

Michelson Found Animals

The Basics of Dog Ownership

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The Basics of Dog Ownership

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR NEW FURRY FAMILY MEMBER



Sharing your life with a dog is an incredibly rewarding — and sometimes challenging — experience.

This guide is to help you through the first few days, weeks and months of dog ownership so you can enjoy the many years ahead.

And feel free to refer back to this whenever you hit a roadblock.



Exercising Your Dog

EXERCISE IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF A DOG'S HEALTH

Dogs love to play and require enough exercise to burn calories, stimulate their minds and help satisfy their urge to run, chase, fetch, dig and chew.

If they do not get enough exercise and stimulation, dogs will get bored, which tends to lead to destructive behaviors.

At minimum, a young and healthy dog will need at least 30 minutes of active play a day. A full hour of play is optimal, however.



Puppies and active breeds have a ton of energy and they'll thrive on burning it off and all of the extra attention!

If your healthy dog gets tired after 15 minutes or so, keep at it! Just like humans, dogs will build stamina and get fitter with every session.

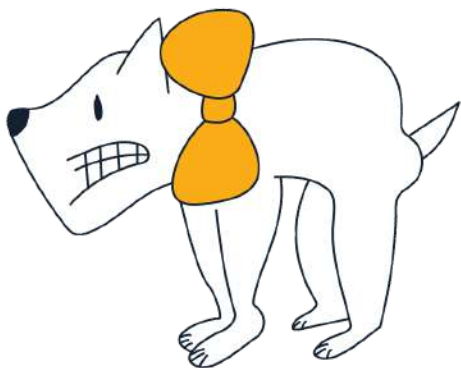
Make sure to take precautions exercising your dog in warm weather, however. They tend to overheat faster than humans, so if your dog looks done, call it a day.

Also, always make sure to have water on hand to keep them hydrated.



Grooming 101

HELP KEEP YOUR PUP HAPPY WITH REGULAR GROOMING



Frequent brushing can reduce shedding, prevent or remove mats and help keep your dog clean.

Some dogs love it, some hate it and some couldn't care less. Some breeds require professional grooming, but most dogs can be bathed at home.

For full details on how to do this, check out our guide [here](#).



The pet grooming business in the United States is a \$6B industry and the average dog owner spends approximately \$73 per grooming visit.*

1

Don't use human shampoo (nope, not even the stuff for babies)! You'll need a gentle formula especially for dogs. Ask your vet which one they recommend.

2

Brush first. Your dog will be so much easier to bathe if you run a comb through that fur first.

3

Towels, towels, towels! We predict you'll need at least three.

4

Protect your drain. If you don't want to have to call the plumber, block your drain to catch loose fur.

5

Blowdry, if you have the time. We know, it's not a salon, but it'll prevent your wet dog from climbing and rubbing against your furniture.

6

Don't forget the flea treatment. Apply this two to three days after the bath, when the oil returns to your dog's fur. Treat fleas all year long and not just in cold months for the best results.

* American Pet Products

A close-up photograph of a small, scruffy dog with large, upright ears and a white and tan coat. The dog is looking directly at the camera. It is being held by a person whose arm, featuring several tattoos including the words "WHAT HAVE", is visible on the right side of the frame. A black coiled cable is in the foreground, partially obscuring the dog.

Providing a Comfortable Space

SIMPLE CHANGES CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

Of course your dog will be part of the family, so providing them a safe and quiet place of their own will be important as they adjust to their new home.

We recommend getting an appropriately sized crate or a dog bed in a quiet room.

If your new dog came from a stressful situation, they will appreciate the space to chill out and assess their new surroundings.

Although it's hard to resist playing with your new dog 24/7, it's important that you let them retreat to their special space when they feel the need.

Establishing boundaries in the first few days will make your new family member feel safe, protected and loved.

A photograph of a man with glasses and a beard, wearing a red and blue plaid shirt, holding a small brown and white dog. The dog is licking the man's face. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees.

Licensing and Identification

PROTECTING YOUR PET STARTS WITH YOU

Licensing your dog establishes ownership of your pet. It also increases your chances of being reunited with your dog, which allows animal control more time to focus on caring for and finding homes for other pets in need.

