Dog Foster Care Manual

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Pets In Need
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www.PetsInNeed.org
Communication
Types of fosters
Responsibilities
  Signing up, picking up, and returning
  Medical appointments
  Marketing your dog
Preparing a safe home
  Supplies
  Where to set up your foster dog
  Preparing your yard
  Preventing escapes
  If your dog gets loose
  Dog proofing your house
Introduction to your home
  The first few days
  Home introduction
  The “Safety Zone”
Daily care
  Setting a regular routine
  Crate training
  Feeding time
  Play and exercise
  Socialization with people
  Socialization with other dogs
  Dog body language
  Sleeping arrangements
Your foster dog and other pets
  Foster dogs and resident dogs
  Foster dogs and resident cats
Your foster dog and children
Training
  Watch me
  Sit
  Walking on a leash
  Walking on a loose leash
Communication

In order to cut down on emails and phone calls, our communication process relies on online form submissions on our website’s Foster Resources page and a private Facebook foster group. Here is a quick guide to how we’d like you to communicate with us.

Get urgent medical help, 8am - 4:30pm
PIN Foster Hotline
(650) 421-3009

Get urgent medical help, 4:30pm - 8am
Sage Animal Hospital
934 Charter Street
Redwood City
(650) 417-7243

(Call ahead, if possible. Let them know you’re fostering for Pets In Need)

Report a non-emergency health issue
Online form

Report a non-emergency behavior issue
Online form

Fill out a dog personality profile
Personality profile

Ask or learn about available dogs
Facebook group

Share photos and stories with our foster community
Facebook group

Ask our community for general foster advice
Facebook group

Contact Pets in Need Foster Coordinator
jpearson@petsinneed.org
Types of fosters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type:</th>
<th>Description:</th>
<th>Age:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical foster</td>
<td>Give a dog a safe, quiet place to recover from an illness or surgery</td>
<td>Adult dog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialization foster</td>
<td>Help a shy or unhappy-in-the-shelter dog come out of her shell with patience and attention</td>
<td>Adult dog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster getaway</td>
<td>Give a long-stay dog a break from the monotony of shelter life</td>
<td>Adult dog</td>
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Responsibilities

Signing up, picking up, and returning

When we have dogs available, we’ll post them on Facebook and/or contact prospective fosters by email. If you sign up, our Foster Coordinator will send you the necessary supplies via Chewy.com and make a pick-up appointment. When the dog is ready to return to the shelter, our foster coordinator will make an appointment for his return.

Medical appointments

While fostering dogs, you may occasionally have medical appointments at our shelter for vaccinations, worming, and flea control. Our foster medical appointments are usually Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays between 3:30 to 4:30pm.
At the time of pick up, you will be given a document called a Dog Passport. Bring it each time you bring your foster dog in to an appointment because our medical staff will use it to record the date we need to see you next, if any.

**Marketing your dog**

One of the most important parts of being a foster parent is helping us get your animal adopted! With every dog you foster, you will be asked to fill out a [dog personality profile](#) -- please be truthful when writing these descriptions.

We understand that fostering is an exciting and photogenic experience! Feel free to share photos and videos of your foster dogs on your personal social media accounts (tag us @petsinneed1965) as well as on our [Puppy and Dog Foster Facebook page](#). If any of your friends want to adopt, please contact the Foster Coordinator as soon as possible. While the final decision is ours, we want to accommodate referrals from foster parents if we can.

### Preparing a safe home

**Supplies**

Besides time, a safe home and patience, it doesn’t take much to foster dogs. These are the basic supplies you will need. **PLEASE USE ONLY THE FOOD WE PROVIDE.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pets in Need will provide:</th>
<th>Foster will provide:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crate and bed</td>
<td>Collar with ID tag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Harness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowls</td>
<td>Leash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poop bags</td>
<td>Bedding (towels, blankets)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Washable toys*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*not required</td>
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</table>
Where to set up your foster dog

Set up a safety zone in your home where you can house your foster dog when you are not home or able to supervise him. The area you choose should be climate controlled, easy to clean, dog proof, and easily secured, so that your foster dog cannot wander into the rest of the house. If you don’t have a room that you can easily section off with a door or baby gate, we can loan you an exercise pen (x-pen). We ask that you not lock your foster dog in a crate until he has shown that he is comfortable there.

