

Shopping for Your New Dog

A list of some of the supplies you will need. You really want to have (at least) these things before you bring your new dog home

- Collar and/or **Harness** (HHS uses the [EASY WALK HARNESS](#))
- 6-foot **Leash**. No Retractable Leashes!
- Food & Water **Bowls**. (For extra fun & enrichment, [Interactive Toys](#) can take the place of bowls!)
- **Food** (HHS uses the [Science Diet](#) brand dog food, but you are encouraged to do your own research, consult with your vet, and find the right food for your new dog)
- **Toys**. A variety is ideal, such as [plush](#), [rope](#), [plastic](#), [wood](#). A starter set of different types of toys is a good place to start. As you learn your dog's preferences, you can get more of the toys he likes.
- [Crate](#) and/or [Bed](#)
- **Identification tag** ([The Nautical Dog](#) - Williamsburg's Only Locally Owned Pet Market (nauticaldogwilliamsburg.com) and most pet stores will have machines)
- Enzymatic [Cleaner](#)
- [Seat Belt](#) or **Travel crate** for your vehicle

Plan Ahead

Setting yourself up for success

- Create a Space:
 - Where will your new dog spend most of their time?
 - Be sure there is plenty of room for their crate or bed.
 - Puppy-proof the area to help keep them safe and minimize their mistakes.
 - Assume “if they can chew it up, they will”
 - Assume they will have potty accidents. An easily cleaned floor is a plus.

- House Rules:
 - Are there rooms that are off-limits?
 - Is your new dog allowed on the furniture?
 - Where will your new dog sleep?
 - When & where will your new dog eat? Who will feed them?
 - When will your new dog be taken out for a walk? Who will take them?
 - Does your new dog have a “quiet zone” where they can go to be left alone? Do the kids know to leave your new dog alone when they are in this “quiet zone”?
 - Are you prepared to use gates and closed doors to enforce your new dog’s approved access to the house?

- Potty Training
 - Expect your new dog to need potty training. Maybe they have never been housebroken. Maybe they were, but their time in the shelter has caused them to lose the skill. It is common for dogs to need potty training when transitioning from the shelter to a home.

- Expect Mistakes
 - Be ready for setbacks. Expect your new dog to have some difficulties adjusting to their new environment. They might poop in the house, chew up a remote control, chase the cat, or any number of other annoying things. Problems like this are totally normal. Prevent problem behaviors when you can, stick to a routine, don’t freak out over every misstep, and remember that your new dog is going through a huge transition. They do not want to make you mad. They don’t want to end up back at the shelter. But they have never lived with you before. Maybe they never lived in home at all. They don’t know how to be a member of your family, yet. Be patient. Reach out for help from a certified trainer. Often, success takes time.

Adoption Complete! Now What?

➤ Take. It. Slow.

- Your new dog has been through a lot. They want to be a good dog. They don't want to mess this up. But they don't know how to be a member of your family. Not yet. Heck, maybe they have never even had a family. Maybe they have been taught some bad habits. Maybe they are just scared. At the very least, they are confused. They need you to be patient. They need you to be understanding. They need you to take it slow.

➤ Easing into their new life

- They need time to rest and recuperate from their time in the shelter. They need to **decompress**. The first week in their new home is not the time for excitement. They do not want to party, yet! They are not interested in meeting all your friends and extended family, yet! Your dog hasn't had a good night's sleep since the day they first entered the shelter. What they need right now is quiet, expectation-free, quality time to ease into their new reality.

➤ Low-impact leisure

- You might be eager to hit the mountains and hike the Appalachians with your new best friend. Maybe you want to begin your epic conquest of the agility circuit. Perhaps you're itching to join the dog park. It's possible you've been dreaming about those intense games of frisbee fetch you used to play with your last dog. For now, however, stick to simple pleasures like routine walks around the neighborhood. There will be plenty of time to make memories in the years to come. Be patient. The first week (or weeks) in their new home is *their* time. Let them acclimate.

➤ One-on-one time

- Make sure to take time for you and your new dog. Just the two of you. Leave your other pups behind. Plan some one-on-one time so your pup can learn to trust you and the two of you can bond.

Potty Training & Crate Training

What is Potty Training?

- Potty training happens when a dog pees/poops outside so often that they forget they can pee/poop in the house. They do not “know it is wrong” to eliminate inside. They simply habituate the experience of only eliminating outside. They get used to holding it and they get accustomed to only doing it outside on a schedule.