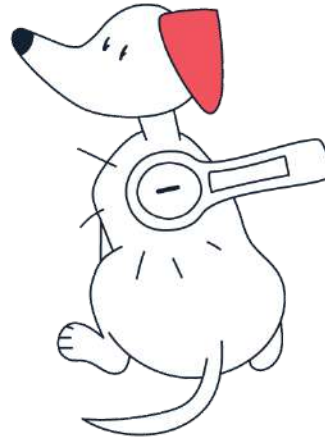
To obtain a dog license, you just need a current rabies vaccination certificate, spay or neuter certificate and an appropriate form of payment. Know that some jurisdictions only accept a check or cash.

Some areas also offer reduced-cost licenses for altered animals while some jurisdictions may mandate sterilization.

You also need to microchip your dog. Microchips are small electronic chips about the size of a grain of rice that are implanted under your dog's skin.

Each microchip has a unique identification number. If your pet gets lost, shelters and vets can scan them and look up your contact information.

It is very important that you keep your pet's microchip registration up to date if you move or change your contact information. **[You can register and update your microchip for free at Found.org.](#)**



1 in 3 pets become lost at some point and 90% of them never return home. Are you cool with these odds?*

Depending on how you acquired your dog, they might already be microchipped. How can you tell? You can't, unless you get them scanned at your local clinic or vet.

Regardless, make sure your chip is registered, which will drastically increase the chances your dog is returned to you if they ever get lost and then found.

Two methods of identification are best in case one fails, so you should also outfit your dog with an engraved identification tag.

Add your phone number and any other pertinent information about your animal to the tag (like special medical instructions) and make sure your animal never leaves the house without their collar on!

*Department of Animal Services



Your Dog's Diet

FEEDING YOUR DOG THE RIGHT FOOD

A healthy dog means more time with you and less time at a vet! You may notice that your dog develops diarrhea in the first few days they are home with you.

This can be attributed to a number of things, but most likely stress and switching foods. Here's how to transition from one food to another:

Transitioning Food

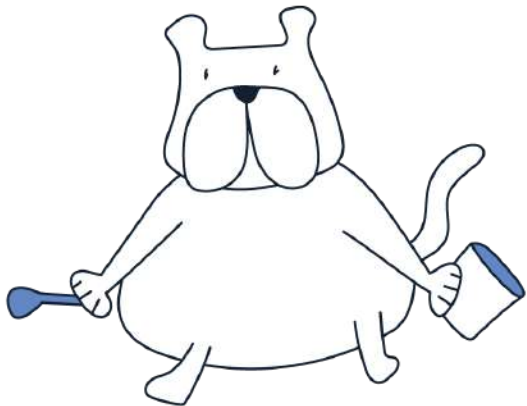
Begin a transition with 75% of the old food and mix in 25% of the new.

Continue this for a few days while monitoring how your dog's poops look.

If they remain solid, then continue with 50% of the old food and 50% of the new food. Stick with this for another few days while monitoring their poop.

If everything looks good, continue on to 25% old food and 75% new food. After a few more days, you should be ready to transition completely to the new food.

Keep in mind that some dogs may be pickier about switching foods and others may have more sensitive stomachs and might require a longer transition period.



Maintaining A Healthy Weight

We all love our dogs, and sometimes to show that affection, we may over-treat and overfeed. However, maintaining a healthy weight ensures that the dogs are not carrying around excess weight which will stress their joints and internal organs.

An overweight dog is also more likely to develop diseases like diabetes, liver problems and joint issues. A dog at a healthy weight will have a slight hourglass figure. If you take three fingers and press them lightly at the torso, you should be able to easily feel the ribs.

There are many factors that may affect a dog's weight. For example, some breeds are more prone to gaining weight, old age may also affect metabolism and lack of exercise can also contribute to weight gain.

Please consult with your vet if you would like to start a weight-loss program as losing weight too quickly can be harmful to your dog's health.

Treats

Dog treats are a great way to teach a new pet their new name or simple commands.

However, keep in mind that over-treating can cause your dog to pack on some extra pounds. Limit treats to 10% of their total food intake for the day.

Never feed table scraps as this will cause your dog to reject their dog food. People food is high in sodium and seasonings which can't be properly processed by a dog's body.

Some raw fruits and vegetables make for great treats and snacks though! Beware that some fruits, such as grapes, can cause acute kidney damage.

