

# **ADOPTING A RESCUE DOG**

**Lisa Tenzin-Dolma Dip.Dog.Psy**



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## **ABOUT THIS BOOK**

Rescue organizations expend a great deal of energy in ensuring that their dogs settle well and remain in their adoptive homes. Most of these organizations give out information about the adoption process during the required home check, where potential adopters are assessed for suitability and a profile is put together of the right match of dog and new owner. This small book aims to give extra information that can be used alongside that of your local rescue centre or charity. It is aimed at those who are considering adopting a rescue dog, so that you can make an informed choice about which breed of dog would best fit in with your lifestyle, and in order to help ease the transition for you and your dog.

The information in these pages is also for people who have already adopted a dog and want to understand more about how to make the most of this new and very special relationship. Adopting a rescue dog can be a hugely rewarding experience and, with the increasing numbers of homeless dogs, you are not only gaining a devoted new furry friend but are also saving a life.

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# **ADOPTING A RESCUE DOG**

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## **WHY ADOPT A RESCUE DOG?**

In the Dogs Trust statistics for just one year (2007), 96,892 straying or abandoned dogs were taken into rescue kennels across the UK. Of these, 6,710 dogs were euthanised. In America the statistics are for dogs and cats combined. 6 to 8 million dogs and cats are taken into US shelters each year, and 3 to 4 million of these are euthanised. Contributing factors include: changes in income; a shift in family circumstances, such as moving home or the arrival of a new baby; a reluctance to spay or neuter; the practices of over-breeding and puppy farming; the large number of racing greyhounds that are bred in order to increase the possibility of finding champions; and a general lack of information about how to care for and train family dogs that leads to many dogs being taken to shelters because their owners cannot cope with them.

Although it's widely believed that most rescue dogs are highly traumatized and need experienced new adopters, this is simply not true. Some dogs do need special homes, and rescue centres state this when they give information about the dogs in their care. But many are lost and unclaimed, and some are taken in when their owners' circumstances change due to family break-ups or loss of income. Adopting a dog can be a hugely rewarding experience for you and for the dog, and whether you are intending to adopt a dog from a specific breed, a puppy, or an older dog, there are specific rescue centres that you can contact who will be able to help you make an informed choice.

This small book was written with the aim of helping you to choose the right dog for you, and to help you and your dog settle comfortably together and forge lasting bonds. It includes information about settling your dog in, introducing your dog to other dogs, small furrries and people, and some basic training that will help to make your budding relationship one that will be a pleasure for all concerned.

## **WHICH BREED OR MIXED BREED IS RIGHT FOR YOU?**

The companionship, friendship, trust and devotion of a dog is a tremendous joy, but it's important to look into which dog is right for you before you bring home a puppy or rescue dog. One of the reasons why dogs end up in rescue centres and shelters is simply, and sadly, because of a mismatch between the dog and his owner. Before you go falling in love with that cute puppy (and all puppies are incredibly appealing!) or the rescue dog gazing hopefully through the kennel bars at you, consider which breed or mixed breeds of dog will best be suited to you, your lifestyle and circumstances.

If you want a puppy, are you aware of the extra initial costs and the work that is involved in rearing and training an energetic bundle of fun? Puppies of all breeds need a great deal of time and attention; toilet-training, four meals a day for the first few weeks, puppy classes, playtimes, teaching them to walk on a lead and to socialize happily with adults, children and other dogs. The expense of vaccinations, micro-chipping and neutering needs to be considered in advance, too. Puppies are a delight to have around but they need guidance in developing good manners, and many puppies, sadly, are handed over to rescues when they reach the demanding, awkward and often pushy stage of adolescence between the ages of 6 to 9 months. However, if you feel prepared for the commitment, then bringing up a dog from puppyhood is immensely rewarding.

Many people now choose to adopt a rescue dog instead of going to a breeder. As a Canine Psychologist I work with a lot of rescue dogs and feel strongly that they should be in caring homes. Not all of these dogs have emotional baggage, but some do have problems, so take a list of questions along with you. Your local rescue centre should give you as much information as possible about the background, health, and any known issues before you make the decision to adopt. Usually rescue dogs have been vet-checked, vaccinated, neutered and micro-chipped before adoption. You will be visited at home by a member of the rescue centre, to ensure that your home is safe for a dog and that your garden is secure. You will also have the opportunity to ask questions about settling your dog in and starting off on the right foot (or paw). Bear in mind that dogs will often behave very differently in a home to how they seem in kennels. Spend time getting to know the dog first, through making several visits along with family members and your current dog, if you already have one. This will help to foster mutual bonds and make the early days of adoption run smoothly for all involved.

Think about your lifestyle. Are you a couch potato, preferring to relax in your leisure time? If so, look for a dog which doesn't need a great deal of exercise. Sighthounds, such as greyhounds and lurchers, can run very fast (up to 45mph) but only need 20 to 30 minutes exercise twice a day and are happy to lounge around the rest of the time. Older dogs of all breeds are often overlooked in kennels, yet they tend to be calm and gentle companions. You also have the pleasure of knowing that an older dog has been given the chance of well-deserved love and comfort through the twilight years.

Are you active and energetic? If so, a terrier or one of the working breeds such as a collie, Labrador or German Shepherd would suit you well. These dogs need more exercise and enjoy mental stimulation through play or agility classes.

