



# RESCUE S.M.A.R.T

STRUCTURE - MANAGEMENT - ACTIVITY - RED FLAGS - TRAINING

## A guide for the first 3 days/3 weeks/3 months with your new dog

By Ann King, CBCC, KPA-CTP

Everyone knows that adopting a dog from a rescue saves lives and makes us all feel good. Our social media feeds are packed with heartwarming stories of people giving homeless dogs a well-deserved chance at a do-over. It's feel-good central and we eat it up.

What people *don't* talk about as much, though, is what the first few days and weeks at home with a new dog are like, particularly if it's difficult. And even less talked about is the fact that many dogs are returned to rescues and shelters within just a few weeks. *Some statistics say as many as 20%*. Why is this? How can things go from happy to, well, crappy, so quickly?

For support materials visit  
[www.RescueSMART.net](http://www.RescueSMART.net)

The truth is that a lot of us are simply doing it wrong. With loving intentions and full hearts we're inadvertently setting our new best friend up for failure. Trust me, as a frequent flyer in the dog foster and adoption world and before I was a professional dog trainer, I made every mistake in the book. Some of these were little mistakes, which merely resulted in a dog that wasn't pleasant to live with. But some of these were BIG mistakes, a few of which resulted in injury to dogs and me, and the subsequent re-homing of dogs.

Obviously I didn't set out to create chaos for my newly adopted dogs. In fact, I now realize the problems were a result of the things I *wasn't* doing. Because I wasn't proactive with structure, management, activity, red flags, and training (S.M.A.R.T) I ended up having to "fix" problems that arose for dogs both new and existing in my household.

Before we jump into the S.M.A.R.T. protocol we should address a couple of truths I wish I had known.

### Lose the baggage

Let's talk about the suitcase in the room: your new dog's "back story". The circumstances that led your new dog to end up in a rescue. The baggage. *Let's lose it.* By hanging on to what we may or may not know about our new dog, and viewing it through a lens clouded by the dog's perhaps-not-ideal past, we do it a great disservice. **Let us observe the dog in front of us, and respond accordingly.**

## The rule of 3/3/3

Keep in mind the rule of 3/3/3 – 3 days, 3 weeks, 3 months.

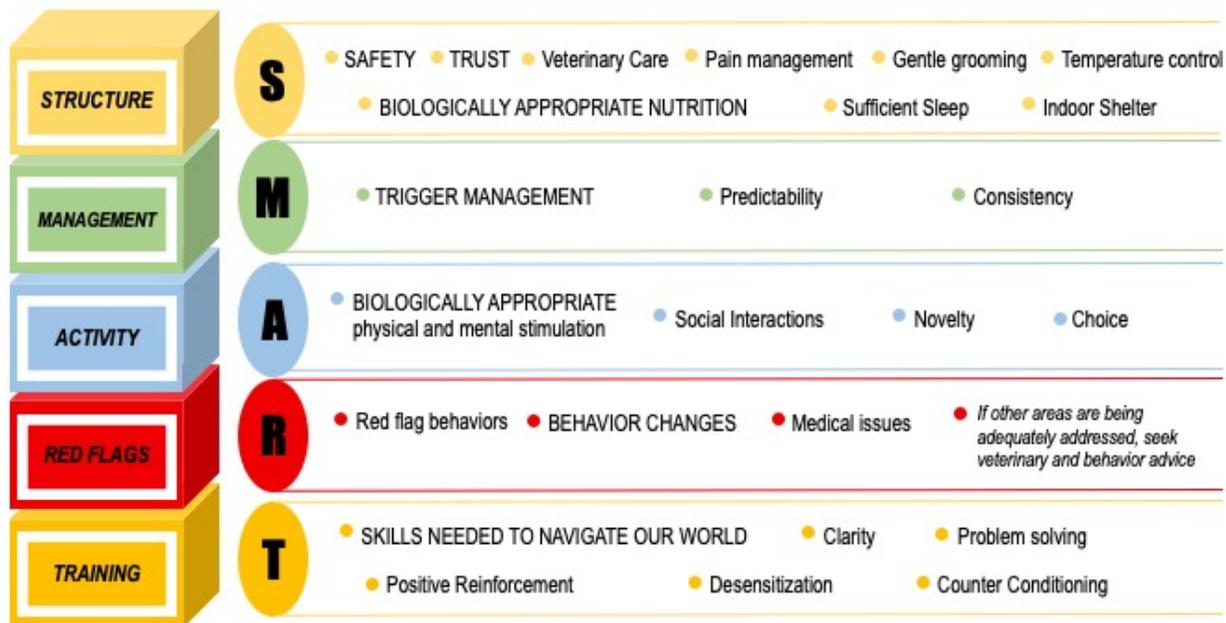
These are common milestones when we often see changes in behavior as the dog settles in. Emerging behaviors may be old habits resurfacing, or they may be new behaviors brought on by the environment. What we do (or don't do) in these early days and weeks affects both. These timeframes are important in setting new routines and helping build new habits. Resist the temptation to back off on the elements of the S.M.A.R.T. protocol during the first 3/3/3.