Preparing your yard

No matter how carefully you have prepared your yard, do not ever leave your foster dog outdoors unattended. Even if your resident dog has never gotten loose, please don’t assume that your yard is secure. Check your fence line and property for holes, loose planks, poisonous plants, foxtails, and dangerous household items.

Preventing escapes

Before you bring your foster dog home, devise a plan for how your family and friends will enter and exit the house safely. Many of our foster parents choose to enter and exit through the garage, laundry room or back door to ensure that if their foster dogs manage to get past them, they are still in a safe, contained area. Sectioning off the front door with an x-pen can be helpful if you have a lot of people coming and going.

If your dog gets loose

If you can see the dog, try calling him in a happy, excited voice. Some dogs will follow if you call them, then turn and walk in the other direction, and then kneel down and dig in the dirt as if you have found something interesting. If you have another dog with you, you can also use that dog as a lure. Chasing a loose dog seldom works, and reaching for a scared dog can cause them to bolt or bite. Exercise caution.

If your foster dog panics and is not responding at all, try to follow them from a distance so you can catch up with them when they slow down. If you lose sight of your dog, please call us immediately and start putting up flyers in the vicinity where he was lost. Keep photos of him on hand for this purpose.
Dog proofing your house

Due to curiosity, stress, or boredom, foster dogs can get into things resident dogs never would. They can also ruin curtains, carpeting, and furniture. If this happens, we will not be able to reimburse you for the damages. Carefully preparing your foster area will keep both your foster dog and your belongings safe.

Here is a list of preparations you will need to make before welcoming a foster dog into your home:

- Put away any small items that a dog could swallow
- Place cleaning supplies, medications, and toiletries up high, out of reach
- Hide any breakable items and remove toxic plants
- Place electrical wires out of reach
- Block off any spaces that the dog could crawl into and hide in
- Keep trash cans covered, or inside a latched cabinet
- Keep all human foods out of reach
- Keep washers and dryers closed at all times

Introduction to your home

The first few days

We ask that you pick up your foster dog when you will be able to spend a few days helping him get adjusted. You don’t have to stay with the dog 24/7, but try not to leave him alone for more than a few hours at a time in the beginning. Avoid having a lot of visitors while your dog is getting acclimated.

If possible, arrive at Pets In Need with a hard plastic crate for your foster dog (in a pinch, we can loan you one). We require that your foster dog ride in your crate whenever you transport him.
Home introduction

When you bring your dog home, show him around your house and yard on leash. If you have a resident dog, go for a walk around the neighborhood first, and then bring both dogs in together. If your foster dog is too shy to go for a walk, bring your dog out into the driveway and then walk the dogs in together after they have had a chance to eliminate outside. While your new dog is getting adjusting, allow him to drag a light leash around the house when you’re home. That way, if you have to redirect his attention or lead him in a different direction, you won’t have to reach for or corner him. When your foster dog explores your yard for the first few times, he should drag the leash. This will make recovering him easier if he is afraid to come with you back inside.

The “Safety Zone”

Allow your dog to get used to spending time in his “Safety Zone” while you are home. If your foster dog is hesitant to enter the space you plan on using, try tossing a toy or treat in and repeating the exercise several times. Once he willingly enters the room, you can give him a filled Kong or chew toy. Spend some time sitting in the room with him. Once he is comfortable, try leaving the room (even for only a few seconds at a time). You want the dog to understand that you may leave, but that you will always return.

Your dog should be very comfortable being left alone in their Safety Zone while you are home before you attempt to leave the house. You can make the space less alienating by playing a radio or television and leaving your dog a t-shirt with your smell on it.

Daily care

Setting a regular routine

In general, your foster dog will need to be taken outside to eliminate every three to four hours and about ten to fifteen minutes after feeding time. Please be patient if accidents occur -- some of our dogs have never been inside, some of them have never been outside, and others (even if they were house trained at one point) have been thrown off their routine.
Remember: reward the positive and ignore the negative. If your dog has an accident, clean up immediately with an enzyme-based product like Nature’s Miracle. If you see your dog starting to spin or squat, calmly call him and take him outside. When he eliminates where you want him to, give him a treat and calmly praise him.