Do you have young children? If so, you will need to teach your children and their friends to treat your dog gently and to leave him alone at mealtimes and while he's resting. Dogs and children can be wonderful companions to each other, but respect should be taught on both sides.

How long will your dog be left alone each day? If you work part-time, a dog can usually be left for a maximum of 3 or 4 hours, but please bear in mind that dogs are highly social creatures and find it hard to be left alone for long periods. If you work full-time your dog's needs should be carefully thought through and attended to. Some dogs can cope with being left alone as long as someone (a friend or dog-walker) can come in at least twice daily during working hours to let your dog out in the garden for a toilet break, check his water bowl is full, and walk him or play with him. Think about whether you have the energy for playing with and walking your dog after your working day. A dog that has been left on his own for hours needs to be exercised and given special time for fun, games and affection when you come home.

It's useful to read as much as you can about the breed (or mix of breeds) that you are considering buying or adopting, and there are many good books available. Doing some research in advance helps you to make a wise decision that you and your new dog will benefit from in the years to come.

### **LIVING WITH A RESCUE DOG**

Congratulations on making the decision to adopt a rescue dog! You are about to embark on a very special relationship that is likely to change both of your lives for the better. The centre you adopt your dog from will give you any support necessary to help you settle your new dog into your home, and at the end of this booklet you will find a list of books that will help you to understand and train your dog.

Sections within this booklet will explain how to introduce your dog to your home, family and friends, and how to quickly and easily manage all aspects of his care, including toilet training, feeding, exercise, socializing, and keeping him or her healthy. For ease of reading, I have referred to your dog as 'he' so please substitute 'she' if you have adopted a female.

Before you adopt your dog you will be given any information that the rescue centre have about him. This will include the age and temperament of your dog, background information if this is available, and details of any health issues or old injuries that have been noted. You will meet your dog, taking along other family members and any other dogs that already live with you, before making the decision to adopt him, so that you can see how everyone gets on together.

Dogs are very willing and eager to please. They have evolved alongside humans for thousands of years, and their brains are hard-wired to look for ways in which they can understand what we want from them. If you take a few minutes to look at this new phase of life from your dog's perspective, that will help you understand him and will make the first few days easy for both of you.

When you bring your rescue dog home, everything will seem strange and confusing to him at first. Things you take for granted, such as the washing machine, vacuum cleaner, television, cooker, furniture and stairs may be totally new experiences for dogs such as ex-racing greyhounds who have never lived in a home before, and what is familiar to you may seem quite frightening until your dog gets used to them. Imagine you were suddenly transported to another planet and you'll be able to see how your home will seem to your dog!

Most dogs accept these changes without a backward glance and throw themselves wholeheartedly into exploring all aspects of their new lives, but some dogs may be overwhelmed initially. They may react by barking a lot and acting 'hyper' or nervous, by avoiding noisy areas and hiding behind furniture, or by 'shutting down' and sleeping a lot while they adjust to the shock of change. If this happens, don't worry; give your dog time to find his feet and make sure he has plenty of praise each time he copes with a new experience. Try not to over-compensate by making a fuss of him if he wants to lie quietly on his bed or seems a bit aloof. And if he seems nervous, please don't reassure him by giving him extra attention, as this will be viewed by him as reinforcement and therefore as a reward, and he'll keep reacting in that way instead of learning to adjust. Give him space, and he will soon realize how fortunate he is to be with you!

### **BEFORE YOU COLLECT YOUR DOG**

You will have been advised about what you will need to buy before bringing your dog home. Here is a checklist:

- **An identity tag** for your dog's collar, engraved with your phone number (preferably your mobile number so you can be contacted when away from home). Please bring this to the kennels and put it on his collar as soon as you have filled in his homing form. This is very important, so that if your dog gets lost you can be quickly contacted by the person who finds him. A tag with the rescue centre's name may already be attached to your dog's collar. Please leave this on so that there is an alternative contact number if he ever gets lost.
- **A collar and lead.** A comfortable collar that your dog cannot slip out of, and a leather or strong fabric lead is best. Please avoid metal link chains, as these could hurt your dog's sensitive neck and skin. Your homing officer at the rescue centre will be able to tell you which size collar will best fit your dog.



- **A soft bed.** This could be a folded duvet, large floor cushions or a donut bed with soft sides. Dogs like to curl up, but they also love to stretch out on their backs with their legs in the air (this is called roaching), so a sleeping place that enables them to stretch is best. Put the bed in a quiet, cosy corner so that it can also be your dog's retreat.
- **Food and water bowls.** You can buy these from your local pet shop. Because they have long legs and deep chests, greyhounds and lurchers find it uncomfortable to eat from a bowl on the floor, so their food and water bowls need to be raised. You can buy bowls set onto adjustable stands, or place the bowls on a tea chest or even upended washing-up bowls. Eating from a raised bowl also helps to prevent a dangerous health condition called gastric torsion, or bloat, where the gut becomes twisted. Raised bowls are best for all large dogs, especially the long-legged breeds.
- **Good quality food.** If you intend to feed your dog a complete diet of dried food, look for good quality food that contains not more than 23% protein. Avoid foods with colourings and chemical additives, if possible. Your homing officer will be able to advise you on which food your dog has been eating in kennels. Whether or not you change his diet, your dog may have an upset tummy during the first few days. This can be due to the stress of being moved to a strange environment, and many dogs take a few days to adjust to different food.
- **Rawhide chews.** These will keep your dog's teeth clean and will give him hours of entertainment.
- **Treats.** Small dog treats will be very useful for rewards while you are bonding with your dog and teaching him the basics of toilet training and good manners.
- **A winter coat for cold or wet weather.** You'll need this if you adopt a thin-skinned dog such as a greyhound or a Chihuahua, as they can become chilled very easily and need extra protection.
- **A muzzle.** Not all rescue dogs will need a muzzle, but some rescue centres (particularly those dealing with greyhounds and lurchers, breeds that have been trained to chase small furry animals) recommend using a muzzle for walks until you have assessed your dog's reaction to smaller dogs and to cats.