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## What is S.M.A.R.T?

### Structure, Management, Activity, Red flags, Training

The S.M.A.R.T. protocol is a *holistic approach to our relationship with our dog*. It provides a framework that addresses all aspects of a dog's life: physical, social, environmental, and bridging the communication gap between our two species. When we attend to each area of the framework, we are setting our dog (and ourselves!) up for success. Conversely, when there are deficiencies in the framework, these can manifest in behavior we find undesirable.



## STRUCTURE

Regardless of our new dog's previous experiences, the unfamiliar smells, sights and sounds in her new environment, not to mention the change in daily routine and caretakers, can present some challenges for her. The more "figuring it out" we leave up to the dog, such as offering it free reign of the house, the more likely she is to be overwhelmed or make mistakes (such as peeing in the house). Your new dog needs *structure*.

- **Supervise** – No matter the age of your new dog, pretend she’s a puppy. Keep a close eye on her in the house and outside in the yard. Confine her (we’ll discuss more in the Management section) when you can’t supervise.
- **Drag a leash** – *When you are home and supervising, have your dog drag a light, short leash in the house. Say “Let’s go” and use it to gently guide her off furniture, through the house, to her bed. Step on the leash to keep her from bolting out the front door. Use the leash to keep her with you (aka “umbilical cord” training); free access to the house is a recipe for trouble in the early days and weeks. The leash is also a great safety tool when your new dog is exploring your fenced yard in the first few days with you. A nervous dog might bolt into the bushes to hide, or try and escape the yard (small dogs are notorious for finding the escape spots you didn’t know you had). You must always supervise your dog when it’s dragging a leash. A biothane long line is especially useful for outdoor dragging because it’s light and easy to clean.*
- **Show her the potty spot** –Walk her to the potty spot when you first get home, after she eats, naps, or when she starts sniffing with purpose. Set up a House Training plan. I recommend using a long training lead (15 or 20 feet, make sure it’s light for small dogs) so the dog has room to walk and smell, which stimulates the urge to potty. Don’t distract her while you’re waiting; ignore her entirely and then reward her with a high-value treat as soon as she goes. Keep in mind your new dog won’t know how to “tell” you she needs to go, so set an alarm on your phone to remind you to take her out every hour or so at first. Your new dog may not respond well to being put out alone at first, so plan on accompanying her during the first few days and weeks (remember 3/3/3 rule).
- **Food** – Don’t be alarmed if your new dog doesn’t eat for a few meals. The stress of change to a new environment causes lots of dogs to skip meals. It’s OK. Their bodies are built to handle it. But when they are ready to eat, make sure to pony up for a decent quality food with a short list of ingredients. It matters, and you won’t miss the extra few bucks. A local feed or pet store will have small bags you can try. Add a tablespoon or two of canned food and some warm water to dry (boring) kibble. I enjoy adding leftover lean meats and cooked veggies to my dogs’ kibble to make a nice stew. Check out article Foods Your Dog Shouldn’t Eat before you start adding.
- **Specific feeding time** – *A delicious meal will help your dog stick to a specific feeding time, which is important in getting on a potty routine. Your new dog also needs a quiet place to eat, undisturbed by kids or other dogs. Crates are ideal (we’ll talk more about crates in Management). Give your dog about 10 minutes to eat, then remove the food. Try again at next feeding time. The goal isn’t to deprive your dog, but to help increase an already-present food drive every dog possesses.*