**Crate training**

Since our eventual goal is to be able to leave your dog in a crate, set up the crate in the Safety Zone with the door propped open and frequently toss treats and toys into the crate to get your dog used to willingly entering the crate. Once he is comfortable, use the crate both when you are home and when you aren’t -- your foster dog shouldn’t associate the crate with your absence. Please keep in mind that some dogs have had negative experiences being crated and that even the sight of a crate can cause anxiety. If your foster dog really hates his crate, please use this form to let us know.

**Feeding time**

Please see your Dog Passport for exact feeding instructions, and use only the food we give you. Try to feed at the same time every day, as this will help with housetraining. **Make sure to feed your foster dog separately from other pets in the home.** If you notice your foster dog seems apprehensive or fearful around their food, or if they start guarding the food bowl from you, please contact our Behavior team immediately.

Feeding can be about more than just eating -- feel free to use your foster dog’s daily allotment of dry food for socialization and training rewards.

- Hand feeding shy and fearful dogs can help them learn to trust people.
- Placing food in a Kong toy so that the dog has to work to get the food out can provide mental stimulation.
- Bringing their food on walks and asking them to work for their meals can help reinforce nice leash manners.
**Play and exercise**

While your foster dog is with you, set time aside for daily walks, runs in the yard, and games of fetch. Your dog may be too fearful to play initially, but you can still stuff a Kong and leave it in his Safety Zone (along with a few other toys for him to choose from). Your first clue that he’s feeling a little bit at home might just be the happy sounds of squeaky toys from the next room.

**Socialization with people**

Be sure to offer your foster dog plenty of opportunities to meet people, but remain alert to your dog’s body language. Never allow unknown people to approach your foster dog unexpectedly. Ask new people to allow your dog to greet them in his own way, and then to respond with treats, gentle petting, and kind words.

If your dog is too fearful to get close to people, stay at a comfortable distance and give him treats for tolerating the sight of people. If he won’t eat them, you’re too close. As he learns that people mean rewards, you can gradually get closer. Don’t rush this process.

**Socialization with other dogs**

Your foster dog should always be on a leash when in public. With careful meetings and supervision, you can introduce him to your own dogs or your friends’ dogs in an securely fenced yard. For safety’s sake we ask that you avoid public dog parks and off-leash beaches while our foster dog is in your care.

**Dog body language**

Since your foster dog can’t use words to tell you how he’s feeling, you’ll need to learn to read his physical cues. Review the below infographics, and soon you’ll be speaking fluent dog in no time!
Know the Signs Your Dog is Uncomfortable!

- Ground sniffing
- Closed mouth
- Low tail wag/unsure
- Avoidance
- Head lowered/crouching
- Lip licking
- Heavy panting
- Head turn/No thank you!
- Appeasement licking
- Genital checking
- Razorback
- Tail tucked
- Shake off!
- Hypervigilance
- Paw lift/moving in slow motion
- Showing belly
- Scratching/Spontaneous shedding
- Yawning
- Pancaking
- Dilated pupils
- Targeting/I’m going to get you
- Freezing
- Whale Eye

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Severe Stress Signs in Dogs

**FIGHT**
- RUFF RUFF RUFF
- BARKING
- BARE TEETH
- HACKLES
- LIP LIFT

**FREEZE**
- MOVING IN SLOW MOTION
- FROZEN

**FLIGHT**
- RUNNING AWAY
- HIDING
- DUCKING BEHIND LEGS
- STARTLES EASILY

Vet Behaviour Team
Phone: 0432881174
www.vetbehaviourteam.com
By going slowly and paying attention to a dog’s cues, most bites can be prevented. If your foster dog does bite you, please notify us immediately using our online form. If your foster dog bites a stranger, please take all of their information. We are legally required to document bites that break the skin and to quarantine the animal.

**Sleeping arrangements**

We recommend sectioning off a space in your bedroom where you can place a dog bed or crate. If you have a bathroom nearby, that is another option. If you’re not comfortable having a dog in your bedroom, choose a place where your dog won’t feel isolated. The Safety Zone is fine as long as you can hear the dog in the event he becomes distressed.

Some of our foster parents want to sleep with their foster dogs. We prefer that you don’t, since their eventual adopters may prefer to have them sleep in their crates at night.

**Your foster dog and other pets**

**Foster dogs and resident dogs**

Having a dog of your own can while fostering can be a lot of fun. Your dog can help your foster dog learn that you are a safe person who can be loved and trusted, and can help the foster dog settle in to your routine. Be sure to keep your own dog’s routine as consistent as possible and spend plenty of one-on-one time with him. Your dog should realize that good things happen when the foster dog is around, but also know that he is still your favorite.

