

Adoption Handbook

Some Common Sense Suggestions for Easing
the Transition With Your New Family Member

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Dear Adopter:

Congratulations on your new family member—a BTBR dog!

Bringing a new dog into your home—and your life—is a big commitment, one that comes with many benefits and joys. (But let's be real: many responsibilities as well).

This Adoption Handbook isn't intended to be an exhaustive guide about dog ownership but we wanted to give you a few sound tips at the outset. There's great material on the web that can provide you with critical information on a just-in-time basis. And, the counsel of a good veterinarian can be invaluable. But, when you have questions, ask! BTBR is here to help. Our contact information is on the last page.

We're thrilled you've decided to take this step. Thank you for supporting rescue dogs.

*The Board of the
Black Tie Boston Rescue*

Checklist of Initial Supplies

MEETING YOUR DOG'S NEEDS

Adding any new family member, especially the four-legged kind, requires a certain amount of equipment and some adjustments to your home for everyone's safety and comfort. Here's a list of must-have supplies for a great start with your new BTBR dog:

Basics

- [] Food (ideally, the food the foster parent fed the BTBR dog to start; gradually transition your dog to another brand, as appropriate)
- [] Water bowl
- [] Bed, blanket, towels
- [] Crate and/or baby gate
- [] Long leash, short leash
- [] Flat collar w/ID tag (to be worn at all times)
- [] Head halter or anti-pull harness (for walking)
- [] Poop bags

Dog Care

- [] Dog toothbrush, dog toothpaste
- [] Nail clippers
- [] Dog shampoo
- [] Grooming brush
- [] Flea & tick prevention*
- [] Heartworm prevention*

Training and Mental Stimulation

- [] Food dispensing toys (KONG® toys, treat balls)
- [] Puzzle toys (hide-and-seek, treat wheels)
- [] Training treats (soft treats, freeze-dried meats)*
- [] Edible chews

*Consult your vet for recommendations

Set Up for Success



SETTING UP YOUR HOME

Tempting as it is to give your new dog the run of the house right away, that's too much freedom too soon. Instead, create a safe, confined area—a dog-proofed area—to allow your dog to make a gradual transition to their new home. The dog-proofed area is where your dog will stay when you can't supervise them, *i.e.*, whenever you can't keep your eyes on them **the entire time**. This prevents chewing incidents, house-training accidents and teaches your dog to relax while alone. Don't worry that this is too strict or mean. Dogs are den animals who truly enjoy close quarters.

Where? The ideal dog-proofed area is easy to clean and easy to close off with a door or baby gate. It should be mostly free of furniture. The best places for a dog-proofed area are the kitchen, laundry room, bathroom or an empty spare room.

What? Furnish the dog-proofed area with a bed or a crate with something soft to sleep on, a water bowl and several toys, including a chew toy or a KONG® stuffed with part of your dog's meal.

FOR A HAPPY AND WELL-BEHAVED DOG

A good exercise program means a healthier *and* better-behaved dog. Tired dogs bark less, chew less, sleep more, and rest easier if left home alone. Does that mean you must take up marathon running? No, but a stroll around the block is not enough.

Here are some options for giving your dog a good, aerobic workout:

- ✓ Train your dog to fetch or play Frisbee®
- ✓ Sign up for a dog sport or activity like agility
- ✓ Let your dog-friendly dog play with other dog-friendly dogs regularly
- ✓ Burn off mental and physical energy with regular obedience training and/or classes
- ✓ Hire a dog walker or enroll your dog in doggy daycare

Tip: Until your dog's recall (coming when called) is rock-solid, don't let them off leash unless you are in a fenced-in area.

Set Up for Success, continued

FOR A HAPPY AND WELL-BEHAVED DOG

Mental Stimulation

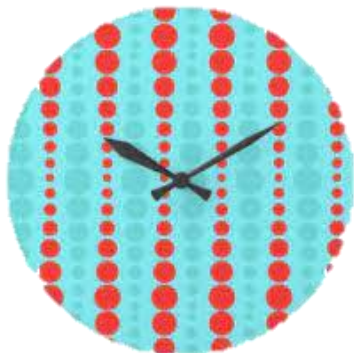
When it comes to boredom, dogs are a lot like children. Unless you give them something fun to do, they will make their own fun. To dogs, that often means a scavenger hunt in the trashcan or disemboweling the couch cushions.