**AVAILABLE in the STRUCTURE SECTION of the TRAINING LIBRARY at**

[www.RescueSMART.net](http://www.RescueSMART.net)

- Canine Developmental Stages & Fear Periods
- How Dogs Learn
- House Training
- Do You Think I’m Fat?
- Dog too Skinny? (a recipe)
- Foods Your Dog Shouldn’t Eat
- Pet Safety Essentials

## MANAGEMENT

Once we’ve structured an ideal environment for our new dog, we must then *manage* him through it. I know no one gets a dog so they can practice being the sheriff of boundaries and enforcer of rules, but your new dog will be much more at ease with you in this coaching role rather than if he is left to figure things out for himself. And you’ll be much happier with the transition.

- **Resident dogs** – Our existing dog(s) rely heavily on our management of the new guy to feel secure. The rule of 3/3/3 tells us we don't really KNOW how the new dog will respond to our existing dogs in every situation, even if they've been in foster care with other dogs. A new dog brings a new energy and can affect the dynamic of the group. In time, all the dogs ideally will become friends, but in the early days we want to err on the side of micro-management. Read Dog-Dog Intro.
- **Resources** – Furniture, toys, food, our attention, doorways, entire rooms, “resources” are anything a dog finds valuable (they get to decide, which can sometimes be confusing to us). The early days, weeks and months are the time for us to observe our new dog's resource preferences and to set the rules around resources in the household. Feed dogs separately. Watch how the new dog responds to your presence while he is eating. If resident dogs are allowed on furniture, use a leash to guide the new dog to the desired spot. Don't leave dogs alone with toys and bones, and check the backyard for forgotten but potentially high-value items. There's nothing like a little competition to make something valuable again. Prevent dogs from crowding in high-value areas such as the kitchen, under the dining table, or around the front door where excitement can lead to bad choice-making and conflict.
- **Crates** – Nothing is more convenient than having a crate-savvy dog. Dogs that are crate trained can go practically anywhere with us, making both our lives much more interesting. Crates provide an excellent place for dogs to rest and feel safe, particularly in a new environment. They are excellent tools to help with structure and management. You may or may not know your new dog's experience with crates; don't be too quick to write off a crate if you think the dog doesn't like it. Actual containment phobia exists, but it isn't as common as people might think. Most dogs can learn to like the crate. I strongly suggest dogs sleep in crates (vs. your bed or unconfined) at least for the first 3/3/3. Make that 3/3/6 (months). There's plenty of time to share your bed with your dog if that's what you want to do. We just don't recommend it in the beginning (can create Red flag behaviors if the bed becomes a valuable resource). If you know your dog to be crate trained, start using it for short periods during the day and for sleeping at night. If you're unsure about your new dog's experience with the crate, read Crate Training. **Note: Until you have a sense of how your new dog feels about a crate DON'T shove him in one and leave. This can create a bad association in a new environment, even if the dog was crate trained before.**
- **Confinement in general** – Use baby gates, exercise pens, tethers, to manage your new dog's whereabouts, especially during the 3/3/3 period. Dogs left to roam an entire house or on their own in the back yard for extended periods, like if you're away at work all day, will undoubtedly get themselves into trouble. Ideally you can create a safe space inside and/or outside for your dog. For example, lots of folks give their dogs partial garage access with a dog door that leads to a designated run outside. Tethers (see picture) are useful to keep a dog in a certain spot while you're around to supervise. Use an O-ring secured in a baseboard with a 3-4 foot tie-out next to a comfy dog bed to create an ideal resting and bone-chewing spot. Keep in mind proximity of resident dogs if you have them.

