

EXPLORING A NEW WORLD

Even the most outgoing pup will need a period of adjustment before he feels secure again. If your new dog is a little quieter at first than when you chose him, just give him time. He'll come around.

Dogs need to explore their environment in order to gain a sense of security. Your new dog will want to check out every part of his new home — let him. But watch him closely to keep him out of trouble. It's best to leave the dog on his leash, and either let it drag behind him — with you nearby — or take it loosely and follow along on his journey of discovery. Your companionship on this first daunting expedition will tell your dog that you're there for him, and also remind him that you are in charge. A gentle tug on his leash when he gets too near the stove, garage or other danger will reinforce this.

It's normal for a nervous dog or puppy to wet the floor. Take the new arrival to his designated elimination spot, preferably outdoors, as soon as you bring him home. After he has eliminated, make a big deal about praising him; this will start the positive reinforcement necessary for toilet training right away. If he has an accident before getting to his special area, don't yell — this will only cause further stress, and it won't do much for the bonding process, either.

Don't invite all your friends over to meet the puppy right away. It's important that he form ties with your family members first, and learn his place in the pecking order. Too many people at once will both scare and confuse him, neither of which helps develop a well-adjusted pet.

Place your dog's food and water dishes where he can at least see his human family. Of course, it's up to you to prevent the habit of begging for food. Bring your dog to the dining area for the first few days, fill his bowls, then set them down. When he starts to eat, convey the praise. He'll soon learn where to go at mealtime.

If you already have another pet at home, you'll have to introduce him to the new addition. Don't push for the two to become friends right away. They must feel each other out and establish trust and respect — just as a first child might with a newborn baby. Keep a close watch on the two, and never leave a puppy alone with an adult cat or dog; if the older pet feels his place in the family is threatened in any way, he might just take it out on the new arrival. Expect the older pet to exert his special status a little. He may taste the new arrival's food, use some of the new toys, and maybe even check out the newcomer's sleeping quarters. Don't ignore your older dog in favor of the new one — train him to respect the new kid on the block.

Reprinted from the Animal Planet website