Prevention

- Dogs naturally see the world as an unending field of potential toilets. The only places naturally “off-limits” are (1) covered in food that they are currently eating, and (2) where they are currently occupying (if they are stuck there). That’s why **crate training** is so important. ***A properly sized crate allows a dog just enough room to stand, turn, and lie down comfortably.*** If the crate is too big, they feel like they can pee/poop inside the crate. Many of the larger metal, “wire”, crates come with a moveable divider wall so the crate can grow along with your dog.
- Humans are terrible at “keeping an eye” on something for more than a minute. We think we are good at it. We are not. We get distracted very easily by work, tv, a good book, household chores, etc. And it only takes a moment for our dogs to slip out of sight and relieve themselves. Set yourself up for success by using barriers, such as **baby/pet gates** and closed doors, to help ensure proper supervision. If barriers aren’t an option, you may need to tether a leash to your belt and keep your dog attached to you to prevent accidents.
- When your dog has an accident, make sure you are using an enzymatic cleaner that is designed to eliminate pet odor. It isn’t enough to just clean the spot. You have to remove all traces so that Fido can’t smell his handywork. Remember, potty training happens when a dog *forgets* about “going” indoors. If they can smell their residue, then they won’t forget.

Routine

- In general, a calm adult dog in a properly sized crate can hold it for up to 8 hours. Overnight, they might even hold it longer. Work up to that expectation. Take your new dog out every few hours, on-leash, to the same general spot outside. Keep a log of their potty habits and plan accordingly. A few weeks of diligence can prevent ongoing issues.

Introducing Your Dogs to the New Dog

- When you pick up your adopted dog from the shelter, leave your dogs at home. The freedom ride is a joyous occasion, but that does not mean everyone needs to be part of it.
- Arrange to have a helper bring your dogs to a neutral location. There are several wonderful parks in Williamsburg that are perfect for this step. Take a long, leisurely buddy walk. Let them walk parallel. Let them pee over top of each other's pee and sniff to their heart's content. If they are walking calmly and politely, you can let them take turns walking in the lead. They may even sneak in a butt sniff while walking like this. It is best if they **do not** meet face-to-face at this point, especially if they are pulling at their leashes.
- After you leave the park, you may choose to repeat the buddy walk in your neighborhood.
- If all the dogs are comfortable and calm, you can now let them meet "for real". In a safely enclosed outdoor area (such as a fenced-in yard), allow them to interact naturally. If everyone is behaved and polite you can drop the leashes (leave them attached and just let them drag) and let them do their nose-to-nose hello.
- Before moving inside, make sure that you have picked up all treasured toys, bones, chews, and food bowls.
- If you do not allow your dogs in certain rooms or on furniture, then restrict access to those things before letting the new dog explore. Take steps to prevent unwanted behavior so you will not have to issue any 'corrections' while your new dog checks out their new home. We do not want to add any unnecessary tension while your dogs are sizing-up and learning to accept their new sibling.
- Feed the dogs separately and be mindful of any potential resource sharing issues while they get to know each other over the first few weeks.

Introducing Your New Dog to Cats & Small Animals

➤ Cats

- Do not leave your new dog alone, unsupervised with your cat until you have learned about his reaction to cats and he has developed some basic obedience skills.
- Set-up the environment to make your cat feel comfortable. Multiple “escape routes” in and out of the room, vertical spaces for her to climb, and physical barriers (such as pet gates she can leap but your dog cannot or gates with cat doors that your dog cannot fit through) will keep your cat safe and allow her to build confidence.
- It is common for a cat to “disappear” for a while when a dog first moves into her home. She may be holed up in a single room or she may just make herself very scarce. If your cat isolates herself, then make sure she has access to food, water, and a litter box.
- Conduct daily “scent swapping” by trading blankets and bedding covered with the smell, dander, and hair of your cat and new dog.
- Your new dog may want to chase the cat. This can be very stressful for her, but it is not a deal-breaker. Often, once the cat gains confidence and the novelty subsides, they will learn to peacefully coexist. However, if your new dog shows overt aggression such as snarling, growling, or baring teeth then you must keep them separated and seek the assistance of a certified trainer.
- Keep in mind: a dog who is safe around a cat indoors may act completely differently outside, even with the exact same cat. Just because they are best friends on the couch does not mean you can trust them in the yard.

➤ Small Animals

- Do not leave your new dog unsupervised around caged small animal pets until you know how they will react. This may mean moving the animals cages into a secure room for the first couple weeks. Remember: **a dog with a strong prey drive towards small animals will not be stopped by a pet cage.**
- Do not leave your dog unsupervised around small animals when they are outside the cage getting play or exercise.
- Do not leave your dog unsupervised around small animals while they are being held/handled by children.
- Most of the time a dog will simply ignore a small animal pet. That is good. If, however, your new dog shows aggression or troubling fixation towards your small pet then seek assistance from a certified trainer.