Instead, give your dog acceptable outlets for their mental energy by providing toys, puzzles and other brain teasers.

Always choose size-appropriate chews or toys and check with your vet before introducing your dog to a new product. Avoid rawhide chews and pig's ears—they've proven dangerous to dogs.



Start Off on the Right Foot



THE FIRST HOUR

It's important not to give your dog the run of the house—or make them the center of attention—right away. Instead, prepare them for a normal routine from the beginning by introducing them to your home this way:

Step 1: When you arrive home, take your dog out for a walk or bathroom break.

Step 2: Introduce them on leash to their new home, including the dog-proofed area.

Step 3: Give them a chew bone or stuffed KONG® and leave them alone in the dog-proofed area for five minutes or less. Then take away the bone or KONG® until the next time they are in the dog-proofed area alone.

Tip: If they begins to howl, whine or bark, wait for them to be quiet for at least 10 seconds before you respond. Otherwise, they learn that whining or barking summons you, and they will bark or cry for longer periods of time.

THE FIRST DAY

You probably want to spend every moment with your new dog, but that can give you problems in the long run. Dogs are highly social animals and have to be taught to be calm and relaxed when alone. You need to get your dog used to, initially, brief absences within the first few hours of their arrival at your home. See page 9 for crate training tips.

Leave your dog in their dog-proofed area while you go out or spend time in another part of the house. Vary the length of your absences, from 30 seconds to 20 minutes, and repeat them throughout the day. Does your dog seem comfortable? Then increase the amount of time.

Tip: It may take several days or even weeks for your dog to adjust to their new home.



Start Off on the Right Foot, *continued*



THE BEDTIME ROUTINE

After a bathroom break, put your dog in their crate or dog-proofed area with a chew toy. They may have trouble settling in at first, but should eventually relax and go to sleep.

Tip: Harsh as it seems, don't respond if your dog cries or barks. If they get attention for crying or barking, they'll keep it up longer the next time.

LEAVING FOR THE FIRST TIME

Just as you can't spend the first 48 hours nonstop with your dog and expect them to be fine when you leave, you can't launch into eight-hour absences from the get-go. Ideally, your dog will never have to be left alone for a full working day. But you need to build up to longer absences *gradually*.

House Training and the Crate

AVOIDING ACCIDENTS

Regardless of your new dog's house training history, you should allow anywhere from a few weeks to several months for a brush-up course. That way, you avoid accidents and get off to a great start. To do this, you need to use your dog-proofed area and/or a crate. A crate is a terrific investment for a number of reasons. A crate can help you with:

- ✓ House training. Prompts your dog to hold it when unsupervised.
- ✓ Chew training. Stops your dog from chewing anything except legitimate chew toys.
- ✓ Settling. Teaches your dog to settle down when alone and inactive.
- ✓ Kenneled. Your dog may need to stay in a crate during travel or a hospital visit.

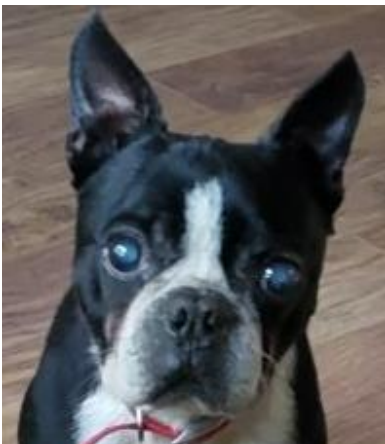
If you decide to purchase a crate, get one large enough for your dog to stand up, lie down and turn around—but no larger. Otherwise, they might be tempted to use one end as a bathroom and the other as a bed.

