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ARIZONA'S OLDEST & LARGEST NO-KILL SHELTER

# AAWL Dog Adoption Handbook



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## Introduction

Congratulations on adopting your new family member from the Arizona Animal Welfare League (AAWL)! Bringing a new dog into your home (and your life) is a big commitment, one that comes with many benefits and joys. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for making this very heart felt decision. Rescuing a dog from a shelter is a wonderful way to give a dog a second chance at life, and find yourself a new best friend.

In this adoption handbook we provide you with many resources and tips to help you get set up with everything you need to make the transition with your new best friend a successful one!



**Thank You for Adopting!**

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## Checklist for Success

You wouldn't bring a new baby into your home without preparation, so why not do the same for a new furry addition? Adoption a pet from a shelter can transform your house into a cozy home but without careful preparation, your new furry friend can turn the old homestead into a mess! Here's a must-have list of supplies for a great start with your new dog:

<b>Basics</b>	
<b>Done</b>	<b>Item</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Food
<input type="checkbox"/>	Water Bowl
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bed, Blanket, Towels
<input type="checkbox"/>	Crate and/or Baby Gate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Leash
<input type="checkbox"/>	Flat collar w/ ID Tags (to be worn at ALL times)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Poop Bags
<b>Dog Care</b>	
<b>Done</b>	<b>Item</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dog Tooth Brush
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nail Clippers
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dog Shampoo
<input type="checkbox"/>	Grooming Brush
<b>Training and Mental Stimulation</b>	
<b>Done</b>	<b>Item</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Food dispensing toys (Kong toys, treat balls)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Puzzle toys (hide-and-seek, treat wheels)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Training Treats (soft treats, Freeze dried meats)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Plush toys (with or without squeakers), rope toys
<input type="checkbox"/>	Edible Chews (rawhide, bully sticks, pig ears) – consult with your vet for recommendations

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## The First Few Days/Weeks

The first few days in your home are special and critical for a pet. Your new dog will be confused about where he is and what to expect from you. Setting up some clear structure with your family for your dog will be paramount in making as smooth a transition as possible.

- Determine where your dog will be spending most of his time. Because he will be under a lot of stress with the change of environment (from shelter or foster home to your house), he may forget any housebreaking (if any) he's learned. Often a kitchen will work best for easy clean-up.
- If you plan on crate training your dog, be sure to have a crate set-up and ready to go for when you bring your new dog home. See the section on Crate Training in the guide.
- Dog-proof the area where your pooch will spend most of his time during the first few months. This may mean taping loose electrical cords to baseboards; storing household chemicals on high shelves; removing plants, rugs, and breakables; setting up the crate, and installing baby gates.
- Training your dog will start the first moment you have him. Take time to create a vocabulary list everyone will use when giving your dog directions. This will help prevent confusion and help your dog learn his commands more quickly.
- Bring an ID tag with your phone number on it with you when you pick up your dog so that he has an extra measure of safety for the ride home and the first few uneasy days. If he is micro chipped, be sure to register your contact information with the chip's company, if the rescue or shelter did not already do so.

### First Day:

- We know moving is stressful — and your new dog feels the same way! Give him time to acclimate to your home and family before introducing him to strangers. Make sure children know how to approach the dog without overwhelming him. Go here for more on [introducing dogs and children](#).
- When you pick up your dog, remember to ask what and when he was fed. Replicate that schedule for at least the first few days to avoid gastric distress. If you wish to switch to a different brand, do so over a period of about a week by adding one part new food to three parts of the old for several days; then switch to half new food, half old, and then one part old to three parts new.
- On the way home, your dog should be safely secured, preferably in a crate. Some dogs find car trips stressful, so having him in a safe place will make the trip home easier on him and you.
- Once home, take him to his toileting area immediately and spend a good amount of time with him so he will get used to the area and relieve himself. Even if your dog does relieve himself during this time, be prepared for accidents. Coming into a new home with new people, new smells and new sounds will throw even the most housebroken dog off-track, so be ready just in case. Need more housetraining tips? See the House Training Section.