**AVAILABLE in the MANAGEMENT SECTION of the TRAINING LIBRARY at [www.RescueSMART.net](http://www.RescueSMART.net)**

- Crate Training
- Kitchen & Mealtimes
- Dog-Dog Intro
- Size difference (dogs)
- Visitors to the House
- Dog-in-Training door sign
- Dog Safety for Kids



- **Furniture** – I don't have hard-and-fast rules about dogs on furniture UNLESS access to furniture is creating problems (like uninhibited invasion of my personal space) or exacerbating problem behaviors (like resource guarding). I do, however, have a permission-based policy. If you're a dog, you must wait to be invited onto the couch. Why? Well, in addition to the obvious safety reasons (e.g. I don't want a jumping dog to cause me to spill hot coffee all over myself and I don't want a jumping dog to hurt my 83-year-old dad or a small kid), I want to be *relevant* in my dog's eyes about such things as access to high-value areas like furniture. In the 3/3/3 period I don't really know if my new dog has the tendency to become a pushy-pants so I'd like him checking in with me for the go-ahead.
- **Kids** – Monitor and manage interactions between children and the dog. Your new dog should be taught that kids' personal space needs to be respected. And vice versa. Share "Dog Safety for Kids" with your kids. Don't leave children alone with your new dog. See how your new dog responds to kids' unpredictable bursts of energy and noise. The #1 reason children get bit by dogs is because the dog's personal space is invaded and the dog feels threatened. See *Red flags for more about kids and dogs*.
- **"No-fly zones"** – If you like a zen-like environment in certain areas of your home (who doesn't?), then communicate this with your new dog by not engaging in or encouraging high-energy play in those areas. You'll need to manage the kids to that end as well.

## ACTIVITY

We all know dogs need physical and mental *activity*. Too little, too much, or the wrong kind of activity can hinder our efforts to help our new best friend adjust. Plan to spend some time getting to know what your dog *likes* to do while keeping the following in mind:

- **Don't overwhelm** – *The biggest mistake we make in the early days with our new dog is to overwhelm them with new sights, sounds, and people.* During the 3/3/3 period carefully choose activities that are appropriate for your new dog's emotional, psychological, and physical state. See *Red flags for specifics on fearful dogs*.
- **"Let's Go" with the long line** – I LOVE this exercise with a new dog. Attach a 20-foot long line to a *secure* buckle collar or harness – make sure your dog can't slip out of it - and go out in your yard. *Keep the line slack and allow your dog to just be.* Let him do dog things like sniffing, peeing, looking around, whatever. Say "Let's go", turn your body, and walk in a different direction. If your dog doesn't follow you (if he's brand new and doesn't know you yet, he may not) apply a *light* leash pressure (don't yank or pull, just hold steady) and as soon as your dog turns toward it or starts to follow, release pressure on the leash. This is not meant to be an energetic training exercise; it's meant to allow your dog to be at liberty but encourages him to check in and follow you when requested. Use this time to encourage your dog with affection and petting (if he likes those things) and treats. Tap into a calm state of mind when doing this exercise. Just chill.

**AVAILABLE in the ACTIVITY SECTION of the TRAINING LIBRARY at [www.RescueSMART.net](http://www.RescueSMART.net)**

- Let's Go with a Long Line
- Find It
- Tug-of-War
- Flirt Pole
- Fetch
- Taking a Walk
- Top 10 Tips for the Dog Park
- Dog Park 101
- Get Puppy S.M.A.R.T. – *read Socialization section*
- Puppy Socialization Checklist

