



Dog Fosters Manual Template

"Saving one dog will not change the world, but surely for that one dog, the world will change forever."
- Karin Davison

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INTRODUCTION

This manual is NOT meant to cover everything that your fosters or volunteers need to know. We designed this manual to allow for editing and customizing for each organization that cares to use it. We cover a lot of principles that we believe are the foundation of a successful rescue and foster mindset, however we have also purposefully left things out for you to add. Below are our suggestions for additional sections that would be very useful to your fosters and volunteers.

Code of Conduct – This would cover how you as an organization expect your fosters and volunteers to act when they are representing you. This should include on social media, at events, and at your facility if you have one.

Table of Contents – This is simple; however, we did not include one because as you add things specific page numbers will change. We believe this to be highly valuable so that a foster or volunteer can quickly reference a specific section such as the medical section if something seems to be wrong with their foster dog.

Standard Operating Procedures – This section would mostly cover how you would like your fosters or volunteers to respond in different emergency situations. For example, who to call as a first and second contact if their dog were to get loose, sick or injured. Which veterinarians you recommend or have an account with in their area etc. You will likely reference and/or combine this with the contact page described below.

Contact Page – This section would contain the contact information for at least 2-4 members of your organization who can make decisions in times of emergency etc. Also included should be veterinarian office(s) that you work with for primary care and emergency care situations.

Mission Statement – Your organizations mission statement.

Please remember as you add these sections, you will probably have to check and edit the formatting of the entire document. We have organized this version so that each new chapter starts on a new page, but your additions may throw this off.

We truly hope that this manual helps you and your people feel more confident, better supported, and ultimately better able to help dogs in need. Remember, we are not the only organization that works with behavioral training and rescues. Our friend Jason Cohen has created a great guide for new adopters that can also apply to fosters, check it out through his website, caninecohen.com, or go directly to it [here](#).

To your rescue success,

Hope2K9 Rescue

BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

Before you pursue the role of foster parent to a dog in need, there are a few questions you need to ask yourself. Why do you want to foster, and what is your end goal?

If you want to foster a dog to support a local rescue, you have a stable home environment and a healthy respect for the value of structure, rules, boundaries, and accountability, and you wish to be a stepping stone on this dog's journey to the right home, then this booklet is written to support you in that process. If you are seeking to fill a hole in your life, have a full plate and too many dogs/kids in your home already, or if you just want to *cuddle* your foster dog and struggle to say NO to people/things in your life, then fostering may not be the right choice for you at this time. With that said, this manual could be the tipping point to assist you in getting ready and making your eventual foster experience the most positive and meaningful experience possible.

Fostering is a HOUSEHOLD commitment, so be sure that EVERYONE in your household is ready, willing, and able to provide a stable, structured, and safe home for the dog(s) you steward. Many people have a difficult time adjusting to the new schedule and responsibilities that a foster dog requires, so be sure that you are all as prepared as possible, and on the same page. A healthy approach to fostering involves recognizing that there is a beginning (honeymoon period), middle (the sometimes messy discovery of the dog's true nature or needs), and end (the beautiful full circle moment when that dog's ideal placement is found). **Celebrate each of these stages for all they can offer you, your own pack or family, and the dog you foster, and you'll enjoy many years of fostering ahead.**

Are you worried about becoming attached to your foster dog? It is normal for you and your family to become attached to a foster dog while they are staying with you, and this is why it is so easy for rescuers to "foster fail." While saying goodbye to a special friend may not be easy, the experience of seeing a dog blossom in your care, so they can then move on to truly thrive in their new home, should help motivate you to stick to your boundaries as a foster - and get past the temptation to keep your foster dog.

The more dogs you keep, the less you can continue to help. Talk through all of these potential feelings within your family, especially with young children, as they are probably experiencing the same emotions. After the first or second dog comes through your home, it does become easier to see your role as vital, and *temporary*, within the rescue cycle.

Attachment can be especially hard if you are fostering a behavioral case that has limitations to where they can be placed. You may feel as though you are the only person that understands your foster dog, and that no one else would give them what they need to stay safe. While this can be true in certain cases, if you put the work in to teach your foster dog basic house rules, manners and boundaries, you can trust that your hard work will carry over in their carefully selected forever home. This keeps you available to continue to give your time and hard work to another dog if you would like.

PREPARATION

Dogs are opportunistic predators. Let us repeat that one more time...

ALL dogs are OPPORTUNISTIC, and ALL dogs are PREDATORS.

It does not matter if you are fostering a 7lb Chihuahua or a 170lb Mastiff - they are still a dog with the same basic instincts, drives and [ability to bite](#).

Your foster dog will likely be capable of jumping onto high surfaces, squeezing into the smallest of spaces, opening things they shouldn't, chewing things they shouldn't, eating things they shouldn't, and most importantly - BITING things (or beings) they shouldn't. **Don't underestimate the lengths a dog will go to get to something they want**, especially a dog that was brought in as a stray or taken from a shelter with an unknown past. These dogs often have not bonded with humans in the same way as a dog raised conscientiously from a puppy and can be very independent, manipulative, stubborn and determined to get what they want.

