

# TWO-WEEK STAYCATION

## How to successfully bring a new dog home

by **Laura McKinney**, A Rotta Love Plus

Adding another dog to your home is a big adjustment, not only for you and your family, but also for the new dog. Your new dog has been uprooted from the only life she knows (even if it wasn't great, at least she knew what to expect!). She doesn't know who she can trust, doesn't speak the language, and doesn't even know when – or if – her next meal will appear. A little extra work in the beginning can help smooth everyone's transition, promote bonding, and prevent behavior problems in the future.

### WEEK ONE

- Crate or tether your new dog when you can't supervise her. This will keep the dog out of trouble when you're not there to work with her. Don't be tempted to take your dog everywhere with you. Undoubtedly in the future, there will be times when you will need to go to work, go to the grocery store, or use the bathroom alone, so set up the expectation early that you will not always be present. While you're gone, give your dog a comfortable place to relax with a Kong or toy. Make sure to ignore any barking or whining; we don't want your new dog to think that being noisy makes you appear!
  - Leash the dog to you when you are together. This will prevent your dog from wandering off and getting in to trouble. It will also allow the dog to get comfortable with your routine. Plus, it will give you a chance to observe your dog for good behaviors and reward those behaviors with praise or a cookie.
  - Any training should be happy and positive in nature. Generally, if you have to touch the leash or the dog to get a behavior, this is too harsh of training for now. Consider this: Are you more likely to become friends with someone who is kind and gives you lots of cookies and praise, or someone who orders you around and punishes you regularly? Your new dog will bond with you faster if you are a fun person to hang out with. If you can't be positive in your training, it's better not to train at all during this stage.
- Stay put! Don't take your dog off your property. There will be plenty of time in the future for walks, car rides, trips to the pet store, training classes, and play dates with friends. Trips off your property can be overwhelming, overexciting, and stressful. For now, you want to focus on teaching your dog to trust you, learning your routine, and learning the routine of her new house.

- On the same note, don't allow visitors or introduce new animals – even the dogs already living in your house! Dogs bond much more easily to other dogs than to people, and this first week is for you to build a relationship with your new dog. This first week will also allow your new dog to get used to the smells and sounds of your other animals, which will make for much smoother introductions in just a few days' time. Don't let them meet – **don't even let them see each other!** – for this first week.

## WEEK TWO

- Let your dog earn the privilege of freedom. If she behaves well when leashed to your side, you can start letting her free in the room you are in. Keep a close eye on your new friend: don't let her find trouble, and don't let trouble find your dog! You don't want bad behavior now after you've put so much hard work into a great start.
- Start letting your new dog and your resident dog(s) see each other. Quick glimpses through baby gates are great for this: let them sniff for a second or two, then go with your new dog to another room to get a cookie for good behavior. If this goes well, start giving the dogs more exposure together. Crate them side by side, let your new dog sleep in a crate in your bedroom while your resident dog(s) sleep where they want, let them see each other while moving from room to room. After a day or two of this, provided everything is going well, start allowing short play dates between the dogs. Don't leave them together all the time yet, though! Make introductions a gradual, stress-free, relaxed process, and both your resident and new dogs will thank you for it. **You risk a lifetime of bad relations by rushing things; you risk nothing by going slowly.**
- Start introducing the outside world. Go for short walks around the neighborhood. Have a friend over for a quiet dinner. Let the dog ride along with you for a trip to the bank. Short, calm activities will keep your new dog from getting overwhelmed and help build the trust that you will keep her safe. Don't force your new dog into situations where she feels uncomfortable, especially this early in your relationship.

Two weeks is a general guideline for bringing a new dog fully into your home, your family, and your life. Some dogs require more time to adjust, some require less. Pay attention to what your new dog is telling you about her comfort level, and adjust your game plan accordingly. Building a foundation of trust and structure will pave the way for many years of happiness with you new best friend!