Also keep away from onions and garlic! A quick search online can help let you know which foods are okay to feed.

Dental Chews

Dental health is a very important part of a dog's overall health as well. Gingivitis (gum disease) can lead to heart disease.

Dental chews can be a great way to scrape away any tartar on their teeth and keep gums healthy!

As with any chew treat or toy, keep an eye on your dog while they enjoy their treat!



Types of Food

As you delve deeper into the world of dog food, you'll discover that there is more than just dry food and wet food.

It is important to research the company and brand of food you are thinking of buying and ensure that the ingredients are high quality (no animal byproducts).

Spending a little more on a higher quality food now can help keep your dog healthy and out of the vet's office. Outside of kibble and wet food, raw diets are now becoming more popular as well.

Raw food can either be frozen or freeze-dried. They are typically a mixture of a raw protein along with veggies and fruits. It is not recommended to feed raw meat from a supermarket since meat acquired there is assumed to be consumed cooked.

No screening will be done to ensure that the meat does not contain any harmful bacteria that the dog's gastrointestinal tract can't handle.

Some dog owners even cook for their dogs. Be sure to consult with a vet to ensure that the food being prepared contains enough vitamins and minerals and is well-balanced.

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a plaid shirt, is sitting on a sandy beach at sunset. She is smiling and holding a small treat in her hand, which a large, light-colored dog is reaching up to take. The dog is wearing a colorful patterned harness. The background shows the ocean and a warm, golden sunset sky.

Training Your Dog

TRAINING YOUR DOG WILL LEAD TO GOOD BEHAVIOR

Positive reinforcement is the best way to teach your dog a trick or teach them to not do a negative behavior. Positive reinforcement works by rewarding your dog for performing a positive action. This reward can be verbal praise, scratches behind the ear or delicious treats.

Doggie brains notice cause and effect. “If I sit, I get yummy biscuits! Wow, I should sit every time I’m asked!” And practice makes perfect.

Even if your pup doesn’t at first notice the pattern of Command + Obedience = Reward, it’s likely they will pick up on it after practice.

Negative reinforcement is another training method through which you “punish” your pet for a negative behavior. An example of humane negative reinforcement is shaking an empty soda can filled with coins whenever your dog barks at a passerby.

You should never, of course, hit your dog, kick them or rub their nose in a potty accident. Yelling at them is also counterproductive. We recommend the soda can method or squirting your pet with a squirt bottle filled with water.

There’s information on how to correct behavioral issues later on in this guide, so stay tuned!



Vet Care

REGULAR CHECK-UPS HELP PROTECT YOUR PET

Check-Ups

You should always take your new pet to the vet within a week after adoption. A wellness check at your vet will not only give you peace of mind, but will also give your vet a chance to build a relationship with your new pet.

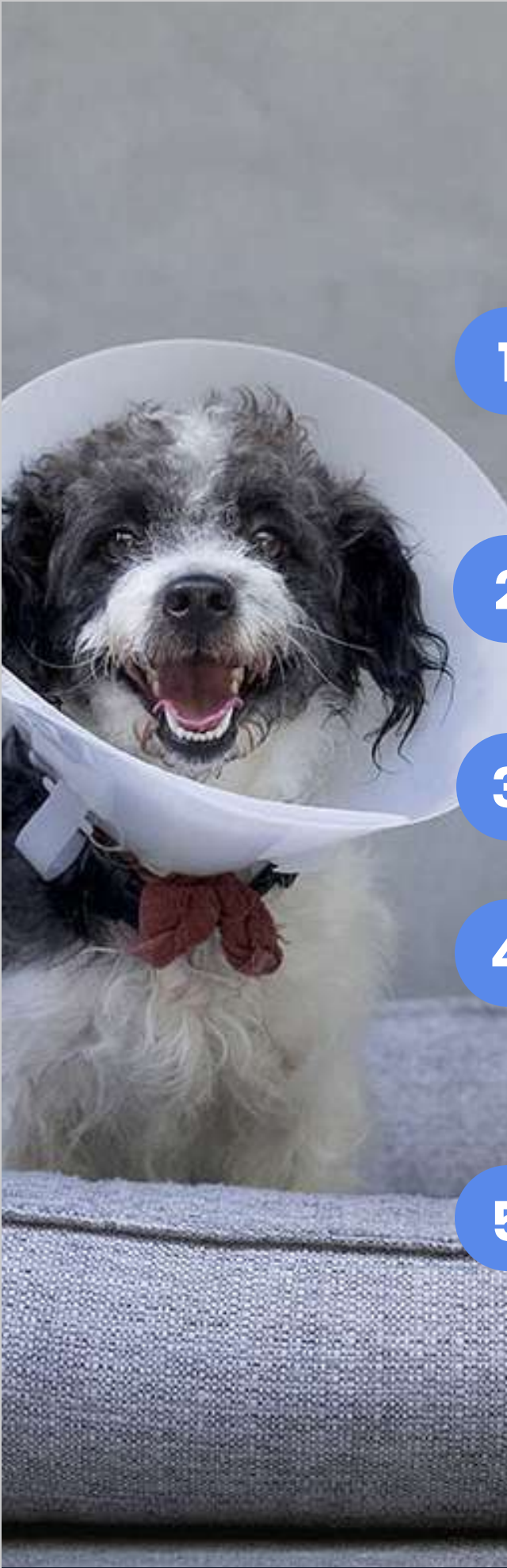
Many vets' offices will give you a free or inexpensive wellness exam if you have recently adopted. After the first appointment, you should bring your pet in for annual vaccines and a yearly physical to check on their wellbeing.