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- If you plan on crate training your dog, leave the crate open so that he can go in whenever he feels like it in case he gets overwhelmed.
- From there, start your schedule of feeding, toileting and play/exercise. From Day One, your dog will need family time and brief periods of solitary confinement. Don't give in and comfort him if he whines when left alone. Instead, give him attention for good behavior, such as chewing on a toy or resting quietly.
- For the first few days, remain calm and quiet around your dog, limiting too much excitement (such as the dog park or neighborhood children). Not only will this allow your dog to settle in easier, it will give you more one-on-one time to get to know him and his likes/dislikes.
- If he came from another home, objects like leashes, hands, rolled up newspapers and magazines, feet, chairs and sticks are just some of the pieces of "training equipment" that may have been used on this dog. Words like "come here" and "lie down" may bring forth a reaction other than the one you expect. Or maybe he led a sheltered life and was never socialized to children or sidewalk activity. This dog may be the product of a never-ending series of scrambled communications and unreal expectations that will require patience on your part.

## Following Weeks:

- People often say they don't see their dog's true personality until several weeks after adoption. Your dog will be a bit uneasy at first as he gets to know you. Be patient and understanding while also keeping to the schedule you intend to maintain for feeding, walks, etc. This schedule will show your dog what is expected of him as well as what he can expect from you.
- After discussing it with your veterinarian to ensure your dog has all the necessary vaccines, you may wish to take your dog to group training classes or the dog park. Pay close attention to your dog's body language to be sure he's having a good time — and is not fearful or a dog park bully.
- To have a long and happy life together with your dog, stick to the original schedule you created, ensuring your dog always has the food, potty time and attention he needs. You'll be bonded in no time!
- If you encounter behavior issues you are unfamiliar with, ask your veterinarian for a trainer recommendation. Select a trainer who uses positive-reinforcement techniques to help you and your dog overcome these behavior obstacles. If you have additional questions, please call our Behavior Helpline at 602-273-6852 ext. 124.

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## House Training

If given a choice dogs prefer to eliminate away from the areas where they eat, sleep, and play. Dogs eliminate in the house for a variety of reasons:

- There might be a medical cause for the problem.
- The dog might not have been properly trained to eliminate outside.
- The dog might be marking his territory.
- The dog might urinate when excited, intimidated, anxious, or upset.

House training is accomplished by establishing a surface and location preference AND by preventing the dog from eliminating in unacceptable places. Crating and confinement needs to be kept to a minimum, but some amount of restriction is usually necessary for the puppy or dog to learn to “hold it.” Understand that house training demands an investment of time and effort. Puppies are sometimes not fully house trained until they are 8-12 months of age. As a general rule, a puppy can only hold his waste for the same number of hours that he is old, in months. In other words, a four-month-old pup should not be left alone during the day longer than four consecutive hours without an opportunity to go outside. By the time the pup is four months old, he should be able to make it through the night without going outside. Adult dogs adopted from shelters are often not fully housetrained and need a refresher course.

### What to do:

1. Keep the dog on a consistent daily feeding schedule and remove food between meals.
2. Know where your dog is at all times. To anticipate and prevent accidents, you need to watch for early signs that he needs to eliminate. These signs include pacing, whining, circling, sniffing and leaving the room. If you see any of these, take the dog outside as quickly as possible. Not all dogs learn to let their owner know they need to go outside by barking or scratching at the door. Some will pace a bit and then just eliminate inside.
3. If you cannot watch the dog, confine him to a crate, a small room (with the door closed or baby-gated), or tether him to you with a leash that does not give him much leeway. Gradually, over days or weeks, give the dog more freedom. If the dog eliminates outside, give him some free time in the house (maybe 15-20 minutes to start). If all goes well, gradually increase the amount of time out of confinement.
4. Accompany the dog outside and reward him with praise, treats, play, or a walk whenever he eliminates outdoors. It’s best to take the dog to the same place each time, as the smells may prompt the dog to eliminate. Some dogs will eliminate early on in a walk; others need to move about and play for a bit first.

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## House Training (cont.)