CRATE TRAINING

Before you start using the crate, you have to give your dog a chance to get used to it. Don't just put them in there and hope they adjust; that would be unrealistic. The crate needs to be a comfy, safe place they love to spend time in—their “den.” You can make them feel this way about the crate by using treats, praise and toys in an easy-to-follow crate training program. Here's how:

The First Day

1. Throw tiny, yummy treats into the crate. When your dog goes in to get the treats, praise your dog. Then allow the dog to leave the crate freely.



House Training and the Crate, continued



2. When your dog is happily venturing into the crate, begin practicing closing the door for a few seconds while giving them treats through the opening in the crate. Then let your dog right back out. Repeat the exercise many times, building up to 10 seconds.

The Next Few Days

1. Repeat step 2 from above. Then stuff a KONG® or a yummy chew toy with extra-special goodies. Put the treat in the crate and close the door behind your dog as they go to eat it. Go about your business in the house, then let your dog back out after five minutes. Do this without any fanfare whatsoever.

2. Repeat the exercise several times in the next couple of days using a KONG® or a yummy chew toy.

3. Vary the absences from one to 20 minutes. Ignore your dog if they whine or bark; always wait to let them out until they have been quiet for 10 seconds.



Leaving the House

1. Leave your dog in the crate with something delicious in their KONG® or a yummy chew toy. Then leave the house for *brief* errands, such as collecting your mail or watering the garden.

2. Over the next few sessions, gradually extend the duration of your absences. Go from one minute to five minutes to 10, 15 or 30 minutes. Don't just build your absences upward, though; throw in some shorter ones for variety.

Tip: Never leave your dog in the crate longer than three to four hours at a time, except for bedtime.

House Training and the Crate, continued

KEEP IT POSITIVE

Even the smartest, best-trained dog can have accidents, especially when getting used to a new home. The best thing is to treat your newly-adopted dog like a puppy for the first weeks or months, at least where house training is concerned. The key to success is to use your dog-proofed area and/or the crate.

Golden Rules of House Training

- ✓ Until your dog is perfectly house trained, never leave them alone unless they're in the dog-proofed area or crate. Supervise your dog at all times when given the run of the house.
 - ✓ Take your dog out on leash often. Start by walking them at half-hour intervals. Then, increase the intervals gradually.
- ✓ If you see your dog sniffing and circling in the house, take them out immediately.
 - ✓ Praise and reward with a treat when they go outdoors.
 - ✓ Keep in mind that your dog's size affects how long they can hold it. The smaller the dog, the less time you can expect them to go without a bathroom break.

Tip: Never yell at or punish your dog for an accident.

It will only make them afraid of you, and usually it makes the behavior worse. (When *you're* about to lose it, put your dog in the crate or dog-proofed area, and give yourself a time-out).



Obedience Training



PRACTICE POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Training your dog through positive reinforcement means using your dog's natural motivators to teach them which behaviors you like and which you don't. You can use anything your dog wants: Praise, toys, treats, a belly rub, a leash walk—whatever your dog loves.

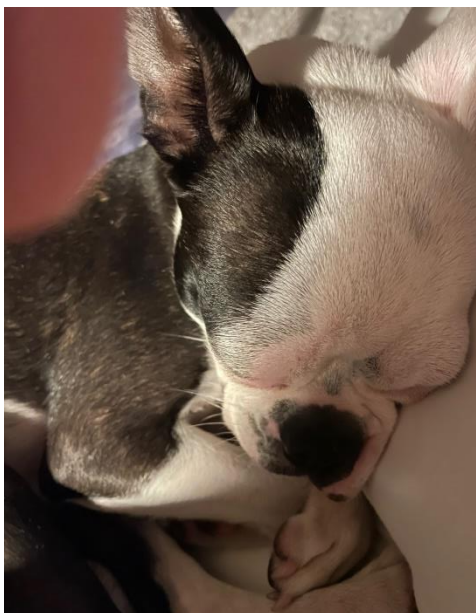
This type of training is based on the fundamental truth that all animals are more likely to repeat a behavior that's reinforced—and less likely to repeat one that isn't. Just like we humans are much more likely to show up for work if we get a steady paycheck, dogs will do exactly what we want them to do—if we tap into their motivation. Reward behaviors you like. That will make them happen more often. Ignore behaviors you don't like. That will make them happen less often.