Below is a list of things to consider in different areas of your house before your foster comes home. As you read through this list, remember that **your foster dog should not have free access to anything in your house in the beginning** and should never be left alone unsupervised. We will get into more details later, but remember that maintaining the safety and well-being of your foster (and personal dogs) is vital to your role as a foster parent.

Kitchens/Bathrooms

- Keep medications, cleaners, chemicals, and laundry supplies on high shelves.
- Be aware of how easy it is for the dog to access the trashcans (keep covered or inside a cabinet).
- Many dogs can figure out how to open cabinets if they are motivated enough.
- Check for any small spaces, nooks, or holes under beds/furniture, inside cabinetry, between cabinets and floors, under bathroom cabinets or dishwashers or behind washer/dryer units where the dog may hide if they are scared.
- Be aware of where foods are kept (even if the food isn't harmful, the wrapper could be).
- Keep toilet lids closed.

Living/Family Room

- Be aware of dangling wires from lamps, VCRs, TVs, stereos, and phones.
- Keep children's toys put away and remove dog toys as well unless you are actively engaging or supervising toy time, to avoid any resource guarding or scuffles between your foster and personal dog(s) especially.
- Be aware of breakable knickknacks or chewable items around your home.
- Move houseplants - which can be poisonous - out of reach, including hanging plants that can be jumped onto from other nearby surfaces.
- Secure aquariums or cages that house small animals, like hamsters or fish, to prevent harm to/from another animal.
- Make sure all heating/air vents have a cover.

Garage

- A garage usually contains many dangerous chemicals and unsafe items. Be aware of these, and limit access to this area unless your foster dog is securely kenneled.
- Move all chemicals to high shelves or behind secure doors.
- Clean up any/all anti-freeze from the floor and driveway, anti-freeze can be deadly to any animal.

Bedrooms

- Many medications, lotions or cosmetics can contain chemicals that are harmful and may be kept on a counter or nightstand
- Look for electrical and phone wires that could be chewed.
- Carefully consider placement of beds or crates for your foster which may be too close to heating vents.
- Essential oil diffusers may be common in living spaces such as bedrooms or dens - some essential oils are toxic to dogs and must be avoided.

Potentially Dangerous Situations

- Open doors to unsecured outdoor spaces (foster dog might escape).
- All electrical cords and wires (electrocution or strangulation).
- Potted plants (potentially poisonous).
- Open windows (especially on the 2nd floor or higher).

Never underestimate your foster dog's abilities!

Items you may need:

Check with your rescue organization about what will be provided as part of your foster package, but the following items are most commonly found to be useful and/or necessary when fostering a dog.

- Food and bowls, ceramic or metal bowls are preferred.
- Plain Canned Pumpkin (not pie filling)
- [Bentonite Clay](#)
- [Diatomaceous earth](#)
- Crate ([wire](#) or [plastic](#))
- 4 - 6ft [Leash](#)
- 15 - 20ft [Long line](#)
- [Slip lead](#)
- ID Tags on [Flat Buckle](#) or [Quick Release Collar](#)
- Training Collars such as [prong collar](#) or martingale
- [Carabineer](#) for collar backup
- Other training tools as needed (such as [remote collar](#))
- Dog Bed or [Cot](#)

- Aspirin (5mg per lb of body weight)
- [Benadryl](#) (1mg per lb of body weight)
- [Antibiotic Ointment](#)
- Gauze
- Self-Adhesive Tape
- Styptic Powder for nail trim issues
- Dog Nail Clippers and/or Dremel
- [Tea Tree Oil](#)
- Epsom Salt
- [Baskerville Muzzles](#)
- Crate Bedding – keep it simple, old towels or secondhand blankets will do
- Odor Neutralizer (Odo-Ban is sold at Home Depot and other stores and works great)
- Toys such as hard rubber balls, fleece, rope toys, or Kong’s (peanut butter is a great stuffer for your Kong)
- Thermometer
- [Robitussin](#) (1tsp or 5ml per 20lbs of body weight)
- Hydrogen Peroxide
- [PeptoBismol](#) (1tsp of 5ml per 10lbs of body weight)
- [Zantac Acid Reducer](#) (0.5-1mg per 1lb of body weight)
- Vetericyn
- Elizabethan Collar or Cone

*Some of these items will be noted in the medical section, please prepare for common medical issues by building a “first aid kit” for your personal and foster dog(s).