5. Take the dog outside on a consistent schedule. Puppies should be taken out every hour, as well as shortly after meals, playtime and naps. All dogs should get out first thing in the morning, last thing at night, and before being confined or left alone. Adult dogs must get out at least four times a day.
6. If you can catch the dog in the act of eliminating inside, make loud noises. Immediately run to the dog and rush him outside. If he is small, pick him up; otherwise, just grab him by the collar and run outside with him. The idea is to startle him, which should stop him in mid-stream. Allow the dog to finish outside, and reward him. If you do not catch the dog in the act, do not do anything to the dog.
7. Clean accidents with an enzymatic cleanser to minimize odors that might attract the dog back to the same spot.

### What not to do:

- Do not rub the dog's nose in his elimination (this teaches him nothing).
- Do not scold the dog, unless you catch him in the act of eliminating in an inappropriate place.
- Never, ever physically punish the dog for accidents; that includes hitting with a rolled-up newspaper.
- If the dog enjoys being outside, don't bring the dog inside right after he eliminates—he may learn to “hold it” to stay outside.
- Do not use an ammonia-based cleanser. As urine contains ammonia, this could attract the dog back to the same spot to urinate again.

Above all, please be patient! If your dog has an accident, it is not because he is spiteful or lacking in the ability to learn—it's because the owner failed to adequately supervise him, didn't take him outside frequently enough, or ignored or was unaware of the dog's signals to go outside.



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## Crate Training

A dog that is trained to be content in a crate can be kept safe when traveling in a car, visiting someone else's home, or being transported in an airplane. Some dogs really take to the crate, preferring to sleep in it or take refuge there when things get too hectic. Other dogs are never happy in the crate, but will tolerate it when necessary. Still other dogs panic when closed in a crate. While some people view crate training as cruel and unnecessary, it's actually very beneficial and less stressful to your dog. If done correctly your dog will come to appreciate the crate as their own space to relax and feel at home.

- **Choose the proper size crate.** The crate should allow enough room for standing, sitting, and stretching out, but you don't want the crate to be so big that your dog has enough room to make one section of the crate the bathroom and the other the sleeping area. If you only want to buy one crate, get one that will be large enough for your dog as an adult and block off an end of it while your dog is still small.
- **Make the crate comfortable.** Find an old blanket or towel to fold up and place on the floor of the crate. If your dog already has a bed that they're accustomed to, you can use that too. The idea here is not only to create a comfortable place for your dog to lie, but also to remind your dog that the crate is for sleeping and comfort, not for going to the bathroom.
- **Provide water.** This is especially important if you're planning on leaving your dog confined for more than two hours. If you're worried about your dog making a mess, invest in a small hamster-type water bottle and fill it with ice water.
- **Make the crate appealing.** Place your dog's favorite toys inside at the far end of the crate, provided they are sturdy and large enough that your dog will not choke. Later on in the training process, you can also place juicy treats such as marrow bones in the crate when your dog goes in.
- **Keep the crate in a high-traffic area.** By keeping the crate in an area with a lot of people, such as a living room or kitchen, your dog will associate the crate with being surrounded by people rather than completely alone and isolated. Allow the crate to sit there for a little while before you ask your dog to go into it. This way, the crate will become a normal piece of furniture in your house rather than a strange object.
  - NOTE: At night the crate should be kept in your bedroom. Once again, being around humans and human activity will comfort the puppy. In addition to that, your sleeping patterns will influence those of your puppy to ensure a full night of sleep for you and the dog.
- **Use positive reinforcement.** Though it may be tempting, you should never use the crate as a form of punishment. Always talk to your dog in a happy tone of voice when referring to the crate.
  - Begin positive reinforcement by dropping little treats or pieces of dog food in and around the entrance of the crate. While exploring the room and new object, your puppy will begin to associate it with delicious treats.
  - Praise your puppy every time you see him enter the crate. Drop what you're doing when you see him enter and give your dog full-blown praise. Hug him, pet him, say good dog, and maybe even give him a treat out of your hand.

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## Crate Training (cont.)

- Play "games" with your puppy. Drop a treat in the crate without showing your dog. Then, call your puppy by name and say something along the lines of "Where is your treat?! Go get it from your crate!" Use an extremely happy, friendly voice and gentle gestures to playfully guide your dog to the crate. As soon as the dog finds the treat, praise him enthusiastically. If your dog is more motivated by toys, you can also do this with his favorite ball or squeaker.
- Never try to push, pull, or force your puppy into the crate. With the exception of nighttime, you should allow the puppy to enter at its own will during this stage.