Why It Works So Well

1. Tapping into your dog's innate motivators makes training fun for them—and it helps make you their favorite person on the planet.
2. Making training a game means your dog relaxes and learns faster.

One Caveat: Knowledge acquisition centers in your dog's brain slow down or shut off completely when they're afraid—risk-avoidance takes the place of problem-solving. So, if your dog is scared or uncomfortable, they can't learn.

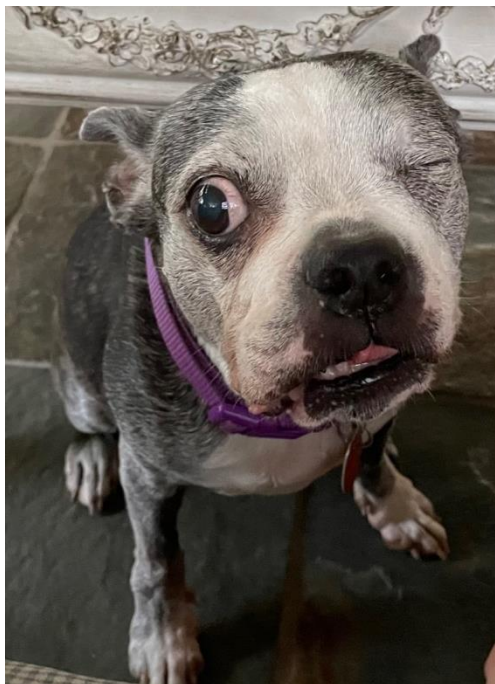
Find a way to make them comfortable first, and then try again.



Obedience Training, continued

A Word on Punishment

Never use physical punishment. It comes with serious side effects, like aggression, fear, and erosion of the trust between you and your dog.



EXTINGUISHING UNWANTED BEHAVIORS

Using positive reinforcement methods doesn't mean you never say "No" to your dog. You just say it in a way they understand instead of using human language. Either:

Ignore the behavior. Don't reinforce or inadvertently reward unwanted behavior. (Remember: Allowing the dog out of the crate when whining or barking? Wrong message!)

Avoid the situation. Restrict your dog's access to a place, person or object. You see a squirrel and you tell your dog to sit. Reward the sit.

Redirect them to an alternative behavior and reward those. Instead of just saying, "Off," when your dog jumps up, say "Off" and then tell your dog to sit. Reward the sit.

Tip: Ask your dog to "Say please" when they want something. Ask your dog to sit for doors to be opened, balls to be thrown, food to be fed, etc.

That way, asking politely becomes your dog's main strategy for getting what they want, not pushy behavior.

Obedience Training, continued

FOUNDATION BEHAVIORS

Dog training is great for exercise, learning and enjoyment, and you can make it a regular part of your dog's entire life. For now, the following five behaviors form a great foundation:

- ✓ Come when called (recall)
- ✓ Sit
- ✓ Down
- ✓ Stay
- ✓ Off

Teaching your dog these behaviors will make life easier for both you and your dog—and all can be taught within a few months.

These simple principles create a win-win partnership between you and your dog. You get a polite dog, who gets to play with other dogs, chase Frisbees® and eat their favorite treats.

Rome Wasn't Built In A Day

You and your dog are now a team and all teams experience failure—or they're not trying hard enough. Some days, your new dog will be Perfect Puppy and other days, *THAT ANIMAL*. Take a deep breathe, take a break, use the crate or dog-proofed area and regroup. Building *any* worthwhile relationship takes time.

Good luck and enjoy your good dog!



BTBR Contacts

Assistant Director | Adoption Coordinator
Olivia Krohmer
adopt@blacktiebostonrescue.org
ph. 740-396-0382

Director | Foster Coordinator
Megan Davis
foster@blacktiebostonrescue.org
ph. 843-245-2921

Medical Director
Kali Schwindt
medical@blacktiebostonrescue.org
ph. 919-699-5639

Rescue Resource
Robin Hrycko
info@blacktiebostonrescue.org

Treasurer
Peggy Nash
donate@blacktiebostonrescue.org