## **BRINGING YOUR DOG HOME**

When you arrive home, keep your dog on his lead and walk him straight through to the garden area that you have designated for his toilet. Let him sniff around, talking softly to him, and wait for him to 'go'. As soon as he does, say whichever word or phrase you have chosen (such as 'Do a wee' or 'Do your stuff'), and reward him immediately with praise and a treat. This will quickly teach him that the toilet area is outside. You will find out more about toilet training later in this booklet.

Take him back indoors, show him where his water and food bowls are, and let him explore. If there are places you don't want him to go on, such as your sofa, say 'Off' firmly, and call him to you if he attempts to jump up. Praise him as soon as he moves towards you. Dogs are easily distracted from undesirable behaviour if something more interesting (your company and a toy or treat) is offered. Unless you have another dog, you could put some treats or a chew on his bed and he will quickly settle down. However, if you already have another dog, chews and toys are the most common causes of conflict, so please avoid leaving them lying around.

Make sure his water bowl is kept full of fresh water at all times. A new environment is very stressful for dogs, so he may pant a lot from anxiety on the first day and this will make him very thirsty. Don't worry if he drinks a lot at first – this will soon settle down.

Be sensitive to your dog's needs. Speak quietly and calmly to him, keep your voice low and your movements as fluid as possible (sudden movements may startle him until he gets used to you), and don't follow him around as this will make him nervous. Call him to you occasionally if he is wandering around, and stroke him gently and reward him with a treat when he comes to you. This will teach him both to trust you and to learn recall. Your dog may not recognize his name at first, so use his name each time you call him. Try not to call him to you too frequently in the first few days, unless it is to take him into the garden, feed him, or walk him, or to distract him from a no-go area.

Ask children and visitors to respect your dog's need for rest and to avoid disturbing him or going to pet him while he is on his bed.

### **THE FIRST NIGHT**

Where your dog will sleep at night is your choice – just be consistent about this. If you want him to sleep on his bed in the living room or kitchen, remember that he will be scared and confused for the first few nights. He will probably never have slept in a room alone, as rescue dogs, unless they go straight to foster homes, usually live in kennels where they can hear the other dogs and the radio that is always left on for them. Many kennels also have heat lamps on at night to keep the dogs warm, so he will be unused to total darkness and may feel chilled.

If you intend for your dog to sleep in the living room or kitchen at night, settle him in with some kind words, a gentle stroke and perhaps a chew. You might want to leave an old piece of your clothing with him, so that he has your scent close by for comfort. If you have a thin-skinned dog such as a greyhound, and it's cold weather, put him in custom-made pyjamas. Leave a lamp on low, and the radio on so that he feels less alone and frightened. If possible, sleep in that

room with him for the first three nights, until he gets used to the new surroundings.

He may cry at first if he is alone. If you are in the room with him, a gentle 'Shhhh' will calm and reassure him. If you are in a separate room, try to avoid the temptation to go to him unless he is really howling, as it will only take him longer to learn that he is safe and will see you in the morning. If you do go to him, be matter-of-fact and settle him down then leave him again.

There are several schools of thought regarding allowing dogs to sleep in the bedroom. Some say you should never do this; that keeping him out of your room establishes you as the leader. However, you will be teaching your dog to look to you, trust and respect you in many ways, so if you want to let him sleep in your bedroom, go ahead. In this case, have a bed just for him in there. Allowing your dog in your bedroom can help him to settle in faster, and the close proximity speeds up the process of building trust, but once you start this, you will need to follow it through.

### **TOILET TRAINING**

Toilet training a rescue dog should be very straightforward, and many new owners accomplish this within 48 hours or less. Just follow these simple steps:

- As soon as you arrive home with your new dog, take him to the garden and wait for him to empty his bladder or bowels. As he does so, say the phrase or word that you want him to associate with toileting. Give him lots of praise and a treat immediately, and bring him indoors.
- Take your dog into the garden roughly every three hours and repeat the praise and reward each time he goes.
- Always take your dog outside as soon as he wakes from a nap, and first thing in the morning.
- Take your dog outside after each meal.
- If your dog starts looking restless and is circling or sniffing around intently, this is a signal that he needs to go in the garden to eliminate. Take him outside immediately.
- Take your dog outside before you go to bed, and wait with him until he does his business. Remember to use the words you're teaching him to associate with toileting, and reward him each time he toilets.
- Never scold your dog if he has an 'accident' indoors, as he won't make the association unless you catch him in the act. If you scold him after the event, he won't understand what he's done wrong as his attention span is very short and he will have already forgotten. Chastising him could make him think he has to wee in secret, so he may then slip away and wee behind the couch when no-one's looking. Remember he's learning the house rules and is doing the best he can. If he has an 'accident', clean up

the wet or dirty patch without comment. Remember that he's not being naughty – he just needs time and encouragement to learn all the new house rules.

