



Preparing the home

- Kennel w/water and towels/blankets
- Puppy-proof your spaces! Baby gates are helpful too!
- Prepare to give them a bath
- Calming treats, sprays, and/or dog CBD can be helpful

Having a designated area or room for a new dog to decompress in is key to starting off on the right paw! Prepare a large enough kennel with water, potentially a food bowl, some toys, and towels or blankets. If possible, adding a radio, white noise, or speaker with music can help a lot for minimizing stress on newcomers!

Puppy proof the room/area they will spend ANY unsupervised time in (even for adult dogs!).

Be prepared for dogs to not be house trained and/or mark in your home, even if they've previously been in a home. Watch them closely in the first 24-48 hours specifically for any signs that they're about to urinate/poop inappropriately. Please note NorthWest Wag Rescue's policy for positive reinforcement training ONLY. For more information and resources for potty training, please see;

<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/training/how-to-potty-train-a-puppy/>
<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/training/how-to-housetrain-an-adult-dog/>

If the foster pup is coming straight from a transport, be prepared to give them a bath the day they arrive. Depending on their arrival situation, they may arrive soiled, have itchy skin from transport stress, or may just be stinky! Depending on the dog, you may need to give them a bath every day for the first few days. See Tips and Tricks at the end of this guide for additional info! Please note any injuries and/or sensitive areas.

Dog CBD and/or calming treats/spray can be a wonderful resource for nervous, anxious, reactive arrivals. Probiotics are also great for new fosters and can help their digestion and poops. Chicken and rice and/or pumpkin will help their tummies stay settled while transitioning into a new environment and new food.

We will ask you to fill out a questionnaire and provide pictures after the first week. Refer to the resource links for tips on how to get the best pictures of your foster pup!

Don't forget to email us with any concerns/needs/etc! Please allow us 24-48 hours for response.

northwestwagrescue@gmail.com |



Preparing in home pets

- You know your pets and what they might need to prepare for the new pup.
- Allow decompression time for your pup and the new addition
- A 'pack walk' with the new foster and in-home dogs can be helpful!
- Exercise and mental stimulation are essential.
- Cats need a safe space, consider baby gates and cat trees/shelves.

You know your pet(s) best. If there is a toy or bone that you know your dog is protective of or loves deeply, put it away. If your cat has small toys around, consider putting them away so they won't be destroyed/ingested.

If you have cats in your home, make sure there is a safe space for them to go that is separate from any area the foster will have access to. Not all fosters are tested with cats, so it is important to have a safe area in case the pup is overly interested. Also make sure litter boxes are covered or hidden as some dogs think they are big snack bowls! Baby gates and cat trees can be very helpful to give separation to your cats!

First Day

Take it slow and be as patient as you can.

Start with a walk or yard time to get their excitement out, let them potty and sniff as much as possible, and get a good lay of the land. Depending on the dogs, this may be the time to introduce the pups or this may be decompression only time. Going for a walk with both pups can be great for building a positive mentality. Treat giving can also be a bonding experience and can help you earn their trust.

Take the pup to their designated area. Allow them time without any pressure from you to explore. Many fosters will prefer their kennel for a while as it is the most familiar thing in the midst of so much transition. Do not force them to exit when they are not ready. If they seem unsure about your kennel at first approach, put some treats inside and allow them to explore in their own time. Every foster is a little different, but having a space they know they can lie down in peace makes a huge difference in the coming week(s).

Occasionally, a foster might be afraid of a kennel, or might have had a bad experience with it in the past. Do **NOT** force them into the kennel or use it as a punishment, as this can cause them to injure themselves. The kennel should always be associated with positive things, like a cozy sleeping place or treats! Feeding meals inside the kennel and sitting next to it while they try it out can help with the adjustment. Tossing treats inside the kennel to allow the dog to explore the kennel with the ability to leave is a great game to build confidence and comfortability with kennels.



Take many potty breaks. Often fosters are unsure of where the appropriate place to potty is after so much transition. They will learn, but expect accidents the first 1-3 days, at least. Even adult house trained dogs will have accidents due to a new environment.