Dental Care

Like humans, dogs require regular professional teeth cleaning, usually once a year.

Most veterinary practices perform professional teeth cleaning services, so we recommend booking a recurring annual appointment for your pet.

Groomers also offer more basic cleanings. In between yearly dental visits, brush your pet's teeth daily at home.



Emergencies

These are some common emergency medical scenarios that can hopefully point you in the right direction. However, this is meant to be a general guide, and all questions should ultimately be directed to your veterinarian.

1

If your pet hasn't eaten in a couple days after bringing them home, that is fine. They are likely adjusting to a new environment and are unsure of what is okay. If your pet hasn't eaten in three or more days, or is rapidly losing weight, they should be brought to the vet.

2

If your pet is having diarrhea, but is eating and drinking normally, monitor the situation for a few days. If it hasn't gone away or if your pet is not eating and drinking, take them to the vet as they may need fluids and medicine.

3

If you see a parasite in their feces, try and collect a sample and bring it to the vet with you. This is usually an easy fix, but the vet will need to write a prescription for a dewormer.

4

If your pet is coughing and/or sneezing, has eye or nasal discharge and they are not currently on antibiotics, take them to the vet to get treatment. It is likely a common cold, but they will need medicine to treat it. If you were sent home with antibiotics from the rescue, make sure you finish all doses, even if your pet no longer has symptoms.

5

If your pet is throwing up, it can mean many things. Inspect the vomit to see if there are any foreign objects, such as toys or clothing, that may be blocking their system. If only a piece is there, but the rest of the object is gone, you should definitely go to the vet to make sure it is not blocking their intestines. If they are continuously throwing up, take them to the vet as well. However, sometimes they've just eaten something that upset their tummy and they need to get it out of their system.

Vaccinations

There are two types of vaccines: “core” vaccines and “non-core” vaccines. Core cat and dog vaccinations are required for pets. They prevent common and/or serious illnesses. Other optional vaccinations are considered non-core. Your vet will likely give you reminders when your pet needs their vaccines. In the meantime, here’s a typical vaccine schedule for dogs:

