

YOUR NEW BEST FRIEND: THE FIRST TWO WEEKS

Naturally, the first thing you want to do with your new dog is... everything! After all, isn't socialization one of the most important aspects of dog ownership? Yes. But before all of that comes the bond between dog and owner.

Imagine it from the dog's point of view: he might like you, but he doesn't know you yet. He's facing new people, new routines, and new rules all at once. He's stressed, and every additional challenge adds to the stress. Just like a human, your dog may react by becoming defensive and short-tempered, or fearful and shy.

You can make this transition easier on him by *taking things slowly*, and simplifying the introduction process. We call this the **"Two Week Shutdown"**. During these first weeks, avoid unnecessary stressors while the dog settles in, keep everything positive, and take it slowly.

- *Limit introductions to immediate family and caregivers:* he doesn't need to meet your neighbors, your friends, and other animals yet.
- *Avoid long, overstimulating walks:* if you have a yard, use that for outside time. Your dog will manage just fine with minimal exercise for this period.
- *Set him up to succeed:* that means avoiding complicated training and socializing situations for now. Celebrating his successes together and avoiding harsh corrections will strengthen your bond.
- *Use a crate:* it will be a safe haven for him in a time of uncertainty. It also keeps him isolated from other pets, and helps him make good choices like NOT peeing inside or destroying your shoes.
- *Set up a simple and consistent routine from the start:* regular mealtimes, calm leadership, and clear, fair rules will help your new pet get his bearings.

Every dog is different. Some might jump right in to your life with enthusiasm. Young pups sometimes handle things more easily than older dogs. A very timid or reactive dog, or one coming into a dramatically new environment (i.e. a former yard dog moving into a condo) may need extra care. But any new dog, especially one coming out of a chaotic shelter environment, will go through an adjustment period. So slow it down! It will make for a better "honeymoon period" and save you both a lot of stress down the road.