- **"Find It"** – Another exercise I LOVE to do with a new dog. "Find It" gets a dog moving, so it's great with shy dogs that may not be ready to connect with you. It also gives an exuberant dog a way to channel energy. Attach a 20-foot long line to a secure buckle collar and arm yourself with a bait bag full of small, tasty treats. Let your dog know you have the treats by waving them under his nose. Then, when he shows interest, say "Find It!" and toss a few treats. Do this a few times. Ideally your dog starts to look at you expectantly. Reinforce that eye contact by tossing more treats.
- **Structured walk on a short leash** – The life skill of nicely walking through a neighborhood on a short leash is essential, but training that perfect loose-leash walk doesn't have to be (in my opinion) a priority in the first 3/3 period. Being trapped on a short leash in a new environment (your neighborhood) can be not-so-fun for a more sensitive dog. For a happy-go-lucky dog, a short leash can inspire a dog's oppositional reflex and encourage pulling, so work with a trainer to find the gear and technique that works best for you and your dog.
- **Play** - Let's face it, we ask our dogs to behave very un-dog-like a lot of the time. Don't bark, don't jump, don't dig, don't chase, don't hunt, don't chew, and the list goes on. Play is a great way to allow a dog to express those innate behaviors in a constructive way AND it's a great relationship builder for the two of you. Look at The Predatory Cycle (see diagram) and find things your new

## Biologically Appropriate Activity – predatory cycle



- **Seek/Search/Sniff**
  - "Find It", Puzzle toys, snuffle mat, nose games, novelty, "sniffaris" on a long line, car rides, digging box
- **Stalk**
  - Personal play with your dog – high and low arousal
- **Chase**
  - Flirt pole, ball toss, keep away, take turns
- **Grab/Kill**
  - Tug, spring pole, wrestle, weight pull, bite sports
- **Celebrate**
  - Woo Hoo!, victory lap
- **Consume**
  - Shredding, dissecting, chewing

dog likes to do. For anxious or fearful dogs that might not be ready to engage in play, sniffing is the best exercise (see Let's Go on a Long Line). Tug toys, flirt poles, fetch, balls, seeking games, snuffle mats, chase, these are all ways for dogs to engage in biologically appropriate activities that will be mentally and physically stimulating. Keep in mind your newly adopted dog may not jump right into play; the new environment can be distracting, and a dog's state of mind must be "just so" to be in the mood for playing. Keep at it...sometimes it can take 3 months for a dog to start showing an interest in playing.

- **All-out running** – Depending on your new dog's level of physicality, he may enjoy a nice run. If you are someone who enjoys that kind of physical activity, super! If not, I found the coolest invention ever for non-runners who have dogs that like to run: the bicycle attachment for dogs. Walky Dog

and Bike Tow Leash are just two of them out there. My dog LOVES this contraption and his whole outing takes about 15 minutes. It's a blast and I literally do nothing but steer the bike.

- **Socialization Outings** – During the first 3/3/3 follow your new dog's lead (pun intended) and carefully choose stimuli and destinations that are appropriate for your new dog's current emotional, psychological and physical state. A happy-go-lucky dog may benefit from a trip to the pet store or a walk around the neighborhood, and may welcome being approached by new people. A nervous, shy or fearful dog will get plenty of exposure to the new smells, sights and sounds in her new home, so don't feel the need to traipse her out and about town the first few weeks. *Keep in mind that everything is new to your new dog, so simply hanging out in your front yard for 20 minutes with your dog on a long line may be a perfectly suitable activity.* Observe how your dog handles cars going by, people walking by with dogs, children playing. Parks and public places with plenty of room to maneuver make good socialization outings. Take delicious treats to create a positive association with the activity (see Look at That in the Red Flags section of the Training Library if your dog is struggling with triggers). Many stores are dog friendly. A confident dog will welcome being approached by new people. An insecure dog will not. *Be ready to abort the mission if your dog looks miserable on an outing and work with a trainer on ways to help your dog become more comfortable and confident in new environments.* Note: Puppies have very specific socialization requirements. See Get Puppy S.M.A.R.T. and Puppy Socialization Checklist in the Training Library.
- **Dog park** – Let's skip it for awhile, especially during the 3/3/3 period. It's much safer and more productive to have your dog evaluated by professionals in a structured daycare setting to determine if your dog is dog-social. If your dog likes other dogs and can play appropriately, use doggy daycare occasionally to keep these skills alive and well. If you do choose to go to a dog park after you've had your dog's sociability evaluated by a professional, take a look at the Top 10 Tips for the Dog Park and Dog Park 101 to arm yourself with the information needed to help make the dog park fun and safe for you and your dog.

