a crate is not an option, you will need to confine your dog in an area where the dog will feel comfortable and can easily be maintained as a “dog-proof” area.

Start slowly. Using short quick sessions, place your dog in their crate or safe area with a good chew toy, a meal or something that they are normally engaged by. Leave your dog’s view for a very brief moment. Reward your dog with calm praise or treats for maintaining a calm and quiet demeanour. This should gradually build to more extended periods of time and incorporate such things as opening your door and simulating your departure.





## Hello, Hello and Saying Good-bye

Are you making your dog's separation anxiety worse? Many owners feel guilt ridden when preparing to leave their dogs for the day. What many people perceive as reassuring their dog only makes the situation worse. Dogs are very perceptive to our emotions. Many people anxiously shower them with love and kisses and constant attention right before they walk out the door. "Oh Max I loooove you so much, you be a good boy, don't worry, mama will be back before you know it." After such personal attention, our immediate departure no doubt comes as a very big shock to the dog, and leaves them feeling worried and anxious. Upon returning home, many humans can't get to the door fast enough and make a big fuss about how happy they are to be back home, "Oh I missed you sooooo much Max!" Your departures and arrivals have become very big events to your dog.



When you leave for the day, place your dog in their crate or area about five to ten minutes prior to your departure. Make sure you provide the dog with something they will find stimulating. This will take the focus off of you. When you leave, say nothing or simply a little "Bye Max, see you later."

When you arrive home, don't run to your dog immediately. Say nothing or a simple "Hi Max, mommy's home." Put down your bags, hang up your jacket and take a minute to relax. This requires restraint on the human's part. Max will be okay for a few minutes and you most likely have the whole evening to look forward to. Go let your dog out of his crate or area and take him outside to relieve himself. Wait a few minutes until outside or after coming back before showering your dog with "I missed you."

Destructive chewing can go hand in hand with separation anxiety. Dogs have a natural desire to chew on things and chewing is usually a very soothing outlet for the dog's anxiety. Not only can a destructive chewer ruin many of your household items, this type of unsupervised chewing can be a big health risk to your dog. Most veterinarians are happy to recount stories of the unusual items they have seen canine companions consume. Determining the level of your dog's chewing requirements will help in your quest for safe and suitable chewing items. Some dogs may be happy to carry a stuffed animal around for years while others may remove the stuffing in minutes. Chew toys also vary in their strengths, so sometimes investing in one good and slightly more expensive chew toy will far out weigh purchasing less chew resistant products. 'Kong' toys can be a saviour to an owner with a dog that likes to chew.

## Fear and Shyness

Some SPCA dogs have had very hard pasts or may never have been socialized properly. If your dog starts to exhibit fear or shyness around people or new things, it is your job to show the dog these things are okay and there is no reason to worry.

When your dog becomes upset by a situation, **do not** baby your dog. This means no panicked human voices "reassuring" your dog it is okay; this is actually only reassuring that there is reason for the dog to worry. Act like the situation is no big deal.





## Resource Guarding



Many dogs have a tendency to guard objects they perceive as valuable. SPCAs usually test for the most common forms of resource guarding (food and toys) but when you arrive home with your new friend, you may discover they have placed great importance on other less common items. Some dogs may be possessive of locations such as the sofa or bed, their owner or a variety of objects such as empty food bowls, raw hides or sticks, to name a few. Similarly, some dogs do not enjoy being handled in specific regions on their body.

If you discover your dog is possessive around certain items or people, it is recommended that you consult with a knowledgeable trainer who has experience in treating resource guarding using desensitization and counter-conditioning, not punishment. In the meantime, every effort should be made to manage the environment your dog is in to ensure the trigger object is not present or your dog is not around other people or dogs when near the person they have chosen to guard.

If you are faced with an emergency situation where your dog has somehow acquired a valued object, you may wish to try to “bait and switch” by quickly and calmly bribing the dog with food or a toy. Do not attempt to confront, reprimand or wrestle a dog that is guarding an object or person. You will compromise your dog's trust and you may become injured during the altercation. Bribery is not meant to be used instead of proper training, but in emergency situations you may have to use it as a last resort.





## Sources and Additional Reading

### General:

- British Columbia SPCA, “A Problem You Can Fix – Spay or Neuter Your Pet,” [www.sPCA.bc.ca](http://www.sPCA.bc.ca).
- Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, “A Common Sense Guide to Feeding your Dog and Cat,” [www.animalhealthcare.ca](http://www.animalhealthcare.ca).
- Humane Society of Canada, March 2007, “Rescue Me,” [www.humanesociety.com](http://www.humanesociety.com).

### Behavior and Training:

- Canadian Association of Professional Pet Dog Trainers, [www.cappdt.ca](http://www.cappdt.ca)
- Dog Star Daily, [www.dogstardaily.com](http://www.dogstardaily.com)
- Karen Pryor Clicker Training, [www.clickertraining.com/dogtraining](http://www.clickertraining.com/dogtraining)
- Jean Donaldson Behaviorist, [www.jeandonaldson.com](http://www.jeandonaldson.com)
- Canadian Association of Professional Pet Dog Trainers, [www.apdt.com](http://www.apdt.com)
- Ian Dunbar Behaviorist & Veterinarian, [www.training-dogs.com](http://www.training-dogs.com)

### Recommended Reading (all titles can be found on [www.dogwise.com](http://www.dogwise.com)):

- *Before You Get Your Puppy & After You Get Your Puppy* by Ian Dunbar
- *Don't Shoot the Dog* by Karen Pryor
- *Culture Clash* by Jean Donaldson
- *Dog Aggression: Biting & Fighting* by Ian Dunbar
- *MINE! A Guide To Resource Guarding In Dogs* by Jean Donaldson
- *When Pigs Fly - Training Success With Impossible Dogs* by Jane Killion