## **NEW INTRODUCTIONS**

### **People**

Hopefully your dog will have met your immediate family members when you visited him at the kennels. Try to avoid having too many visitors during his first few days, and introduce house-guests gradually so that he's not overwhelmed. Dogs need and enjoy company, but some dogs are shy of new people at first. If your dog is nervous he will show this through his body language. A tucked in tail, low head and body posture, cringing away, and ears pinned back are all signals that your dog is feeling scared. Give him plenty of space and the opportunity to retreat to his bed and rest, undisturbed, and he will soon relax and understand that he is safe with you.

You can ask extended family members and visitors to give him a small treat when they greet him. This will teach him that good things happen around people! Gradually reduce the treats, but keep up the praise when he shows he is comfortable around new people.

### **Children**

Most dogs get on very well with children, providing they are not subjected to rough handling. If you adopt a large dog, remember that he will seem huge to a small child. A small dog could be viewed as a cuddly toy, so you'll need to make sure he isn't subjected to rough handling. And, to your dog, children will be curious creatures, especially if he has never met a small person before.

Please make sure that your children don't wander around with food in their hands, as your dog may think it's being offered to him and might help himself. With small children, ensure that any food on their face and hands is wiped off before allowing them to approach your dog.

Ask your children to leave your dog alone when he is sleeping, and to stroke him gently. A firm or hefty pat can seem like a smack to a thin-skinned dog. Remind them, too, to never approach your dog from the rear, as this may startle him.

### **Other dogs**

If you already have a dog, they should have been introduced at kennels to make sure they will accept each other. Make sure that each dog has his own resting place, and let them get to know each other at their own pace. Don't leave both dogs unsupervised in a room at first – wait until you're sure that they are comfortable with each other. During the first few days there may be a lot of bottom-sniffing. Note which dog views himself as the one who leads the way,

and respect their decision in this. Usually one dog will quickly defer to the other and they will soon get used to living together. Dogs are social animals and will take care to avoid conflict. You can help them to settle in together by taking steps to not favour one more than the other.

When you introduce your dog to strange dogs, either on walks or if you take him to visit friends who have dogs, make this relaxed and gradual. You will have been told whether your dog is friendly towards, or is nervous of, other dogs before you adopted him. Ex-racing greyhounds have only ever met other greyhounds so may be very puzzled when they meet other breeds. They might not even be sure about whether this is a dog or not, especially with small dogs that could set off their prey instinct. Remember they were bred and taught to chase small furry animals. Most greyhounds and lurchers quickly learn that the Yorkshire Terrier down the road is a dog and not a rabbit, and will want to be friends – but, in the early days, it's wise to be extra cautious. Other breeds may be more used to canine encounters, but may be nervous and reactive if suddenly faced with other strange dogs.

Make the initial introduction outside in a neutral place (the street outside the house, or a park or field, works well). When you introduce the dogs, try not to lead them towards each other head-on – let them move towards each other in a curve, as this is how dogs display good manners when greeting each other. If you show the dogs to each other and give them the opportunity to sniff, they may feel that they are being put in a threatening position, so act casual.

As soon as you all meet up, don't stop to say hello. Just walk on, with the people on the inside and the dogs on the outside. This gives them plenty of space, but they will be aware of each other and will catch each others' scents as they walk. If they seem calm, shift position so that both dogs are on the inside, with space between them so they don't feel pressured to interact. When they look relaxed, allow them to sniff and get to know each other. If either dog gets stressed or growls, move back so that the people are in the centre with the dogs on the outside again. Take it at a pace that your dogs are comfortable with. Stroking first one dog and then the other helps to spread their scents and eases the introductions.

### **Cats**

All dogs have an inborn chase instinct, but greyhounds and lurchers are bred and trained to chase, and they can move extremely fast. Yet many of these dogs can happily live alongside cats and poultry after careful introduction, just as other breeds can.

If you have a cat you will be adopting a dog that has hopefully been tested as 'cat safe' but you will still need to take precautions. Don't leave your dog alone

with a cat during the first few weeks, and do make sure that your cat has access to an escape route such as a stair gate. Keep your cat indoors during the first week, so that she isn't able to pack her bags and leave home as a protest against the new intruder.

This is the method recommended by most rescue centres to assess whether dogs are cat friendly. When you introduce your new dog to your cat, keep his muzzle and lead on and have him on close lead (hold the lead close to his collar). Have both animals in a room with the door closed. Ask someone to hold the cat, and watch how your dog reacts. Stroke the cat and your dog so that each has the others' scent on them. This helps them to recognize each other as members of the same social group. Make sure your cat cannot make a dash for it, as this could activate your dog's prey drive/chase instinct. If your dog doesn't react, or just looks curious, put the cat down and let her walk around the room, near to and around your dog. Lift your cat so that they can make eye contact, but make sure the cat isn't close enough to scratch your dog – protect his eyes, especially.

When both seem comfortable together, take off your dog's muzzle but leave the lead on and keep him close to you. If they seem relaxed, put the muzzle back on and let your dog off the lead so they can move around freely and get to know each other.