## RED FLAGS

Always, but especially during the 3/3/3 period, it is important you watch for red flags, the behaviors that require help NOW. Implementing the S.M.A.R.T. protocol helps create an environment that doesn't encourage red flag behaviors, but it may not prevent them 100%, especially if your new dog has practiced red flag behaviors before.

- **Resources** – Conflict over resources is one of the main reasons dogs fight each other, and/or bite people. *Review the section about resources in Management.* If your new dog is a frantic eater or stiffens up if you approach her while eating or chewing a bone, read Resource Guarding: Overview and Foundation Training and get in touch with a trainer who has experience in this area. Take a look at the Resource Guarding Scale to

### AVAILABLE in the RED FLAGS SECTION of the TRAINING LIBRARY at [www.RescueSMART.net](http://www.RescueSMART.net)

- Stress & Reactivity diagram
- Adopted Dogs and Separation Anxiety
- Shy Dogs
- Circle of Trust
- Resource Guarding: Overview & Foundation Training
- Resource Guarding Scale
- What Have You Got?
- Handling Basics
- Barking
- Time Out
- Look at that (LAT)

determine where your new dog fits so you can communicate that to a trainer. The “What Have You Got?” exercise will help your new dog learn that your approach is a good thing. *In the meantime, don’t put your new dog in a situation where she feels like she needs to defend a resource from you or your other dogs.*

- **Personal space** – The other main reason dogs fight each other and bite people is violations of their personal space. Small dogs can be especially sensitive to this and may have large personal space requirements. If your new dog stiffens up or growls during handling or petting, read Handling Basics and work with a trainer who can evaluate the situation and help you start desensitizing and counter conditioning your dog to these triggers. Advocate for the dog that has a larger personal space requirement by managing boisterous play from other dogs – read Time Out and Size Difference - or asking people to refrain from approaching. (See *Fearful and insecure dogs* in this section.)
- **Shy or Fearful dogs** – The most obvious display of nervousness we see in our new dogs is a fearful reaction to personal space violations. Below is a list of ways we commonly (and usually unknowingly) violate a shy dog’s personal space:
  - Making and/or holding eye contact
  - Leaning toward or over the dog
  - Reaching for the dog
  - Approaching the dog with an object – dog-related or not – in your hand
  - Walking into a space or room where the dog has no “escape route” and may feel trapped
  - Walking directly toward a dog vs a curved approach or less-threatening posture

For a happy-go-lucky dog, these things are no big deal. For a shy or nervous dog, even eye contact can put them into a threat-response mode. This translates into all kinds of behavior, such as barking, retreating, growling, snapping, and moving away from or toward the perceived “threat”. None of it looks like a dog that is happy at that moment. The kindest thing we can do is to become aware of how our body language creates spatial pressure and what triggers our new dog. Read *Shy Dogs* to learn more.

