

# Dog Adoption Packet



PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY  
ANIMAL SERVICES BUREAU

Prince William County Animal Services Center  
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[animalservices@pwcgov.org](mailto:animalservices@pwcgov.org)



# Congratulations on Adopting Your New Family Member!



Thank you so much for adopting from the Prince William County Animal Services Center and providing a loving home to a much deserving pet. We hope that you and your new companion will be very happy together. Your decision to adopt not only changes the life of your new furry friend but it also helps us continue our mission of caring for animals in need and giving them a second chance at a forever home.

We want you to know that our support doesn't end here. If you ever have any questions or need assistance with your new pet, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. We're always here to help ensure a smooth transition and a happy, healthy future together. In this packet, you will find a variety of helpful hints and learning materials to get you started.

## Happy Tails

Nothing makes our volunteers and staff happier than hearing about successful adoption stories! We care deeply about our animal alumni and love to hear how they are doing in their new homes. If you would like to send an update on your newly adopted pet, please reach out to us at [animalservices@pwcgov.org](mailto:animalservices@pwcgov.org).

## Dog License

Code of Virginia 3.2-65 ([Article 5](#)) requires all dogs older than four months of age to have a current rabies vaccination and owners must purchase a dog license through their locality. If you are a Prince William County Resident, Dog Licenses can be purchased online at [www.petdata.com/pwc](http://www.petdata.com/pwc). The license fee is \$10. If your dog's tag goes missing, a replacement tag can be ordered for \$1.

## Microchip



Every dog adopted from the Prince William County Animal Services Center goes home with a microchip registered to SmartTag. The SmartTag microchip is a permanent pet ID with a one-time lifetime registration, that also comes with a visible metal SmartTag pet ID. To complete registration of your account, visit <https://www.IDtag.com/user/register> or call (201)-537-5644. You should also receive an email from SmartTag within a couple of days after adoption.

**Reminder:** if you ever move or any of your contact details change, be sure to update this information with the microchip provider.

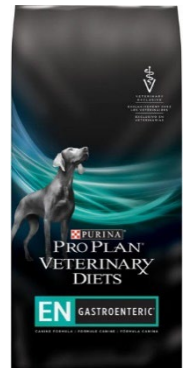
## New Dog Supply Checklist

- Dog food
- Bowls for food and water
- Brush and/or comb for grooming
- Dog crate
- Dog bed
- Leash and collar
- Identification tag(s)
- Harness
- Disposable pet waste bags
- Baby gate/indoor gate
- Pet nail clippers
- Dog toothbrush and veterinarian-recommended toothpaste
- Food dispensing puzzle toys for enrichment (Kong, West Paws Toppl, etc.)
- Small training reward treats
- A variety of dog toys

## Dog Food

While in our care, all dogs (unless otherwise specified) have been eating **Purina Pro Plan Veterinary Diets EN Gastroenteric Dry Dog Food**, which is a prescription-grade food that is designed to promote healthy digestion.

You may decide to feed your new dog any commercially available brand of dog food that is appropriate for their size and age. It is not uncommon to see some changes as their digestive system gets used to the new diet provided in your home. If digestive issues continue, we recommend consulting with a veterinarian.



## Veterinary Care

A complimentary vet exam with any of the providers listed is included with your Adoption Contract. Please schedule an appointment as soon as possible to go over any questions you have about vaccines, parasite prevention, and other medical care that your new pet will need. All previous medical records will be included in your Adoption Folder.

After adoption, animals can become stressed by the sudden change in their environment, as the sounds, sights, and smells are all different than what they have become familiar with. This change may also have a negative impact on their immune system, which can make them susceptible to respiratory infections and cause symptoms like sneezing, eye and/or nasal discharge, lack of appetite, or lethargy. If you see any of these symptoms, please contact a licensed veterinarian.

# Welcoming a New Dog into Your Family and Tips for a Successful Transition

Having the right setup is key to a smooth transition from our center to your home. Here are some tips to get you started:

- Try not to leave your new dog at home alone for the first 48 hours. Give your dog time to adjust to your home and family before introducing them to strangers.
- Create a safe space in your home by setting up a crate with comfortable bedding in a quiet area. Keep the door to the crate open, so your dog can choose to lay in there if they want to. Having this space will help your new dog feel safe and give them a place to retreat to if they feel overwhelmed.
- Develop a routine by feeding, walking, and playing with your dog at similar times each day. This may change overtime, but consistency will help your new pet feel more comfortable.
- Always check that your dog's leash and collar/harness are secure before starting your walk. When fitting your pet for a collar, keep in mind that you should only be able to fit two fingers between the collar and the animal's neck. Never allow your dog to be off leash unless they are in a fully enclosed space to avoid them running off or encountering another animal.
- Help your new dog learn to use the bathroom outside by offering frequent opportunities and rewarding them with a tasty treat when they go. It may take some time for your new pet to learn your routine. Please be patient with them.
- You can use baby gates to section off areas of the home that you do not want your dog to have access to and/or prevent them from running out your front door.
- For the first few days, keep things relaxed and limit too much excitement. If possible, hold off on potentially unpleasant or frightening activities like baths, nail trims, and visitors until your new pet feels more comfortable and develops a trusting relationship with you.
- Remember: it doesn't happen overnight. If you feel overwhelmed by managing your new pet's behavior, please ask for help! We are always happy and here to assist with any questions you may have. If you encounter any significant challenges, you can also ask your veterinarian for behaviorist recommendations.