If everything is going well you can then put your dog's lead back on, remove the muzzle, and feed them both in the same room, keeping careful watch on them. This will teach them that good things happen when they are in each others' company.

Your dog will soon learn to live safely with your cat, but for some time you will need protective measures for both. Avoid leaving them unsupervised or letting them roam the garden together until you are absolutely certain it is safe to do so.

### **Neighbouring cats**

However close your dog and cat become (and often, once bonded, they will even share a bed), any other cats in the neighbourhood are likely to be viewed as fair game. To avoid any problems, it helps to make a noise during the first few days of taking your dog in the garden. Clapping your hands or ringing a bell will warn other cats that there's a dog around, and they'll quickly learn to avoid the area, especially when they hear your dog go outside.

### **Other small furrries**

If you keep small mammals such as rats, mice, hamsters or gerbils, make sure they are safely in a cage behind a closed door in a room that your dog doesn't

have access to. Some dogs are merely curious about what's behind the bars or tank, but it's best to make sure your small furries are safe!

### **MARKING**

Occasionally a male dog will 'mark his territory' as a signal to other dogs that he lives there. Most male dogs do this around the perimeter of the garden or when out walking, but occasionally this can happen indoors, too.

If your dog starts to lift his leg against the furniture or walls as a marking method or to urinate, just gently push his leg back down and take him straight into the garden. Wait there with him until he does a wee, and reward him immediately with praise and treat. If you don't feel confident that you can get to him fast enough indoors, keep his lead on during the first day or two so that he is close to you and you can take him outside quickly. Dogs soon learn that marking is acceptable outside, but not in, your home. Allow your dog to have lots of sniffing time while out on walks. Dogs have a far superior sense of smell to humans, and they gain an enormous amount of information from investigating where other dogs have passed by. Other dogs' size, state of health, indications of whether a bitch is in heat, and lots of other news can be gleaned when your dog sniffs at that lamp post, patch of grass or tree along the way.

### **FEEDING**

Dogs need two meals a day. Giving dogs only one meal a day means they will be so hungry that they will gulp their food, which can make them more susceptible to gastric torsion (bloat), a condition which can be lethal. Morning and late afternoon/early evening are the ideal feeding times.

Your home checker and homing officer will tell you which food your dog has been eating in kennels, and how much to give him. A change in diet can upset your dog's tummy for a few days until he gets used to new foods, so don't worry if this occurs. There are several high quality dried dog foods available. Choose a food that has a protein content of no more than 23%. If you like you can jazz up the meal with some table scraps, but give these after, not during, your meal (you can read more about this in the **Teaching Good Manners** section). If you give your dog human foods please avoid anything very salty or sugary - and especially avoid onions, mushrooms and chocolate, which are toxic to dogs. Sardines are good for him, but the high Mercury levels that are present in tuna can upset his delicate digestion.

You may also want to explore other options such as the raw food diet (BARF). Discuss this with your contact at the rescue centre first, to ensure this would be suitable for your dog.

Many rescue dogs have gone hungry, so your dog will probably need to put on a little weight when he comes to you. This should be done gradually, through sensible feeding routines. Being overweight is just as unhealthy for a dog as being underweight, so try to avoid giving him too many mid-meal snacks!

### **ESTABLISHING ROUTINE**

Just like people, many dogs feel more secure when they have a regular routine. But too rigid a routine can be boring and may set off mischief-making!

As much as possible, feed and walk your dog at roughly the same time each day. You can vary the food and the walking route, so that your dog gets accustomed to new experiences and enjoys an interesting, high quality life.

### **EXERCISE**

All dogs, large and small, need exercise, and often the smaller breeds such as terriers and collies need far more exercise than the large breeds, because they were bred to have the endurance to stay active for hours at a time. Greyhounds need less exercise than many people realize. Because these dogs are very swift (they can accelerate up to 45 miles per hour in a fraction of a second, and are the cheetahs of the dog world!) it's often wrongly assumed that they need a lot of exercise. In fact, they're often called 45 mph couch potatoes! Greyhounds and lurchers are sprinters – despite their amazing speed they run out of steam very quickly. Give your greyhound or large dog two or three daily walks that each last 20 to 30 minutes and he will be happily snoozing on his bed (or your sofa, if that's allowed) for the rest of the day. Collies and terriers need a lot more physical exercise and mental stimulation, and benefit hugely from going to agility classes as well as enjoying long walks with you.

Until you can be totally confident that your dog will come to you when called, please keep him on the lead unless you have access to an enclosed field or paddock that he cannot escape from. He won't mind at all as long as he gets stimulating walks with plenty of time to sniff around.

Walk your dog on pavement and road surfaces regularly, as this will keep his nails naturally trimmed and will reduce any extra visits to the vet for nail care. You can find out more about your dog's paws and nails in the health section.

When you do feel you can let him off the lead, only do so at first in a safe, enclosed place, such as a paddock or a small field surrounded by hedges or solid fencing that he can see. If the fencing is not easily visible he could run straight into it and injure himself.

With greyhounds and lurchers, remember that your dog is very, very fast! If he sees something interesting (a squirrel or cat, or even another dog) he will be out



of earshot in moments. You can teach him to come to you when you blow a whistle, as the sound travels further than your voice. Because he is a sighthound (vision is his keenest sense), if he loses sight of you he may not be able to find his way back, so using a whistle also helps him to locate you. Watching your dog run free in a safe environment is a joyful experience – he will astonish you with his extraordinary grace and speed.

