

Congratulations — you have saved a very special life!

Bringing an under-socialized dog into your home can be an extremely rewarding experience. Across the country, animals are rescued from unfortunate situations such as puppy mills and animal hoarders.

Understand what you're getting into

Often, dogs rescued from puppy mills or hoarding situations have lived their entire lives in a cage with very little human contact. They don't know how to live in a home, or how to do "normal" dog things. They don't know about stairs, noises from televisions and dishwashers, kids, vacuum cleaners, and other everyday things.

In the beginning, your dog may not trust any human being. But by using positive, gentle and kind training techniques, you can become the first person your dog learns to trust. Here are some common conditions seen in dogs from these types of situations. Your dog may show all of the behaviors below, or just a few:

- Fear of people
- Fear of the outdoors
- Fear biting
- Difficulty with house-training
- Fear of loud noises

Don't expect your dog to know how to do any of the following at first:

- Go to the bathroom outdoors
- Play with toys
- Accept petting
- Accept treats from your hand
- Walk on a leash
- Come when called
- Be handled or held

Dogs' fear level and reaction to their environment can vary widely. Your dog may not need all the items or even the techniques outlined in this guide. We have included information to help the most under-socialized dogs, though much of it is relevant to even slightly shy dogs.

The good news!

With patience and kindness and using the techniques in this manual, your dog **will** show improvement. Some dogs eventually become normal, happy (and grateful) household pets. Others will always have special needs, but in an understanding environment they too can be happy, healthy, wonderful pets.

Please note that the trajectory of improved behavior varies for each dog, and while you may see a marked improvement one day, don't be discouraged if your new companion seems to revert to unwanted behavior the next. You will see an overall improvement, but it is rarely a linear journey. We are also always here to support you, feel free to call our behavior help line with any questions or concerns.

There is nothing more rewarding than knowing you've given a neglected or abused dog a chance to live in a real home and a loving environment.

Safety: For you, your new dog, and current pets

Keeping both yourself and your dog(s) safe should be your foremost concern. Remember that your dog may be extremely frightened at first. Here are guidelines to keep you and your dog safe.

1. How not to lose your dog.

For the first several weeks or months, your dog may panic and try to escape. (Don't be offended; remember that your dog is practicing the only behavior he/she knows, to run from new or scary things.) All too often, dogs slip out of collars, jump from cars, bolt out an open door/gate, jump over or dig under a fence. Here are precautions to take to keep your dog safe and with you:

- ALWAYS keep a well-fitted collar with ID tags on your dog. In addition, put a well-fitted harness on your dog.
- ALWAYS keep a leash attached to the collar or, preferably, the harness. This is also called a drag line, and is often the only way to catch your dog. Your dog will get used to wearing the leash in your home, in the crate, in the car, outdoors — everywhere. (To prevent serious accidents, supervise the dog more closely if the leash is on a collar.)
- Use extra caution when you first let your dog roam freely around your house. If your house is large, you may want to start out by allowing access to only one or two rooms. Use a baby gate if needed.
- Be sure that everyone in the household knows to be careful when going in and out of the house. Have baby gates at open doors to the outside to prevent sudden escape attempts.
- In the car, be sure to only crack windows slightly. Dogs can squeeze through a much smaller space than seems possible. Always have the dog on a leash in the car. Before you open the car door, make sure the leash is tied to something or get a hold of it to prevent the dog from escaping.
- Consider having your dog travel in a crate in the car. Getting in and out of the car are prime opportunities for your dog to slip out. Placing your dog in a crate in the car is the safest way to travel with your dog.

- Use an exercise pen or tie-out cable within your fenced yard until you can easily catch your dog. Keep in mind, letting your dog loose in the yard, especially if it is large, can mean a game of chase for you. This is also when dogs tend to escape from yards.

2. How to prevent your dog from biting you or harming your other pets.

While not always the case, extremely fearful dogs may bite. You'll quickly get to know your dog and how he or she tolerates handling. Some dogs will "freeze" or "shut down" when touched or picked up, others will try to bite. Some dogs that have a history of being starved will guard their food. **It is important not to get angry if your dog shows fearful behavior.**

- Another way to hold your dog, if needed, is to wrap him/her in a towel (kind of like a burrito). Veterinarians often use these techniques to examine, vaccinate or microchip small dogs.
- Do not place your face next to the dog's head, as she may flee or bite; remember, she was not kissed and cuddled growing up.
- Do not "push" your dogs. Patience and time is of the utmost importance with puppy mill dogs. Some take days, some months, some years, but the "baby steps" are amazing. Please remember to focus on the three steps forward and not the two steps backward in this process. Most dogs benefit from another dog in the home as a "role model."
- You cannot be too careful with shy dogs, and it is always better to be on the safe side. They usually bond with other dogs first (that's all they've ever known) and then you. Most of these dogs will never be "normal" in the typical socialization sense, but you will develop a special, wonderful relationship that's one of a kind.
- In "escape attempts," do not chase your dog! If your dog's leash is out of your hands, and he's running from you, he'll only run faster if you begin to chase him. See the document called "If Your Dog Is Lost."

Bringing your dog home: The first days

Now that you've got your supplies together, and are prepared for the special and rewarding task ahead, it's finally time to bring your dog home. It will take time for you to get used to your new dog, and vice versa. Every dog and every household is different, but there are some things you can do to make the transition as seamless as possible.

