



Good Habits are Hard to Break

Open Paw's® Guide To The First Two Weeks With Your New Dog

Congratulations on the new addition to your family! With a little work and some planning, your new dog will be a well-behaved companion for years to come. It is important to recognize that first impressions are lasting ones and habits begin to develop from day one. Be sure to instill good manners and habits from the first day you bring your new puppy or dog home. Remember, good habits are as hard to break as bad ones. If you follow these simple guidelines, your dog's transition into your home will be a piece of cake for both you and your new best friend.

1. Teach your new dog the rules of your house from the beginning. In the words of Dr. Ian Dunbar, "If you want your dog to follow the rules of the house, by all means do not keep them a secret." When your dog first gets home, he or she may be a little confused and unsure of the new living situation. Even though your home is undoubtedly comfortable, it *is* different than where your dog came from, and different can be stressful. It is important to remember dogs do not speak our language and will best understand your expectations through training and management. Training and management should begin *the very moment* your new dog arrives in your home.

Your instinct may be to give your new friend a few days to unwind and adjust before imposing rules and restrictions. While you may mean well, this delaying of training has the potential to be both frustrating and damaging. Right from the very first day, it is *crucial* to convey your expectations to the dog and to establish an errorless training system. If you do this, your dog will succeed in learning house rules right from the beginning. If you change the house rules a few days after your dog has arrived, he will not understand *why* things have changed. Your dog may have already formed new habits and will have a difficult time adjusting to yet another set of expectations. It is much more efficient to teach your dog everything you would like him or her to know from the outset.

2. Try not to overwhelm your new dog with too much activity during this initial adjustment period (individual dog's adjustment period will vary). It is very exciting to have a new dog. Of course you want to introduce her to all of your friends and family and of course you want to take your new pal everywhere! All this excitement however could be exceptionally stressful for your dog. Please keep in mind that even in the best of situations your dog's world was probably limited to a handful of environments and activities. It is best for your dog to spend the first couple of weeks quietly settling in and getting to know you with brief and frequent outings to continue the socialization process. In the beginning, limit introductions to just a few visitors at a time. If your dog has time to become familiar with you and your home surroundings, she will be more confident when setting out on adventures beyond your immediate neighborhood.

3. Keep your new dog either safely confined with appropriate chew toys, or supervised at all times. This is the best way to keep your new friend (and house!) out of trouble when you are unable to monitor his actions. Your dog requires a dog-proof, safe place: a "doggie den" - the equivalent of a toddler's playpen - where he can rest and chew appropriate items in your absence. There are many options for your "doggie den," but a crate or small room in your house is ideal. However, you may also choose an outside kennel run. Initially when your dog is loose in the house or yard you *must* be around to gently redirect your dog when he chooses an inappropriate activity. If you are vigilant about supervising our dog and showing him what you expect, your dog *will learn* to settle down quietly, to chew only appropriate chew toys and eventually to become trustworthy in your absence.