	VACCINE	INITIAL PUPPY VACCINE	INITIAL ADULT VACCINE	BOOSTERS
		(16 weeks or younger)	(16 weeks or older)	
	Rabies 1-year (core)	Can be 1 dose, age given is state-regulated	1 dose	Annually
	Rabies 3-year (core)	Can be 1 dose, age given is state-regulated	1 dose	Second vaccine after 1 year, then boosters every 3 years
	Distemper (core)	3+ doses, given at 6-16 weeks of age	2 doses, 3-4 weeks apart	Puppies require booster 1 year after the first series, all dogs require booster at least every 3 years
	Parvovirus (core)	3+ doses, given at 6-16 weeks of age	2 doses, 3-4 weeks apart	Puppies require booster 1 year after the first series, all dogs require booster at least every 3 years
	Adenovirus, type 1 (CAV-1, canine hepatitis, core)	3+ doses given at 6-16 weeks of age	2 doses, 3-4 weeks apart	Puppies require booster 1 year after the first series, all dogs require booster at least every 3 years
	Adenovirus, type 2 (CAV-2, kennel cough, core)	3+ doses, given at 6-16 weeks of age	2 doses, 3-4 weeks apart	Puppies require booster 1 year after the first series, all dogs require booster at least every 3 years
	Parainfluenza (non-core)	First dose starting at 6-8 weeks of age, then every 3-4 weeks until dog is 12-14 weeks old	1 dose	Might need booster after 1 year, then every 3 years
	Bordetella bronchiseptica (kennel cough, non-core)	Generally 2 doses, depending on the type of vaccine	2 injected doses or 1 intranasal or oral dose	Annually
	Lyme disease (non-core)	First dose starting at 9 weeks, second dose 2-4 weeks later	2 doses, 2-4 weeks apart	Annually
	Leptospirosis (non-core)	First dose starting at 8 weeks, second dose 2-4 weeks later	2 doses, 2-4 weeks apart	At least annually
	Canine influenza (non-core)	First dose starting at 6-8 weeks, second dose 2-4 weeks later	2 doses, 2-4 weeks apart	Annually



Dealing with Behavioral Issues

BREAK BAD BEHAVIOR BEFORE IT BECOMES A HABIT

So you get your dog home and they seem to be exhibiting some behaviors that don't exactly vibe with your family. Having boundaries is great, and training your dog to behave the way you want can be accomplished through positive, repetitive and consistent reinforcement. The best thing about dogs is that they just want to be adored by their owners, so if you make it clear what you want, they'll oblige!

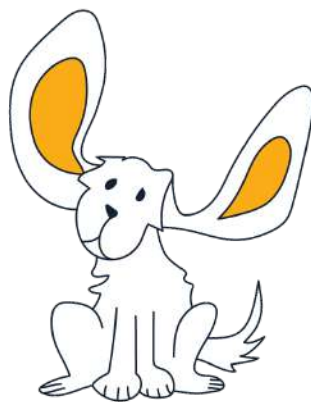
Breaking bad behavior is a long process that requires time and patience. We've outlined the basics for you here:

[How to break bad behavior in dogs.](#)

Housetraining a Puppy

If you've adopted a puppy, they're likely incredibly adorable but also very frustrating when it comes to using the bathroom. Remember, puppies have very small bladders and are easily excitable, so it's difficult for them to "hold it."

Luckily, puppy pads exist and they'll save your floors and carpets from the frequent accidents. To get your puppy to use puppy pads in the first place, you'll have to watch your puppy like a hawk.



Look for signs like sniffing, circling and squatting. When it looks like they are looking for a place to go, quickly move them to a pad. Once they have mastered the pad and are up on all of their shots, they can move to the great outdoors. [Read our article on how to transition when your puppy is ready to go!](#)

[House-training a dog with behavioral issues](#)

Have a full-grown dog who's having trouble adjusting to using the bathroom? [Read this](#) first-hand account of how one patient dog owner house-trained her dog, Phoenix, through positive reinforcement.

[How to handle overexcitement in dogs](#)

Some dogs could run a marathon and some could sleep all day! Harnessing your dog's energy is key to maintaining your sanity. Remember to exercise your dog every day and observe what causes overexcitement.

When you pinpoint the object or situation that makes your dog overexcited, take the energy out by making them focus on you. For example, if your dog flips out on walks, constantly ask for their attention and stop walking until you get it.

You can also take the excitement out of objects by allowing access to the item at all times. So, if your dog goes bananas when they see the leash, let your dog wear it around the house. Pretty soon the association with going outside will wane and you won't have to brace yourself when you pull the leash out of the drawer!

How to stop your dog from jumping

Picture this scenario: You go to a friend's house for dinner in a new outfit, only to have their giant dog jump on you leaving two paw prints on your nice clothes.

It's very irritating for owners and their guests alike to fend off a jumping dog, but it's a problem that's easily corrected.

Instead of yelling at your dog or pushing them off of you, ignore them. When they start to jump on you, turn your body away so they can't, then ignore them until they stop jumping.