### **SLEEPING AND RESTING**

Dogs love to sleep, and sighthounds, especially, do a lot of it. Most dogs like to lie around in a very relaxed state similar to snoozing, and will open their eyes if anything catches their attention, and many dogs sleep with their eyes open. Your dog needs a soft bed that will keep him warm as well as comfortable. You'll know when he is very relaxed and trusts you, because he'll then lie on his back with his legs in the air in the classic 'roaching' position that leaves him with his vulnerable throat and belly exposed.

Your dog's bed should be his sanctuary – his place of rest and safety where he is never disturbed. Allow him this special space and try to avoid stroking or leaning over him while he is resting. A sudden approach can startle any dog, and he is more likely to react out of shock if he is disturbed while fast asleep.

It's up to you whether you allow your dog to rest on the sofa. If so, and you want him to get off, you can do this without creating a confrontation. Point at the floor, or at his bed, and say 'Off' or 'Bed' calmly and firmly. As soon as he moves, treat and praise him. After a few days you can reduce the treats so that he just gets one occasionally.

### **TEACHING GOOD MANNERS**

Unless he has previously lived in a home, it's likely that your dog will have had little or no training. He'll learn quickly, with your guidance, and will soon figure out what you expect of him. Here are a few manners you can teach him right from the start:

#### **Food**

Your dog will probably have gone hungry in the past. He may even have had to compete with other dogs for food. This will make him food-oriented (you can use this constructively by giving him food treats to reinforce good behaviour!) and at first he may think that any food on your kitchen counter or the table is easy game. Dogs are opportunist eaters, which means that they will snaffle up any food they have access to, in case of lean times in the future.

If your dog jumps up and puts his paws on the counter to snaffle up the dinner you're preparing, just step sideways so that his access is blocked, don't look at him, and calmly and firmly say 'Off!' Because your body is blocking the way he'll

hop back down. Praise him as soon as all his paws touch the ground. Repeat this until he learns that his dinner is served in his bowl, not on your table! Most dogs learn this within 48 hours, but some dogs that have been starved in the past find it hard to rid themselves of the urge to snatch and grab any food that's left on the side – if this is the case with your dog, shut food out of temptation's way.

Don't feed your dogs tidbits from your plate while you are eating. If you plan to give him a little something from your meal, wait until you have finished and taken your plate into the kitchen. This will teach him that waiting patiently brings a reward.

### **Walking**

Some dogs are used to walking well on the lead. Others have never learned how to do this. If a dog (especially a large one!) pulls on the lead, walks can become a chore and a battle of wills. Dogs respond to pressure by resisting and pulling harder, so yanking on the lead and pulling him back will only make him strain against it.

There are two methods you can use to teach your dog to walk nicely on the lead.

**Method one:** If your dog pulls, stop and wait. He'll stop as soon as he realizes you're not moving forward, and will look at you. When he's quiet and calm, give him a treat and praise and move forward again. Repeat this each time he starts to pull and he will soon learn. If your dog is a really determined puller, you could use a properly fitted harness or a gentle leader when you walk him.

**Method two:** Take a bag or pocketful of treats with you when you go for a walk. Each time your dog starts to pull, get his attention by clicking your tongue. As soon as he slows down or stops to look at you, give him a treat. Very soon, you'll find that your dog's attention is on you and he is walking by your side. Treat and praise him every time the lead becomes loose instead of taut.

Please don't allow children to hold your dog's lead during walks, especially if you have adopted a large or strong dog. If your dog sees something interesting, or is startled by a sudden noise, he may suddenly lurch forward and your child could be pulled over.

Always make sure you have a good grip on his lead, but with enough space that it is slightly loose between you.

Road walking is very good for your dog, and will keep his nails in shape. He will love having the opportunity to walk on grassy areas, too.

## **Recall**

Many rescue dogs, especially strays and greyhounds, do not recognize their names, so use your dog's name each time you call him to you and when you praise him. He'll soon learn to respond as soon as you say his name. Recall (coming as soon as he is called) is one of the most important things you can teach your dog. It could save his life, and training him to come to you can be a fun game for both of you. You can teach him recall by:

- Calling him to you at mealtimes.
- Calling him if he is doing something you don't want him to do (such as leaping on your sofa).
- Calling him to follow you into the garden.
- Playing hide and seek with him – call him from another room where he can't see you, and reward him as soon as he comes.
- If he is off lead in an enclosed play area, call him, give him a treat when he comes, and then let him go off to play again. By not putting on the lead the first time you call him, you are teaching him that it's rewarding to come straight to you.

## **Jumping up**

Sometimes a very young dog, an untrained dog or an excited dog forgets his manners and launches himself at the object of his affection. If your dog jumps up, step sideways and turn your back on him. As soon as he is calm, give him lots of praise. He will quickly learn that jumping is unacceptable.

## **HEALTH**

Before moving in with you, your rescue dog will most likely have been checked by a vet, neutered, had his teeth cleaned, and will have received any medical treatment if this was necessary. The rescue centre will inform you of any medical care he has received while he was with them. He will also have been given a parasite preventative. Your dog may have had an ID chip (microchip) inserted at the rescue kennels, so that if he gets lost and loses his collar with your ID tag on it, a rescue centre or vet can use a special scanner to identify him and find the kennel's contact details. Looking after your dog's health will be your responsibility after adoption.

