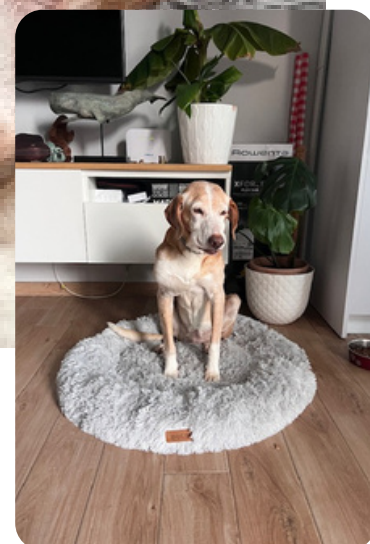




Dogs Decoded
— Simply —

WELCOMING YOUR RESCUE DOG

A Simple Settling-In Guide
for the First Few Months at
Home



By Marta

from

DOGS DECODED SIMPLY

My rescue dog's story

I really wasn't ready to take on a rescue dog at the time: I was travelling a lot, moving flats, working long hours, having a small, top floor apartment in the middle of the city. But as soon as I saw her face on an Instagram post by a local shelter, my eyes filled with tears and I clicked on the "Find out more" button. You already know how this story ends...



important!

Do your research on the shelter as well as the history/background of the dog as much as possible

She was 13-14 years old, was found wondering the streets of a village in Spain, skinny to the bone, when a local shelter took her in. Had a massive tumour on her shoulder, multiple little ones all across her body. She had leishmania (a chronic, and incurable disease caused by parasites transmitted through sandfly bites) and had weak kidneys. I went to visit her. Filled out all the papers there and then, then a few days later, picked her up. She gave me beautiful 7 months together when one day she could not even stand up anymore. The vet told me her liver has shut down and the best way was to help her ease the pain, forever. I was holding her throughout the process and she was wagging her tail until her last breath.

Hi! My name is Marta, as a certified dog behaviourist and trainer, founder of Dogs Decoded Simply. I help rescue dogs and their owners build calm, confident relationships from day one. I wrote this guide to help others navigate the nuances about welcoming a rescue dog into their new homes.

Preparation – before the arrival

Prepare your home for the arrival, and buy/get the essentials:

- bed and blanket: make sure the bed is big enough for your dog and has a head rest area
- selection of toys
- food feeding tools: slow feeder, snuffle mat, lick-mat, Kong, etc.
- food: shop bought, home made or raw
- collar, lead and tag
- appropriate cleaning products

Prepare your house for their arrival:

- Check for hazards around the home such as chemicals, wires, medicines and toxic plants
- Moving anything you don't want them to get hold of and setting up a baby gate, if required.
- Plan out the space – working out where your dog will rest, sleep, eat etc. and set up a den area in a quiet space away from the main, busy part of the house

important!

As well as their likes and dislikes, ask if your dog requires any **ongoing veterinary care**. Also, ask if your dog have any specific **training or behaviour needs**? You should also ask if they have **any special dietary requirements**.



What to expect during the first few months?

Transitioning a shelter dog from life in the shelter into its new home can be both exciting and unpredictable. For some dogs, this transition is seamless and they are thrilled to begin their new life with you. For others, this transition can be very stressful. During this time, we refer adopters to the 3-3-3 'rule'. This is general guideline for the phases your dog may experience after they are brought to their new home but may not be true for all dogs and timing can vary.



Decompress

3 Days

- may feel very overwhelmed
- may feel scared by their new surroundings
- they act timid around you
- they may not want to eat or drink
- they may want to hide completely
- may shut down
- may test boundaries



New Routine

3 Weeks

- starts to feel more comfortable with you and their new surroundings
- begin to build trust adjusting to your routine
- starts to feel more comfortable
- letting guard down
- behaviour issues may start to show up



Feels at Home

3 Months

- true personality is shown
- they are comfortable in their new home
- they trust you as an owner
- they have adjusted to your routine
- gains security and safety

Top 10 tips for welcoming your dog

The first few days after you bring your rescue dog home can be the hardest. It may well have been quite some time since they have lived in a home, maybe never before. Here are my **top 10 tips** to help them settle in and make it as stress-free as possible.

- 1.** Let them settle in at their own pace. Most dogs may be scared when they arrive at your home. You may find they hide at first and don't seem to want to interact. Don't worry - this is perfectly normal. To help them relax you should let them go at their own pace.
- 2.** Allow them to spend time on their own without disruptions and come to you when they are ready.
- 3.** Avoid any visitors to the home during this time and make sure it is calm and quiet, so they get familiar with their new surroundings in peace.
- 4.** Don't force anything. Wait for them to approach you and keep your hands at your side. If they lean in, stroke them gently for a few seconds. Then wait to see if they initiate further interactions. This is to make sure they are enjoying it and feeling relaxed.
- 5.** Allow them to spend time in their den area undisturbed. That den will be particularly important during these first few days. They will learn that it is a quiet, safe space where they can go to spend time on their own. They can relax here and simply observe while they get used to the new household. They won't feel exposed, and this will help to build their confidence.

Top 10 tips for welcoming your dog

6. You could add enrichment, treats and toys to their den area to encourage them to use it and help them to learn that it's a positive place. They should never be disturbed when they are here.

7. Keep walks short and in the same location. Increase distance and duration of walks very slowly. Allow your dog to sniff during the walks.

8. Create a routine and stick to it. This will help your dog get used to their new home and start to know what to expect and when.

9. Keep a diary. You could keep a settling-in diary for the first three months. This is a place where you can note down everything from your pup's likes and dislikes to behaviours and eating habits. This will help you get to know your dog and what is normal for them. You may notice changes over the first few days, weeks and months and this will help you to keep a track of them.

10. If needed, seek behavioural support. You cannot always know exactly what an adult dog will be like in your home when you see them in kennels. This means they may display some unexpected behaviours when you arrive home. If you notice this, seek professional support.



The 3 main pitfalls to avoid



1. Rushing things

Do not rush anything: long walks, interactions, high-arousal plays, groomer visit, introduction to new people or other animals in the household. Introduce everything very slowly, always observing the body language of your dog.

2. No Dog Parks

Dog parks can be high-stress environments. You don't know how your dog reacts to other dogs yet, and stress can lead to snap decisions. Take your time to go to a dog park with your new dog.

3. You being anxious makes them anxious

When you're anxious, you release hormones that your dog can actually smell. You being anxious makes them anxious as they are mirroring the tension they feel coming from you. Use low volume voice, gentle touches and calm energy.