1. Give your dog a comfortable place to settle in.

Plopping your new dog down in the middle of a large house or yard is very scary for a shy dog. Instead, first designate one room for your dog to get used to, and slowly expand the space as he feels more comfortable. For the first few hours, it is best to bring your dog into a quiet room, open the crate door, and leave him alone. Your dog may want to stay in the crate, or he may want to find another place to hide. Be prepared: Your dog may poop or pee in the room. He most likely has never been trained not to use his immediate living area as a bathroom. Puppy pads will be helpful until your dog makes progress with potty training.

2. Secure the harness/collar and leash.

Remember, a well-fitted collar with I.D. tags is a must! Hopefully, your dog will already be wearing a well-fitted harness or collar with a leash attached. If he isn't, now is the time to put one on. You'll want to wear the welding gloves and have two people for this job if possible. Your dog may not be too afraid, but it is better to be prepared. Bring your dog into a small

room such as a bathroom or small bedroom. Take your dog out of his crate, speaking in a soothing voice. You may need to take the top off the crate in order to reach your dog. Have one person be the “holder” while the other carefully puts on the harness and/or collar. Make sure to clip a lightweight leash to the collar or harness. Now you have a way to catch your dog for potty breaks and anything else.

3. How to do potty breaks.

Use the same method you've used indoors — limit the space. In the beginning, you should place your dog in an exercise pen within your fenced yard. Make sure you always keep the leash attached to the dog's harness. If your dog panics while on lead, either pick him up, or carry him in and out in a small crate. Your dog will feel safer and secure in the exercise pen, and will be less likely to run and find a place to hide. Frightened dogs can easily panic and look for an escape route, which could be a hole in the fence, over the fence, under a deck, or another place that makes it difficult or unsafe to retrieve your dog. Remember that dogs that have lived their entire lives in cages can be extremely difficult to house-train, so just do your best to stay consistent, putting your dog in the exercise pen every few hours, especially after he's eaten.

Living with your dog

Watching your dog's personality emerge is by far the most rewarding aspect of adopting a previously abused or neglected dog. Remember that it may be weeks before you see things like tail wags or any playful behavior. The best way to work with your dog is to introduce new things in increments. It's also important to make an effort to expose your dog (slowly) to new things, places and people — just not all at once right away. For example, taking your dog to a pet-friendly store or a dog park on his first day with you is probably not a good idea. Below are some tips to help your dog acclimate to life in your home and beyond.

1. Hand-feed your dog.

Seeing you as the source for food will help your dog learn to trust you. Simply placing a bowl of food on the floor is not enough to reinforce this, but feeding your dog straight from your hand is an excellent way to start building a bond. Your dog may be reluctant to eat in the beginning, especially in your presence. If this is the case, start by putting food down, and then step away and sit quietly in the room. Also, try “high value” treats, like chicken, cheese, freeze-dried liver, canned dog food and other irresistible goodies. Many dogs are afraid of hands coming at them, so crouch low and sit quietly, extending your hand out with the treat. Don't stare at your dog, or look him in the eye until he's comfortable taking food from you.

2. Start socializing, but keep space limited.

After a day or two, move your dog to a slightly busier place in the house. Kitchens and family rooms are great areas for your dog to start observing the bustle of living in a home. Set up an exercise pen, if you have one, so your dog can see what's going on, but will still feel safe. It is important not to let your dog spend all his time in the crate. Most of the time, dogs see the crate as a safe haven and if given the choice, will stay in it all the time. You don't want to remove the safe spot entirely, but don't let your dog hide all the time either.

3. Introduce your current pets.

Once your new dog has had a few days to settle in his safe area, you can bring your other pets in, one by one, to meet him. Hopefully your other pets will welcome your new dog, but supervision is important in case there are any squabbles. Also, be aware that your new dog may act very differently when you are in the room. Shy dogs often don't show their true

behavior for a long time or until no one is around. Use caution if you have other pet species (like a pet bird, rat or other rodent), especially if your dog is a terrier or bird dog.

4. Have a “role model” for your new dog.

Dogs from situations of neglect and overcrowding are often afraid of people, but are comfortable around other dogs. Having another dog in your home — one who has been socialized to people and a normal living situation — can be great as a role model for your new dog. Often, new dogs will start to mimic the behavior of your current dogs, and will just be more comfortable in general. Think about what it would be like to be sent to an alien planet, with only aliens present. If there was one friendly human there, you'd feel a lot more comfortable — your dog will, too.

Training and socializing your dog

So your dog has settled into your home, and seems fairly comfortable with the routine of eating, sleeping, potty training, and maybe even playing with your other dog(s). Now it's time for the fun part — working with your dog every day to help him learn normal “pet dog stuff.” You've made it past the extreme fear phase, and that's great!

The rest of the pages in this kit will help you and your dog move beyond the basics of just getting by. Remember, it could take months or years for your dog to really be comfortable around people. Here are some things to consider:

1. Spend time working with your dog every day.

Even if it's just a few minutes a few times a day. Too much time without working on your dog's skills is a way to lose ground fast.

2. If you see a sudden change in behavior or habits, take your dog to a vet.

Acting more fearful or snappy than usual, or refusing to eat, could mean your dog is in pain or doesn't feel well.

3. Don't stop when you reach a comfort zone or plateau.

Sure, your dog may be living just fine in your house, but there's more to life than that. Strive to help your dog get comfortable with everything he may encounter, such as going to the groomer, taking walks, meeting other dogs and people.

4. Go at your dog's pace.

You want to make progress, but pushing your dog beyond what he's ready for is counterproductive and can negatively affect your relationship with him.