Pet Insurance is important, because if your dog becomes ill or has an accident, vet bills can be crippling. Sadly, many dogs are handed into rescue simply because their owners cannot afford their vet bills. Your rescue centre will be able to discuss pet insurance with you, and some centres include a month's free pet insurance when you adopt a dog. Some companies will not insure older dogs, but others will, so shop around for the right insurance for you.

**Veterinary care**

It can be useful to take your dog to meet his new vet soon after he moves in with you. Your vet can weigh him and advise you on whether he needs to put on any weight, and can have a good look at him so that if he becomes unwell in the future the vet will have a clear picture of how he was when in good health. You can also use this opportunity to discuss any questions you may have about feeding or general health care.

**Vaccinations**

Once a year your dog will need a booster injection of the vaccinations he received before adoption. This will prevent serious illnesses such as parvovirus, canine distemper, infectious canine hepatitis, and parainfluenza virus disease. Your rescue centre will tell you when he last had a vaccination, so that you can book an appointment for a booster injection a year later.

**Coat and skin: Grooming**

All dogs need grooming. Long-haired dogs need a good daily brushing so that their coats don't become matted and tangled. Short-haired dogs need a brush-through at least once weekly to get rid of shedding hair and stimulate the skin. Greyhounds have thin skin and flat coats, so use a soft grooming brush or glove to keep your dog's coat healthy and shiny. At first your dog's skin may seem dry and flaky, or he may have bald patches on his coat where his fur has rubbed away from not having a soft enough bed. You can add a teaspoon of olive oil or flax oil to his meals to help improve the condition of his skin and coat. Giving him a couple of teaspoons of tinned sardines in oil in his meal once or twice a week will help give him a glossy coat, too.

Dogs tend to enjoy being groomed – it's the equivalent to having a massage. Give your dog lots of praise when he stands still for grooming, and before long he'll light up and come straight to you when he sees you pick up his brush!

Unless your dog rolls in something very smelly, try to avoid bathing him too frequently as this washes away the precious oils that protect his coat and skin. If you do need to bathe him, use a gentle shampoo that you can buy from your vet or a specialized greyhound website. Avoid using human shampoo, as this can irritate your dog's skin.

If your short-haired dog gets muddy, a wipe down with a damp sponge will soon get him clean again. Long-haired dogs will need bathing.

**Parasite prevention**

Fleas, ticks, worms, heartworm, mites and an assortment of other nasties can make your dog's life a misery and can affect his health (and yours). There are several good parasite preventatives, such as Frontline™ or Advocate™, which are

safe for all breeds, and the rescue centre will tell you which preventative they use. Your vet will also be happy to give you advice, too.

The easiest preventatives to apply come in the form of drops which you put on the back of your dog's neck once a month.

### **Feet**

If most of your walks are on soft ground, your dogs toenails will need to be trimmed regularly, as too-long nails will make him walk awkwardly and will cause him discomfort. The 'quick' is long in some breeds, and cutting the nails too close to the 'quick' will make him bleed. Walk him on roads and pavements as part of his daily exercise so that the hard surfaces keep his nails short without the need for an extra visit to the vet. If your dog's nails do become too long and cause him problems, ask your vet for advice.

### **Old injuries**

Some rescue dogs have been injured in accidents, been abused by previous owners, or have been attacked by another dog in the past. Your rescue centre will inform you of any strains or injuries that are likely to need future treatment or that could lead to arthritis in the future. Racing greyhounds hurl themselves at great speed around the sharp bends of the racing track, and can bump into each other during races, as well as incurring injuries to the feet, hocks, wrist joints and toes. Your dog will have been checked for signs of injury, and treated if necessary, before coming to live with you.

If your dog has a past injury, do inform your vet so that, if it troubles him in the future, your vet will already have a record of this.

### **PLAY**

Your dog may never have learned to play, so you will have to teach him this initially. Once he gets the idea, he'll be delighted!

If your dog has a favourite toy, keep this out of reach to use as a special reward.

Not all dogs are retrieving breeds, but your dog will soon learn that if he brings a **toy or ball** back to you after you've thrown it, the game carries on for longer! Initially you can teach him to do this by calling him when he has picked up the toy you've thrown for him.

You can **hide treats** around your home and garden for your dog to seek out.

Playing **hide and seek** to teach recall is a great game for your dog!

Your dog will enjoy having **soft, fluffy toys** to throw around and chase. Make sure these are safe to play with, with no parts that can come off and harm him. Your pet shop is a good place to go to for toys.

You can also buy **tugging toys**, such as ropes, at your local pet shop. If you play tugging games with your dog it's okay to let him win sometimes, but make sure you put the toy out of reach afterwards, so that your dog knows that you are in charge of toys and playtime.

When your dog settles in, he will show you that he feels full of the joys of spring-time by doing what's called a 'play-bow'. He'll stretch his front legs before him on the ground and raise his bottom in the air while wagging his tail.