Often a foster will not eat food for the first day or two. Do not panic - this is perfectly normal. Provide unlimited access to water and food as you are able (preferably in the kennel). They will eat when they are ready.

Do not force the foster to be cuddled or pet. If they are hiding, allow them to hide. They WILL come out when they are ready. *Respecting their boundaries grows trust and keeps the household safe.*

Even if dogs know basic commands such as 'sit', they may not be willing to perform those things yet. Don't take it personally if you feel like you're starting at square 1 with a dog that has a history training. This is not a sign of disobedience, but a sign that they are overwhelmed with their new surroundings. Start slow with sit, down, and come before introducing 'fun' tricks.

First Week

Around Day 3 is almost always the hardest day. The dog is testing boundaries, learning so much about how to be a dog in a home, and still decompressing from whatever trauma they have endured.

Around Day 4 on, things start getting easier. The dog is learning where to potty, what they are allowed to chew on, what toys are their favorite, who gives the best cuddles, and the comfiest spot in the house.

This is when the dog's mental capacity and trust allows for some training to actually begin. Many dogs that know 'sit' or 'down' will not be willing to do so (even for high value treats) until this time.

Playing 1-2-3 is a great game to introduce the idea that you want to train them while gaining trust that they will receive a reward from you. Here's a video to introduce you to the game that is not only used to help dogs who struggle with distractions or triggers, but it is also beneficial for so many things!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWEsr7ONMRk&ab_channel=BlackDogTraining

Along with their new found confidence in the first week, you may start to see behavior issues that were not apparent before. Do not be alarmed. The foster is beginning to trust you with their true colors and may be starting to feel protective of you as well. Being proactive about stopping any unwanted behaviors as soon as they present themselves is the best policy.



If any issue is new to you or you feel you may need advice, reach out! This is a perfectly normal part of decompression for dogs. We have seen it all and are ready to support you with whatever may arise!

Marketing your Foster

- Email NWW updates and pictures of your foster as much as possible.
- Post on your social media account and tag NWW (@northwestwagrescue).
- Share your foster on platforms such as: NextDoor, Instagram, Facebook, etc.

About a week after their arrival into your home, we will email you a questionnaire to fill out about your foster. This is a great time to highlight their unique personality, share what their ideal home would look like and mention any quirks they may have. Please fill this out as soon as possible so that we can add the new information to their listing and posts. Please email us pictures of the pup in your home doing everyday things.

Potential Adoptions

- The NWW Team will screen applications and pass you contact information to discuss specific needs and set up meet and greets.
- Consider a group walk or backyard playtime for meet and greets.
- Prepare their to-go-bag prior to meet and greet, if it's a success, they can take the pup home to start their trail. Don't forget to notify NWW!
- Please be honest about any behavioral tendencies and/or home needs!

This is where your notes come in the most handy!

When you are given contact info for a potential family - NWW has already done the vetting for you. Now you get to help your foster SHINE.

Prepare your notes to include: a regular day on your schedule, favorite toys, eating habits or preferences, and any behavioral concerns. Then dial up this potential family! A great starting line is "Hi, this is ____ calling from Northwest Wag Rescue! I'm calling about your application for _____. I'd love to tell you a bit more about how the pup is doing in your home and see how you feel about them!" From there, the conversation flows pretty easily. You can tell them about your first few days together if you'd like or you can jump straight into how they're doing now.

Every dog's story is unique so there's no 'right' way to tell a potential family all of the information. Try to include any information that could be considered a deal breaker for a potential family (i.e. resource guarding, leash reactivity, fear of men, etc.)

*****If you, as a foster, have concerns about the family's response to anything you say, feel free to reach out to NWW to discuss further.***



When meeting a potential family, consider a group walk or a backyard play time - every dog does better in different situations, so feel free to decide what would help your pup be most comfortable.

