

## WHAT TO EXPECT OF YOUR NEW PEN PALS DOG

While the Pen Pals dogs are in our care, we work on:

House-training

Crate-training

Basic obedience skills

Behavior problem solving

It's important to remember that we are just laying a training foundation for each dog. Our adopters need to continue practicing these skills when the dog joins their home. There will be a slew of new distractions and exciting things in his new home and neighborhood – things he might have never been exposed to while living with our handlers in their restricted environment. (This is especially true of walking on a loose leash in new, distracting settings.)

It is also normal for a dog to learn to listen to cues promptly with his primary trainer(s), but this does not automatically transfer to any new person who works with the dog. He'll need to learn that the cues and instruction *you* give are important to listen to as well. This can be accomplished quite easily, as long as you make time each day to practice the skills we've introduced and to reinforce him for his good efforts.

There are many ways to reinforce a dog. Treats are great for many dogs, and with some, you can even use portions of their regular meals (kibble). Tossing a favorite toy, after the dog responds correctly to a cue, is a great way to reinforce toy-motivated dogs. Allowing the dog to exit a crate, or pass through your door to the yard, is another great "life reward" you can use to reinforce something you desire, such as sitting politely at the door until released. If your dog loves petting, have him sit or down before you love on him. Require him to sit before you place his food bowl on the floor, or before attaching the leash to his collar to go on a fun walk.

By making the things your dog desires CONTINGENT upon him responding to your cues first, you will create a dog who happily listens to you because it consistently scores him good things in life! There are dozens of little 'training moments' throughout your day – take advantage of these.

Another point we'd like to mention – our dogs are house-trained while in our care, and the inmate handlers do their best to teach good manners, but here are some important points to remember:

- Our handlers take their dogs outside on a consistent schedule, and their feeding schedule is consistent, too. This insures efficient house-training. Your schedule may be a bit different and the dog will need time to adjust.
- When the dog goes outside to eliminate, a handler is there to be sure he actually does his business. Some adopters expect the dog to eliminate when alone in a fenced yard, but this may not happen right away. You may need to go outside with the dog for a few days to be sure he's getting the job done.
- Our handlers' rooms are SMALL, unlike the comparatively large homes the dogs move into when adopted. Too much unsupervised freedom immediately after the adoption is a recipe for house-soiling accidents or chewing damage with some dogs.
- Our handlers are strict about using a crate when the dog is unsupervised, so that he can't have any accidents or find any trouble to get into! Often, the dog will be given a nice food-stuffed toy – such as a Kong – to keep him occupied and content in the crate. We urge you to use a crate when you can't supervise your new dog. (Gradually test his ability to handle more freedom after he's settled in and you've had time to assess him better.) Imagine, from a dog's perspective, all the lovely temptations you have around your home which he may not have been exposed to before – food on counters, edibles in trash pails, children's stuffed toys, leather shoes (yummy!), sofa pillows, remote controls, etc.  
*Confinement when no supervision is possible = smart management.*
- When you are home, here's an alternative to crating – you can loop a leash around a sturdy piece of furniture in a room you'll be spending time in, and then attach the leash to the dog. When he's tethered like this near you, he gets to enjoy your company (dogs don't like

isolation!) and you are able to supervise him and keep him from sneaking off to find mischief. Providing a nice chewie or a food-stuffed toy should entertain him during this time.

One final point we'd like to share – when our dogs experience a major life change, i.e. when they leave the shelter to join our program, and when they leave the program to join their new family, it is a stressful event. Some rebound quickly, in just a couple of days. Others may need a week or more. Each dog is an individual and will show their stress in different ways. For instance, some dogs:

- Stop eating for a couple of days
- Shut down behaviorally – you see little activity and possibly no interest in treats
- Drink excessively (and thus need to pee more frequently)
- Pace or become excitable in the home (when that isn't their normal behavior)
- Chew things up (when that hasn't been the norm during our care)
- Whine or bark in the crate
- Won't respond, at first, to cues they've learned

You can help him through this stressful time by being patient, consistent and providing structure and clear guidelines. Our trainers are also available to answer questions or give you additional guidance, so please feel free to call on us. It's better to address a problem EARLY than to wait and just hope it'll go away.

Thank you for supporting the Pen Pals program!