This may seem impossible, or even cruel, but it's the only way to show your dog that you're not going to put up with their behavior.

Withholding attention is a surefire way to show your dog that you don't condone his or her actions, and they'll quickly catch on and cut it out. Remember, they thrive on your love and attention!

How to deal with separation anxiety

Separation anxiety is extremely common in dogs and is expressed in many ways. Whining, barking, chewing and scratching are just a few ways your dog is telling you, "Hey! I'm scared you're not coming back."

It can be frustrating to deal with, especially since you can't comfort your dog with words. Instead, you have to take the anxiety out of your comings and goings, so they're not such a big deal to your dog.

One exercise to practice regularly is to grab your coat, keys and wallet and perform your "I'm going to leave the house" ritual and then stay. Your dog will eventually stop associating the ritual with you leaving.

Another exercise is to leave the home several times a day for longer periods of time (you may need a whole day to do this, maybe more, so be prepared). Leave for 10 minutes, and then return. Leave for 20 minutes and return. Do this on and on until your dog realizes you're always going to come back.

A big part of this is not to engage in any behavior that makes your return special. Don't raise your voice or greet your dog in an excitable way. Calmly leave and calmly return, as if this is a normal part of the day.

You also may want to consider obedience training, exercising your dog more regularly or even medication. Like people, some dogs are just prone to being high-strung, and may need a little extra something to take the edge off.



Treating destructive chewing

Having your dog destroy your favorite pair of shoes or gnaw the leg off of a piece of furniture may rank in the top two most annoying aspects of pet ownership.

Chewing can be attributed to fear, separation anxiety, boredom or may be a behavior used to gain your attention. Once you diagnose the reason, you'll be able to treat the cause.

In the meantime, separate your dog from items they might chew as best as you can, and give them plenty of dog-friendly stuff to chew on, like chew treats and toys.

Also, praise your dog when they are chewing the toy and give a stern "No" when you find them chomping away at your sneakers.

This will distinguish the behavior for them, so they know what's okay to chew on and what's not.

The New Dog Troubleshooting Guide



DON'T RETURN YOUR DOG – YOU CAN SOLVE THE ISSUE

Help! My dog hates me

Okay, so your new dog is making you feel like a cat owner — neglected and unloved.

Give your dog some time to adjust to their new environment and let the trust build from there.

Not every dog is going to adore you right away. But be consistent and loving in your behavior and eventually you'll be making room in the bed for your new adoptee!

My dog has diarrhea and it's cramping my style

Your dog is likely adjusting to the new food you're feeding them. Try the transitioning method we mentioned — it'll help!

Also, your dog may be stressed out, so try to be patient. They don't like feeling ill and going inside the house any more than you like cleaning up their poop, so just hang in there.

It'll get better!





My dog has way more energy than I thought

This is very common, especially for puppies. Exercise is key and so is mental stimulation. Make sure your dog gets at least 30 minutes of exercise a day and more if you have the time.

Give them plenty of toys and chewable items. If you can afford it, consider a dog walker to come when you're at work or daycare, which will keep your dog active and fit.

All my dog does is sleep

A low-energy dog may need a checkup with the vet, especially if they are young. Still engage in play and exercise to get the blood pumping and energy up!

My other animals hate my new dog

Most animals are not introduced properly which can lead to problems down the road. For a thorough guide on how to do this, check out our article. The basics are this: keep the introduction location neutral, keep dogs on leashes and have treats on hand to reward positive behavior from both animals.

Again, allow for an adjustment period. Animals experience the same emotions we do — love, dislike, jealousy — which can manifest itself in some unusual or threatening behavior.

Figuring out how to comfort your animals will take some trial and error, but keep monitoring and offering positive reinforcement, and while they may not become the best of friends, they'll work out how to coexist.

Your New Dog and You

Adopting a new dog is a life-changing event, so it's normal to experience some bumps in the road. There may be days when you second-guess your decision to adopt two puppies on the same day — we get it!

When you have questions or challenges with your pets, navigate to our [Resource Center](#) to search for articles relative to your problem. Also feel free to contact us via [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#) with your questions.

We're here for you! We love animals as much as you do, and work every day to keep people and their pets together.

CONGRATULATIONS FROM Michelson Found Animals



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SAVING PETS. ENRICHING LIVES.