When adding foster dogs to single or multi-dog households, it’s common to see resource guarding of attention, food, treats, or living spaces by either the foster dog or the resident dog. You can prevent this by making sure that there isn’t a scarcity of resources, and also by rewarding good behavior. It is important that all of the dogs receive individual attention. When you are in a group setting, try petting both dogs at once or having a different family member pet one dog while you pet the other. If either your dog or the foster dog growls, get up and
walk away. If the dog is on your lap, immediately put the dog down. The dog will quickly realize that instead of getting all of the attention, now he gets none.

When it comes to toys and beds, make sure you have enough to go around. If you are unavailable to supervise the dogs, keep your foster dog in the Safety Zone and your resident dog outside of it. Please do not ever allow your foster dog to access your resident dog’s most sacred items, such as his favorite bed, toy, or bone.

Even if your resident dog has never had issues with other dogs, dog dynamics are very fluid. Err on the side of caution when it comes to making your resident dog happy and comfortable.

**Foster dogs and resident cats**

It’s unlikely that your resident cat will welcome a foster dog into her home at first. The key to making a successful introduction is to be patient and not force any interactions. Also, keep the cat’s routine as consistent as possible. If she is used to sleeping with you, set the foster dog’s bed up elsewhere.

If your cat is curious, allow her to approach the foster dog while he is on a leash that you are holding. The meeting can continue as long as the cat is not aggressive and the dog doesn’t become anxious or agitated. Keep some treats handy, and reward both animals for good behavior. They should each learn to associate the presence of the other with the positive experience of being fed. If either animal becomes upset, remove the dog calmly and immediately.

No matter how well things appear to be going, never leave your foster dog and your cat together unsupervised. If you have a cat, take extra care to make sure your Safety Zone is secure and that your foster dog can’t escape. Throughout the house, provide your cat with rooms and vertical spaces she can escape to if needed. Finally, always feed your cat and foster dog separately.

**Your foster dog and children**

Although Pets In Need encourages all family members to become involved in caring for your foster dog, do not expect your children to assume all responsibility for this.
Never leave children unattended with your foster dog. If you cannot supervise, put your foster dog in his Safety Zone and teach your children not to enter. Also teach them to never bother a dog who is eating or sleeping. Since we know almost nothing about our foster dogs’ previous experiences, it is important that you don’t allow children to take the same liberties with your foster dog as they would with their own dog.

Teach people of all ages to avoid playing tug of war, wrestling, chasing, pulling tails, pulling ears, and playing aggressively. These activities teach dogs to be rough with humans, and that it’s okay to grab and nip. Fetch and hide and seek are good alternatives, but avoid any game that gets your foster dog overly excited when playing with children.

Finally, don’t forget to notice good behavior. When your foster dog is calmly playing with his own toys or being gentle with your children, reward him with praise and treats.

**Training**

Once your foster dog is settled in your home and crate and house training are underway, you can begin working on a few commands that will make him more adoptable. All of the training we do is based on the principle of positive reinforcement. Remember that dogs are much more attuned to their environment than we are, and this makes it difficult for them to generalize commands. You will need to practice these skills many times in different places and at different times of day for your foster dog to understand what you want.

**Watch me**

Take a treat and place it up by the bridge of your nose. When your foster dog makes eye contact, quickly reward them. Please keep in mind that direct eye contact is very threatening in dog language. For a fearful dog, this exercise can be intimidating. Don’t force the interaction, but reward even the most fleeting and spontaneous eye contact. This may seem like an odd command, but it’s extremely useful to be able to get your dog’s attention if something scary or overwhelming is happening, such as an unruly dog walking by or a crowd of children approaching.
Sit

With your palm facing upwards, slowly raise the kibble upward and backward from the front of the dog’s nose and over the dog’s eyes. Do not touch the dog to place or push him into position. Once the dog is sitting, say “Good sit” and give the dog a treat.

For dogs that are fearful of hand movements, try this: Sit or stand quietly until your dog sits. Once he does, say “Good sit” and give him a treat. Practice this multiple times in multiple rooms and outside until your foster dog learns to associate the word with the act.