# The 3 Days, 3 Weeks, 3 Month Rule of Adopting a Rescue Dog

The 3-3-3 rule is a general guideline, every dog is unique and will adjust differently. Give your dog space and allow him to go at his own pace.

## 3D



### In the first 3 days,

- Feeling overwhelmed
- May be scared and unsure of what is going on
- Not comfortable enough to be "himself"
- May not want to eat or drink
- Shut down and want to curl up in his crate or hide under a table
- Testing the boundaries

## 3W



### After 3 weeks,

- Starting to settle in
- Feeling more comfortable
- Realizing this could possibly be his forever home
- Figured out his environment
- Getting into a routine
- Lets his guard down and may start showing his true personality
- Behavior issues may start showing up

© Rescue Dogs 101

## 3M



### After 3 months,

- Finally completely comfortable in his home.
- Building trust and a true bond
- Gained a complete sense of security with his new family
- Set in a routine

  
**RescueDogs101™**  
ADOPT LOVE TRAIN

## Introducing Your Resident Dog to Your New Canine Friend

We always recommend bringing your current dog to the Animal Services Center for a meet-and-greet prior to adopting your new dog. Even with a good first impression and successful initial meeting, here are some tips to ensure a smooth transition into your family:

- First, pick up anything in your home that your dogs may not be willing to share such as bones, food bowls, or their favorite toys to prevent any potential conflict. Even if your dogs have not had a history of possessive behavior, it is best to exercise caution. It is strongly recommended to always feed your dogs separately.
- Reacquaint the dogs in neutral territory. In other words, do not immediately put them in the room in your house where your current resident dog is usually fed. Have a family member or friend assist you, so that there is someone to handle each dog on a leash.
- Try your best to stay calm and relaxed. Your dogs can read your body language and feel tension through the leash, which can negatively affect their interaction.
- To give their relationship a good start, keep initial interactions short and fun, such as going on a walk together. Show your dogs that when they are together, they are going to have a great time.
- Try to familiarize yourself with dog body language (pictured on the next page). Tail wagging alone is not a reliable sign that the interaction is going well. One body posture that can indicate things are going well is called a “play bow,” which is when your dog crouches with their front end while keeping their hind end in the air. This “bow” is used as an invitation to play and communicate that they do not wish to threaten the other dog. Loose and wiggly body movement is also a good sign that your dogs are comfortable with one another.
- Be on the lookout for raised hackles (hairs along the backbone), growling, showing teeth, and intense staring. If you see any of these signs, create more space between the dogs. End the interaction before things escalate if either dog seems overly stressed, nervous, or tense.
- Do not force interactions between your dogs. Just take things slow and go at a pace that they feel comfortable. If one of your dogs is avoiding interaction, take a break and try again another time.
- If your dogs have a negative interaction or try to fight, keep them completely separate using crates and/or baby gates. Then, reach out to a dog behavior professional for advice on the next steps.
- Never leave the dogs unsupervised with one another, even if things have been going well, until they have had time to get to know each other.

# DOGGIE LANGUAGE

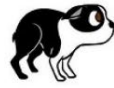
starring Boogie the Boston Terrier



ALERT



SUSPICIOUS



ANXIOUS



THREATENED



ANGRY



"PEACE!"  
look away/head turn



STRESSED  
yawn



STRESSED  
nose lick



"PEACE!"  
sniff ground



"RESPECT!"  
turn & walk away



"NEED SPACE"  
whale eye



STALKING



STRESSED  
scratching



STRESS RELEASE  
shake off



RELAXED  
soft ears, blinky eyes



"RESPECT!"  
offer his back



FRIENDLY & POLITE  
curved body



FRIENDLY



"PRETTY PLEASE"  
round puppy face



"I'M YOUR LOVEBUG"  
belly-rub pose



"HELLO I LOVE YOU!"  
greeting stretch



"I'M FRIENDLY!"  
play bow



"READY!"  
prey bow



"YOU WILL FEED ME"



CURIOUS  
head tilt



HAPPY  
(or hot)



OVERJOYED  
wiggly



"MMMMM...."



"I LOVE YOU,  
DON'T STOP"

## Introducing Your New Dog to Your Cat(s)

- Some dogs at the Prince William Animal Services Center have unknown histories of living with cats, which may make the first interactions with your resident cat very exciting for them. **Take it slow.** Be prepared to manage your pets' interactions with one another for several weeks, if not longer.
- Initially, keep your new dog and your cat(s) separate from one another.
- Working on basic obedience commands with your new dog (such as sit, stay, and leave it) prior to introducing the animals will usually help introductions go more smoothly.
- Keep your dog **on a leash** during initial introductions to make sure that they will not try to chase or harm your cat(s). Allow the cat to approach or leave as they feel comfortable, do not force interaction.
- Ask your dog to sit and reward your dog for calm behavior around the cat.
- Start with short sessions and repeat meetings daily.
- If things are going well, allow the animals to be loose in the room together but keep your dog's leash attached to their collar/harness and dragging on the floor. If your dog tries to chase your cat or otherwise misbehaves, you can step on or grab the leash to gain control of the situation.
- Make sure your cat always has plenty of places to get away from your new dog, if they become frightened or otherwise choose not to interact with the dog. Tall cat trees and areas separated by baby gates can help provide your cat a safe space to get away. The dog-free areas of your home should also have access to your cat's essentials such as food, water, and a litterbox.
- Even after successful interactions, continue to separate your pets when you are not able to supervise them until they have had significant time to get used to one another and you have not seen any concerning behavior.