- Give friends and family a heads-up before they come into the house by printing out and hanging the Dog in Training Door Sign on your front door. This kindly instructs visitors to completely ignore your dog, which in turn will prevent her from feeling pressured and threatened. Let your new dog approach people on her terms. If we don’t ask anything of her (i.e. put pressure on her with our eye contact or body language) she may become comfortable enough to come in for a sniff. *Resist the urge to view this as an invitation to pet. It’s usually not, and dogs don’t keep it a secret if they want you to pet them.* Don’t overwhelm your nervous dog with outings that may be too noisy or chaotic for them to handle. By allowing your sensitive dog to observe the action from a safe distance you are starting the process of desensitizing and counter-conditioning your dog’s automatic responses to triggers. Work with a trainer who has experience in this area and be patient. During the 3/3/3 period we often see a nervous dog relax *significantly* in their new environment if we give them the chance.
- **Separation anxiety** – True separation anxiety is one of hardest conditions we deal with in dog behavior. Helping your new dog learn valuable life skills such as the ability to be alone is something we should focus on from day 1 with a new dog. Ideally, dogs are being helped with these skills from the time they are in foster care. True separation anxiety, as defined in dog behavior, is characterized by what we would call a panic attack when we leave our dog. Read *Adopted Dogs and Separation Anxiety* article for more about ways to prevent and help separation anxiety and consult a trainer who has experience in this area.

- **Resident dogs** – I always say the resident dog gets to make the final decision on adopting the new dog. I say this laughingly, but I'm not joking. If your existing dog(s) have behavioral issues, such as resource guarding or any other aggression problems, integrating a new dog into that mix may be unrealistic. If your existing dogs can handle the presence of a new dog, it's important you pay attention to what your own dogs "tell" you about the new dog. I once had a dog that was a far better judge of dogs than I. If he gave a dog lots of personal space I followed his lead, especially if the other dog had a valuable possession, like a toy. My dog's behavior told me that he was avoiding conflict over a possession, which meant the new dog might have possession guarding issues. If he avoided play with a dog I knew there was a reason (usually the other dog was socially challenged or became too aroused). Implement good Structure and Management and advocate for the dog, resident or new, that needs extra personal space or quiet time. Be patient during the 3/3/3 period while the dogs get to know each other.
- **Leash reactivity** – This is when a dog becomes overly aroused – agitated, barking, lunging, overly excited – when it is on leash and sees other dogs, people, or other triggers. Usually this is a result of frustration: a dog trapped on a leash is unable to interact with its environment. This can be simply frustrating, or because the dog is trapped, scary for the dog. What starts out as simple frustration can quickly become toxic, so if your new dog – even the small ones – is reactive on leash, get started on Look at That (LAT) Training and consult a trainer right away. It doesn't get better on its own, and usually just gets worse.
- **Kids and dogs** – As a general rule, dogs that are confident and resilient make the best pets for households with children. Consider it an immediate red flag if your new dog is extremely frightened by or reacts aggressively to your children or grandchildren. A young and boisterous adolescent dog may simply need structure, management and training to learn not to treat the kids like fellow pups. However, a dog that responds negatively to spatial pressure, handling, or with resource guarding around the children is potentially dangerous and will quickly become a management problem. Read Dog Safety for Kids and work with the rescue to determine your options. A good rescue will take the dog back or pay to have the dog evaluated in your home by a trainer.

## TRAINING

Most people don't get a dog so they can practice their obedience training skills. That said, Structure, Management and Activity help a lot of things, but proper Training gives dogs clarity and teaches them the skills they need to navigate our human world. Keep in mind, your new dog is learning all the time, even things we don't necessarily want him to learn. Our job is to teach them what we *do* want.

- **Name change** – easy! Check out Name Recognition article.
- **Training basics** – Marker words (or clickers), Open Bar/Closed Bar, Say Please, are all useful in creating the foundation for a well-mannered dog.
- **Greeting skills** – Heavy eye contact, a high-happy voice, and lots of touching – the way we humans greet people – all conspire to create a "greeting disorder" in our dogs. To avoid annoying greeting behaviors like jumping, mouthing, barking and overly invasive sniffing, read Visitors to the House and print out the **Dog in Training** door sign.
- **"Let's Go" with a long line** – "Let's Go" simply means to check in and follow. A long line gives your new dog the chance to explore, which helps him get information about his new environment.
- **"Wait"** – A useful command that requires your dog to check in with you before entering and exiting thresholds like the front door, car, crate, and going up and down stairs. This is to help your

dog learn manners and for your dog’s safety. Bolting out of front doors and cars is dangerous. So is barreling through you as you walk down the stairs.

