



Decompression Time for Your New Dog

It is an exciting time when you adopt a new dog or puppy! However, it is important to note that this can be a time of great stress for your new addition. Although your home is going to be filled with love and attention, your dog needs time to adjust to their new surroundings.

Your dog needs to learn where to go out, how to navigate your house, where the water and food bowls are, who the humans are, maybe even who the other pets are. Plus, new sounds, smells and sights. So, it can be overwhelming! Dogs need at minimum, 3-7 days to decompress depending on their past. Some take longer, so please be patient.

So, here are a few tips to help reduce stress levels for your new puppy/dog and make the acclimation to your home one that will be successful.

- Have things set up before your new pet comes home such as a crate or confined area, water bowls and bedding. Have a name tag with your phone number on them just in case!
- If there are additional pets in the home, pick up all toys and food bowls to avoid possible scuffles. Add extra water bowls as an inability to find/access water is highly stressful to dogs.
- Limit access to furniture the first week as although this may be something you want to enjoy, it can create issues initially, especially for dogs that have never been on furniture.
- When you get home, walk your new dog on leash through areas of the house they have access to. It is a good idea to limit the area initially and gradually add more access as the weeks go on. Take them on leash multiple times to the door that leads to potty access and stay with them outside. *Note – your dog may be newly neutered and if an adolescence or adult, may have the desire/need to mark (which can be due to anxiousness). So, keeping on leash initially to avoid this is a good idea. If your dog begins to lift his leg, say “eh eh” and take them outside to a vertical surface like a bush or tree. Avoid any physical corrections as this can worsen the behavior. Simply redirect as the behavior may be motivated by stress.

- Spend your first week bonding with your new dog but avoid overwhelming them. Don't hover over them, shower them with attention or take them places. Also, avoid having people over as this can be very stressful for them. Remember that they are learning about their environment, so we need to give them time to learn about you, your immediate family and your home first. More attention and novel things will come over the next few weeks.
- During feeding time, please feed away from the other pets and keep children away from the feeding area. Your dog may be stressed with the new changes so avoid getting too close to their bowl and give them some privacy when eating.
- If you are taking them on a walk, be sure the equipment (harness, fabric martingale collar) are fitted properly. Take them to a quiet area as walking in a busy neighborhood could be too stressful for them initially. Gradually introduce them to your neighborhood over the next month.

Just remember that although you will provide your new dog with a wonderful, loving home, to your dog, you are a stranger and everything around is strange and scary. So, take it slow.

Jenny Falvey, CPDT-KA, CBCC-KA, VSPDT

Dogsmartz Unleashed, LLC www.dogsmartzunleashed.com