Prior to the meet & greet, prepare your foster's supplies in hopes of a trial! When possible, send along: extra food, a blanket/towel/shirt of yours from their 'safe space', any toys the foster loved that you are willing to part with, and some treats that they have loved. This really helps ease the transition into a new home.

Tips and Tricks for....

Bath time

Bath time is uncomfortable and hard for most dogs in a state of transition. Use a calming and happy voice the whole time you are bathing the dog to help keep them calm. Prepare all potential materials beforehand so that you aren't scrambling with a wet pup. Shampoo, conditioner, towels, and some treats are a perfect start.

Washing the dog indoors with lukewarm water and drying the dog as much as possible before letting them outdoors will be great for their skin!

If the dog needs a nail trim, it is usually best to do so after day 3, so that the dog has developed a bit more trust with you.

Many dogs will need an ear cleaning as well. Here is a quick video about ear cleaning: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5C39A9UU720&ab_channel=AnimalCareTV (the cleaning portion begins at 2 min)

Meals

If the dog is having a difficult time eating, mixing in treats they like with the kibble is a great starting option. Adding warm water or low-sodium broth, a bit of wet food, or a scoop of canned pumpkin can also make the kibble more appetizing!

Some dogs can get an upset stomach when they switch foods which can result in vomiting/diarrhea. Try to transition kibble slowly if possible. If you notice an upset stomach, you can add probiotics or feed a bland diet such as plain boiled chicken and rice for a day or two to help the transition.

*****If you have a dog in the home, feed separately from your dog so that there is no risk of resource guarding.***

Scatter feeding can be done in the yard or inside the home. Simply shake the scoop of food around the area so that the dog needs to sniff around for their kibble. It's a great game to build confidence and the dogs love it!



Low confidence/avoidant/fearful dogs

Take it slow, gentle, and be VERY patient. Rushing the process for a low confidence dog will only result in a lack of trust and potentially an overreaction from the pup.

Scatter feeding is a HUGE help with anxious dogs. Scatter feeding with treats instead of kibble increases the reward and can help increase their confidence.

Some nervous/fearful dogs have the instinct to run when they get frightened. Make sure the pup is always securely leashed to avoid a lost dog situation.

When a nervous dog finds their 'safe space,' allow unrestricted access to that space. Nervous dogs will come and explore when they are ready, but will often need to return to their 'safe space' to decompress and take a break from feeling overwhelmed by the rest of the home.

Move gently throughout your home when a nervous dog is around - sudden movements or loud noises are very difficult for a nervous dog to cope with. The first week is where you will start seeing what noises and what actions may trigger their flee response. Don't take it personally if they were allowing you to pet them on day 1, but on day 2 they allow for minimal pets before going to hide - this is perfectly normal and is a sign they trust you enough to leave you and come back when they are ready.

Loose Stool

Most dogs that are going through a transitional period, whether it be dietary or environmental will have loose stool. This is common and nothing to be alarmed by. You can simply add chicken and rice or pumpkin to their kibble to help solidify their poops. Over a period of days, slowly increase the kibble until the additive is not needed. If there is blood in their stool please notify us. This may be a sign of intestinal worms (even if they are not visible in their stool) and we generally have the medication available to you. This is simple and easy to treat.

Added Resources

NWWR Frequently Asked Questions - <https://www.northwestwagrescue.org/contact>

Tips for Marketing your foster pup!

<https://chewonthis.maddiesfund.org/2020/04/turn-your-foster-caregivers-into-master-marketers-with-this-quick-online-course/>

<https://www.maddiesfund.org/assets/documents/foster-resources/mf-foster-caregiver-marketing-guide.pdf>



**NORTHWEST
WAG RESCUE**

Fostering Guide

Tips for taking great photos <https://heartsspeak.org/10-tips-for-great-foster-pet-photos/>

Tips for writing a great bio <https://heartsspeak.org/pet-bio-writing-the-interview-strategy/>

Educational resources to help <https://university.maddiesfund.org/>

Decompression and Integration Guide

<https://www.bullishlybrilliant.com/decompression-and-integration-guide>