## Exercise the Body and Mind

- The key to a happy dog is regular exercise and mental enrichment that allows them to engage in normal dog behaviors such as playing, chasing, chewing, and sniffing. Taking your dog on daily walks and/or playing fetch together will also keep them healthy and in good shape.



- Individual exercise needs will vary depending on the breed (or mix of breeds), age, and health status of your dog.
- One reason dogs may chew is that they have excess energy to burn. Providing adequate exercise daily and plenty of appropriate chew items will help reduce destructive behavior, though it is equally important to prohibit access to inappropriate chew items.
- Spend some time teaching your dog new tricks every day. This provides mental stimulation for your dog and gives you a fun way to bond with your dog. Plus, you can impress your friends and family by showing off all the different tricks that your dog can do on command!
- Puzzle toys that can be stuffed with food and/or treats are great for enrichment. You can also freeze the food inside the toy to add a bit more challenge and cool your dog down on hot summer days.
- You can even make your own enrichment toys using items you likely already have at home. Here is a link to a few DIY enrichment projects for your dog: <https://www.aspca.org/pet-care/dog-care/canine-diy-enrichment>



## Crate Training

Some people prefer to crate train their dogs, while others prefer not to. It can be a useful tool for many different situations, such as traveling with your pet in a car or house training them. If you plan to crate train your new dog, please consider these tips to ensure that you are doing it correctly. Some dogs adopted from the Prince William County Animals Services Center may already have been trained to use a crate by their previous owner, which may make this process go faster.

- It is important that the crate is **NEVER** used as punishment for your dog.
- First, choose a crate that is large enough for your dog to stand up and turn around in. If the crate is too large for your pup, they may urinate on one side of the kennel and sleep on the other.
- Put the crate in a room that people spend time in such as a bedroom or living area.
- Next, introduce your dog to the crate. You can toss a treat into the crate and praise your dog for entering it. It is not necessary to close the door behind them at first. You just want your dog to be comfortable going into the crate, especially if this is their first time encountering one.
- Never force your dog into the crate. Crate training should only continue when your pet is comfortable.
- When you need your dog to go in the kennel, try using vocal cues such as “crate,” “kennel,” “go to bed,” or whatever you would like the command to be and reward with a treat for doing so.
- Create a positive association with the crate. You may choose to feed your dog their meals in the crate. You can also play “crate games” by having your dog run after a toy or find treats that you have hidden in the crate.
- Once your dog is familiar with the crate and going in and out of it with ease, you can practice with semi-supervised longer crating periods. You will want to start with baby steps, so try for just a few minutes while you go into another room.
- If successful, you can try crating them while you are away doing quick errands, for around 15-30 minutes. If your dog does well, you can crate them for longer durations, but never leave your dog in a crate for more than 6 to 8 hours at a time without a bathroom break.
- If your dog seems overly anxious at any point, go back a couple steps and continue practicing with them while you’re at home.
- Be patient with crate training. It can sometimes take several weeks or even months of training until your dog gets the hang of it.

## **In Case of an Emergency**

### **Signs your pet may need immediate medical attention:**

- Bloating abdomen
- Difficulty breathing
- Staggering or stumbling
- Lameness or inability to walk
- Unconsciousness
- Dilated pupils
- Seizures
- Ingestion of foreign object(s)
- Inability to urinate or defecate
- Severe injury (hit by a car, broken bones, open wounds, etc.)

### **Local emergency care for your pet:**

#### **MedVet Northern Virginia**

Open 24/7  
703-361-8287  
8614 Centreville Road,  
Manassas, VA 20110

### **If you suspect that your dog has consumed something toxic:**

Call your veterinarian or ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center Phone Number:  
(888) 426-4435.

The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (APCC) is your best resource for any animal poison-related emergency, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. A consultation fee may apply. Visit <https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control> for more information.

## Additional Resources and Helpful Links:

- The American Heartworm Society and many veterinarians recommend year-round preventative medication due to heartworm being found in all 50 states. For more information on heartworms and prevention, visit <https://www.heartwormsociety.org/heartworms-in-dogs>.
- For information on other parasites from the Companion Animal Parasite Council: <https://www.petsandparasites.org/dog-owners/overview>
- Additional pet care information from the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA): <https://www.aspca.org/pet-care/dog-care>
- Tips for dealing with common behavioral issues from Animal Humane Society: <https://www.animalhumanesociety.org/behavior/pet-behavior-library>