- **Leash Walking** – Unless you have a good amount of dog handling experience, teaching a dog to walk properly on leash without pulling isn’t easy. Many of our newly rescued dogs don’t have any experience walking on a leash. Dragging a light leash around the yard or house (when you’re there to supervise) helps sensitive dogs get used to leash pressure. If you’ve adopted a happy-go-lucky dog that pulls like a sled dog, you might want to get them used to a Head Halter. If you have experience with head halters (like Halti or Gentle Leader or my favorite one-size-fits-all [Transitional Leash by K9 Lifeline](#)) you can try one of those. Keep in mind, properly conditioning your dog to wear this tool is important, so read Head Halter Desensitization. If she’s a committed puller and will pull until she’s choking herself, try a suitcase wrap. It will slow most dogs down a little bit, but if the dog freaks out and starts to alligator roll, abandon mission until you can work with a professional. Harnesses can exacerbate a dog’s pulling on leash, but using a harness until you can work with a trainer isn’t the end of the world. *Regardless of what tool you use, make sure it’s secure and your dog cannot back out of it.* Again, most people need to work with a trainer to teach this important skill to their new dog.
- **“Touch”** (hand targeting) - This seemingly frivolous exercise actually has many useful applications and is a great activity to get your new dog’s mind into work mode, which gets them out of “uh oh...what’s going on in this new place?” mode. It’s a great relationship builder, too. Targeting can be used to boost the confidence level of a timid dog and help keep a dog’s attention focused on you instead of on distractions. It’s easy to train, fun and dogs love it!
- **“Look” or “Watch Me”** – A cue that asks your dog to make and hold eye contact with you. This exercise is useful for all dogs, and is an excellent substitute behavior for dogs that are reactive on leash or are nervous in new situations.

**AVAILABLE in the TRAINING SECTION of the TRAINING LIBRARY at**

[www.RescueSMART.net](http://www.RescueSMART.net)

- Clicker/Marker word training
- Name Recognition
- Open Bar/Closed Bar
- Say Please
- Touch
- Visitors to the House
- Dog-Dog Intro
- Dog-Cat Intro
- Dog-Baby Intro
- Look at That (LAT)
- Handling Basics
- Getting Ready for the Groomer
- Head Halter Desensitization
- Look or Watch Me
- Thank You! (to interrupt normal-but-annoying barking)
- “Wait” video
- “Suitcase Wrap” video

## Rescue S.M.A.R.T.: not always enough

By following the Rescue S.M.A.R.T. protocol, you’re giving your adopted dog the best chance possible at successfully integrating into your home and your life. Wouldn’t it be great if following the recipe worked every time? We wish.

Sometimes we can do everything “right” and it still doesn’t work out. There are times when a dog has behavioral or physical problems that are more than we can reasonably expect someone to handle.

Those of us who have been in this game long enough know that even when we do everything “right” with a dog in our care, it doesn’t always work. There are times when a dog has problems – behavior or physical – that become more than we can reasonably expect someone to handle. Sure, some folks give up more easily than others, and that can be frustrating, but in my decades of experience I have found

that *most people* have good intentions and want to do the right thing. And *most rescues* want to provide fosters and adopters with as much education and support as possible, which was my goal in creating Rescue S.M.A.R.T.

All that said, the reasonable dog welfare *advocates* among us know that adopting a dog is a crap shoot: you can do everything right and it still might not work out. Hopefully, if you have to make the very painful and difficult decision that your new dog isn't working out, you are not made to feel guilty or shamed by *activists* who loudly scream from their social media platforms about how they'd live in their car with their dog if they had to. *Know that there are real and reasonable folks in dog rescue that don't expect you to take up residence in your car with your dog.*

So, thank you for fostering or adopting. And thank you for giving it your best shot. Your commitment humbles us every day and is the reason we in dog rescue are able to do what we do.