### Tips/Warnings:

- If your dog whines in the crate, ignore it (unless something is physically wrong). Release him only when he is calm. Otherwise, your dog will associate whining with being let out of the crate.
- Be sure to use a crate that is the right size. If the crate is too big, the dog can use a corner to go to the bathroom and will not learn to leave the crate to relieve himself. The crate should be big enough for the dog to stand, lie down, and turn around. If you are starting with a puppy you may need a smaller crate and get a larger one as the puppy grows.
- In case of accidents: Be sure to use an enzyme based stain and odor remover so that your dog does not eliminate waste in the same place. Remember - just because you cannot smell anything it does not mean that your dog can't!
- Never use ammonia-based products. To dogs, ammonia smells like urine, and thus these products can encourage increased use of a specific spot as a bathroom.
- Remember to take your dog out to potty a short time after eating. Most dogs will need to eliminate a short time after meals.
- Leave soothing music or a TV on for your dog while he is in the crate during the day.
- Don't leave your dog in the crate for more than a few hours at a time (unless overnight). You can gradually build the number of hours your dog can stay in the crate to 6 hours maximum (on the rare occasion when absolutely unavoidable), but this process occurs at a rate of one hour per month
  - A 2 month old puppy must have a break after 2 hours.
  - A 6 month old should be able to go 6 hours, but this is not hard and fast. You know your dog - watch for signs of distress and do your best to relieve his problem before he makes a mistake. Remember - sometimes you have those days, too, when you have to go much more often than usual. He's an animal, and things may change for a living thing every day. Be willing to accept some variations.
- Make sure there are no sharp edges or wire ends that can hurt the dog. Some dogs with protuberant eyes, such as Pekingese, have been known to hurt their eyes on sharp crate edges.
- If you must leave your dog in the crate for more than 5 hours, it is highly recommended that you hire somebody to come walk them, and don't do this on a regular basis.

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## Destructive Chewing

Chewing is a perfectly normal behavior for dogs. Dogs love to chew on bones and sticks and just about anything else available. They chew for fun, they chew for stimulation and exercise, and they chew to relieve anxiety.

But that's not it on the list of destructive behaviors. Dogs also steal things off the counters and tabletops, and they raid the trash. Most dogs prefer human food to dog food and, if given the opportunity, will help themselves. While these behaviors are normal, dogs can, of course, be taught to control themselves. Understand that your dog needs to be taught not to chew your things or steal your food—he's not born knowing that he shouldn't.

### What to do:

- Provide the dog with plenty of his own toys and chew bones; introduce something new every day or two.
- Give the dog a "single serving" chew bone once or twice a day—something he will finish in one chew session (i.e., Greenie, Dentabone, etc.)
- Identify the times of the day when your dog is likely to chew, and give him a stuffed Kong, Goodie Ship, or Buster Cube at this time. You can include some of his daily ration of food in the toy.
- Discourage chewing inappropriate items with chewing deterrents, such as Bitter Apple or Chew Guard\*
- Always supervise your dog. If you see him licking or chewing an item he shouldn't, say "uh uh," remove the item from his mouth and insert something that he can chew. Be sure to praise him.
- Booby-trap the counters and tables to discourage the dog from jumping up. You can try double-sided sticky tape, cookie sheets placed precariously so they fall down if the dog touches them and a pyramid of empty soda cans all tied together and placed so that they fall if the dog touches them (you can tie to a small tidbit of food to this contraption). You can also place "baits" to be stolen: food adulterated with bad-tasting substances, such as Tabasco or Bitter Apple.

### What NOT to do:

- Do not show the dog the damage and spank, scold, or punish him after the fact.
- Do not crate the dog for lengthy periods of time to prevent destructive chewing.

\* Using taste deterrents: When you first use the deterrent, apply a small amount to a piece of tissue or cotton wool. Place it directly into the dog's mouth, allow him to taste it and then spit it out. The dog has learned the link between the taste and the odor of the substance and will be more likely to avoid chewing items that smell like the substance. Re-apply the deterrent to the off-limits objects every day for 2-4 weeks.

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