Walking on a leash

Some of the dogs we place in foster care are fearful of the leash. Allowing your dog to drag the leash around the house will help them get used to just having the leash on. Before you ever pick up the leash, allow your foster dog to get used to following you around with the leash dragging using a treat and a soft voice to lure the dog to follow you. Eventually you can start picking up the other end. If just this motion makes your dog uncomfortable, practice picking up the leash, giving a treat, then dropping the leash. Repeat until your dog no longer looks apprehensive.

When your dog is comfortable, you can pick up the leash and take a step without looking at him. If necessary, use a treat to lure him. Use a happy voice and smile. Be careful not to apply any tension to the leash and never to use the leash to move the dog towards you.

Start in an enclosed space or fenced yard so that if your dog does get frightened, you can drop the leash and start over again slowly. If you have another handler and another friendly, outgoing dog to help you, you can also allow your dog to follow the lead of the other dog. If you can get your foster dog interested in exciting smells and he sees another dog enjoying himself, he will often join in and forget the leash...at least temporarily.

Walking on a loose leash

If you have an enthusiastic foster dog who pulls on the leash, play the canine version of Red Light/Green Light. Continue walking as long as the leash is loose (green light), but stop walking when the least is taut (red light). As soon as the leash becomes taut, stop without pulling back, and wait until the dog loosens the leash. Then immediately say “Good dog!” and begin to walk forward again. Allow the dog to go forward up to the end of the patch of sidewalk you’ve chosen, and then turn and head back in the other direction.
You can also spontaneously give your foster dog small treats right next to your knee when he is walking nicely on a loose leash. This exercise will teach him that good things happen when he is in the “magic zone” right next to you.

**Medical Information**

Since dogs can’t tell us how they’re feeling using words, we rely on our fosters to observe them carefully. Early diagnosis generally makes treating common dog illnesses quicker and easier.

**Signs of a healthy dog**

- Alert
- Regular bowel, bladder movements
- Good appetite
- Drinks moderately
- Bright eyes

**Symptoms of illness**

- Significant change in behavior
- Lethargy
- Lack of appetite, even with high value foods like chicken
- Persistent vomiting
- Persistent diarrhea
- Persistent coughing
- Excessive drinking
- Excessive urination
When to contact us

Once they become sick, dogs can go downhill quickly. If you even suspect a problem, please don’t hesitate to reach out to us.

Immediately report these symptoms using our online form:

➔ Loss of appetite for up to 18 hours
➔ Diarrhea for more than 24 hours
➔ Eyes that are red, inflamed, weepy, or have yellow discharge
➔ Vomiting undigested food twice or more. Dog still bright, alert, and responsive.
➔ Congestion, raspy breathing, or dry, infrequent sneezing.
➔ Limping
➔ Worms in feces (looks like rice or spaghetti)
➔ Hair loss
➔ Fleas
➔ Waxy ear discharge

Immediately report these symptoms by phone:

**Pets In Need foster hotline (650) 421-3009 (8am to 4:30pm)
**Sage Animal Hospital (650) 417-7243 (4:30pm to 8am)

➔ Noticeable lethargy
➔ Loss of appetite for 36 hours
➔ Hovering above the water bowl, but not drinking
➔ Bloody diarrhea
➔ Straining to eliminate, or swollen rectum
➔ Vomiting more than once
➔ Very shallow or labored breathing
➔ Physical injury
➔ Unconsciousness or convulsions
➔ Has eaten something toxic
Poisons and toxins

Because your foster dog will be living in an environment that you have carefully dog-proofed, it is extremely unlikely that he will ingest or come into contact with any toxic substances, human food, or medication. If he does, call us immediately.

Summary of rules

❖ Pets In Need foster dogs should never be left alone, unsupervised outdoors, with children, with cats or other small animals, or in cars.

❖ Foster dogs should always wear a collar with ID tag.

❖ Foster dogs should always be on leash when out in public.

❖ Foster dogs should never be locked in a crate unless they are comfortable entering a crate on their own and will willingly enter the crate to sleep when you are present. Crates should not be used for more than four hours at a time with the exception of nighttime.

❖ All training should be done with positive reinforcement. The use of choke chains and prong collars is prohibited.

❖ Go slow and watch your foster dog’s body language.

❖ If your foster dog is afraid of something or someone, increase the distance between your dog and the object or person until they are relaxed and secure enough to move closer. Never force your foster dog into an encounter with a person, object, or animal.