### **ANY PROBLEMS OR ISSUES**

You should be able to phone your rescue centre at any time if you have a problem. If they are unable to help you resolve an issue, it's best to call in a professional behaviourist. Here are three of the most common challenges:

**Separation Anxiety** is the most common problem in dogs, and can be distressing for both you and your dog if it occurs. Your dog will have been used to living in kennels, with the sounds of other dogs around him, and many dogs quickly become attached to their new owners and find it frightening to be left alone. Right from the first day you can help your dog become used to being alone so that he doesn't howl or become destructive when you have to go out and leave him behind.

When you go into another room, close the door behind you for just a minute so that your dog is separated from you. Don't say anything – just act casual. When you come back in, avoid making a fuss of your dog if he greets you excitedly. When he is calm, call him to you and give him lots of praise and a treat. Prolong this gradually until he is alone for a few minutes at a time and understands that you will come back. If he cries, don't come in and make a fuss of him – that would reward him for the behaviour you're trying to avoid and would set up a pattern that can take time to break.

Before you go out, leave a radio on so that there is some quiet background music or chatter. Make sure his bed is comfortable and call him over to it. Give him a chew or a stuffed kong (a toy filled with treats that he has to work hard to get at) to keep him occupied. Calmly get ready to go out – don't pet him or make a fuss about leaving him. Only leave him for very short periods initially – five minutes, then ten, then fifteen – so that he quickly learns that you will soon return. Just a quick walk around the garden or down the road and back will be fine at first.

When you return home, if he greets you ecstatically by jumping up, just turn your back on him until he is calm and then call him to you and make a fuss of him. It may seem unfair to not let your dog give you a huge welcome (and yes, it's hard to resist the temptation to make a fuss of him!), but you are teaching him that you can come and go and he has no need to worry when you're not around. You could spend a couple of minutes taking your coat off and putting the kettle on before greeting him. He will soon realize that it's no big deal when you go out, and will use that time for enjoying his chew or having a snooze.

### **Aggression towards other dogs**

There are many reasons for dog to dog aggression. Some dogs react badly to other dogs because they have been abused in the past and are afraid, so their only course of action is posturing and pretending that they are fierce instead of scared. This is called fear-aggression. Others are aggressive because they were taught to react in that way by a previous owner. Or there could be conflict over what each dog views as precious resources that they are unwilling to share – a meal, a toy, or a bone, for instance.

The section on introducing your dog to other dogs (page 11) can be used for safe introductions to unknown dogs. Always keep this low key in order to minimize the risk of an altercation, especially if your dog is nervous or uncomfortable.

Keep both dogs on the lead while introductions are made. Watch their body language. Ears pinned back and lips raised above the teeth, raised hackles, a crouching position, a low growl are all signals that a dog could attack. If you see these, swiftly but calmly turn and walk in another direction, away from potential conflict.

Indoors, with familiar dogs, take steps to avoid sources of conflict such as shared food bowls, and make sure that treasured resources such as bones, chews or toys are not left lying around. If there are signs of an argument brewing, move each dog to a separate area until each has calmed down.

In the unfortunate event of an actual fight, don't try to wade into the fray to grab either of the dogs as this could result in you getting bitten. Raise the back legs of the attacking dog for just long enough so that he lets go of the other dog – the automatic reaction for a dog is to open his mouth and let go if he finds himself off balance. Move each dog into a separate room until both have calmed down.

You can reinforce good behaviour between dogs by giving fulsome praise each time they react positively towards each other.

## **Barking**

Dogs bark for many reasons: to alert you; if they hear an unusual noise; if someone or something encroaches on what they view as their territory; if they hear or see another dog; if they want you to feed them or to play; and some dogs will bark at bizarre things such as falling leaves or clattering cutlery.

If your dog is barking more than is comfortable or understandable for you, please don't shout at him. This will only add to his excitement, as he will think you are encouraging him to make more noise. Here are two useful techniques to distract him and stop the barking:

- If you are in his field of vision, hold up your hand in a 'stop' gesture, palms facing out, and calmly say 'Thank you.' This acknowledges that your dog is trying to catch your attention to something by making a noise, and most dogs will immediately stop barking.
- Call him to you and ask him to 'sit'. That will distract him from barking, especially if you give him a treat and plenty of praise for doing as you have asked.

## **THE JOYS OF LIVING WITH A RESCUE DOG**

You are providing a home, affection and comfort for a dog who may never have experienced this in his life so far. Dogs are fantastic companions, and your dog will reward you with a waggy tail, the famous canine smile, and his undying love, trust and devotion.

The relationship between a dog and his owner is a special one. Dogs are extraordinary experts in acceptance and unconditional affection, and your dog will quickly become a best friend who wishes for nothing more than to enjoy life with you. And dogs have such a capacity for enjoying life that soon you'll find that you can't imagine life without him!

**The Heartbeat at Your Feet** by Lisa Tenzin-Dolma

**Dog Training: The Essential Guide** by Lisa Tenzin-Dolma

**Understanding Rescue Dogs** by Carol Price

**Adopting the Racing Greyhound** by Cynthia A. Branigan

**The Pet Owners Guide to the Greyhound** by Anne Finch

**How to Handle Living with Your Dog** by Winkie Spiers

**On Talking Terms with Dogs: Calming Signals** by Turid Ragaas

**My Dog Pulls. What Do I Do?** By Turid Ragaas

**The Complete Idiots' Guide to Positive Dog Training** by Pamela Dennison

**The Culture Clash** by Jean Donaldson

**Inside of a Dog** by Alexandra Horowitz