Do’s and Don’ts:

- Do keep your foster dog indoors in a location with a crate available (fosters should be crated while unsupervised). If your foster struggles with separation anxiety, consistent crate training and a solid routine (with *very* limited affection) will be key to helping them overcome this. **See the “[Togetherness Addiction](#)” video from Home2K9** for more information about your ability to create or eliminate separation anxiety.
- Do keep your foster dog in a temperature controlled and dry location.
- Do keep your foster dog on a leash at all times when outdoors unless in a secured fenced yard. When in a secured yard, you must supervise them at all times, and the leash should still be on for the first few weeks at least.
- Do treat your foster dog as part of your own family. Take them out for adventures when you can. Be sure you are prepared to advocate for them - **people should not be allowed to approach or pet** unless or until you know your foster well and can properly guide them to making good choices. The same goes for meeting new dogs.
- Don't place your foster dog around other unknown dogs, as we often do not know the dog’s past history. Foster dogs should not be put in a position of possibly fighting with an unknown or even just poorly behaved dog.
- **Don’t take your foster dog to any kind of dog park.** There is no standard for behavior here,

and many dogs are acting inappropriately or are unhealthy.

- **Don't use retractable leashes.** These are a danger to you and your foster dog and can significantly limit your ability to share meaningful direction and expectations with your foster dog.
- Don't give your foster dog chews without supervision until you have confirmed that they are a responsible chewer and will not swallow the chew or break their teeth.

What to expect when you start:

Expect to [crate your foster dog](#) - this is **VERY** important for short and long-term success

To ensure the safety of everyone in the home and to provide a means of guidance and correction for your foster dog, they should remain leashed **AT ALL TIMES**. Yes, that means even in the house. The leash should only come off when they are crated or become off leash reliable (meaning they follow voice commands and can be held accountable through your relationship and training).

When your foster dog first arrives, the best thing to do is go on a structured walk and/or put them in their crate for a few hours to settle in and decompress. They should be offered a chance to relieve themselves before crating, but in order to limit entitlement it is important that their first experiences are very structured and leadership-based. Through structure and calm direction, you are essentially saying to your new foster pup, “Welcome to our home, you will be expected to earn the right to join our pack and have freedom in our space, calm and respectful behavior in your crate is one way you earn that.”

Around the house, your foster dog can be simply dragging the leash once they have proven themselves to be trustworthy and appropriate, and after careful introductions with your personal dogs. During this adjustment period, please keep stimulation to a minimum. **Your foster dog DOES NOT need to rough house and play or have free time until they have earned it.** Set your bar **HIGH**, and your foster dog will rise to it. This first week is no time for empathy and emotion about where your foster dog has come from, or what he/she may have been through – we cannot lead with empathy!

Due to being confused, stressed, scared, etc., some foster dogs will exhibit behaviors that will make you feel bad for them such as crying/whining/barking or simply being clingy and seeking excessive affection or attention. It is perfectly normal to feel bad for your dog and want to comfort them – unfortunately this will only make the problem worse. **Remember: [YOU GET WHAT YOU PET](#).** The very best gift you can give to your foster dog is rules, boundaries and structure, to ensure they know their place in the pack, and to help them feel secure and gain confidence. **See TRAINING section for more applicable information.**

This may seem strange, but it's amazing how much we can learn about the health of a body through **POOP**. **Keep an eye on your foster dog's stool**, make sure you are aware of any worms, persistent diarrhea, or other suspicious issues that may require medical attention. You do not want your own dogs exposed to uncomfortable or costly health issues, nor do you want your foster dog to exhibit behavior issues due to not feeling well.

Keep dogs on a schedule as much as possible, providing daily exercise and crate time when left alone, as well as crate time even when you are home. **Do not allow your foster to be pushy or demanding just because you feel sorry for them.** Encouraging these behaviors very often encourages other behavior and attitude issues and does the dog a disservice when trying to place them in a new home.

Some additional tips:

- Find a quiet route to walk your foster dog (depending on health status and energy level) to familiarize them with their new environment. This also helps start the bonding between you and your foster dog. (See also: TRAINING section)
- Don't introduce your foster dog to people you meet on your walk. You may not see any unwelcome behavior initially, but anxiety and reactivity can develop if you repeatedly put your foster dog into situations they are uncomfortable with. This process may vary slightly based on the origin of, and information available about the dog's history. Shelter surrender dogs require much more careful evaluation and limited exposure as we get to know them, whereas an owner surrendered dog will likely come with more detailed temperament assessment or a broader picture of what they've been exposed to and how they handle it. It is still good practice to not allow unknown people or dogs to interact with your dog, UNLESS you have a puppy that is under 12 weeks old as is still in the critical development period. (If you do, check our Puppy Raising playlist [here](#)).
- Do not introduce your foster dog to other dogs that you do not know, ever. This includes dogs at parks, restaurants, or just walking down the street. If you have friendly AND well-behaved neighborhood dogs, and dogs belonging to your family or friends, this is different story. Once you know your foster dog well you can start to introduce your foster dog to other dogs you know. These dogs should be both friendly and good role-models. **The key to proper dog to dog socialization is quality over quantity.** There is no way to tell how your foster dog will behave when introducing them to others, so take every precaution you can. If your foster dog bites a person or dog, you are required to report it to your organization immediately. This includes any bite to you or your family members.

(See also: INTRODUCING YOUR FOSTER DOG TO NEW DOGS)

- The first 48-72 hours are crucial as this is when your foster dog is learning about you, your house, and your leadership capabilities. Firm boundaries, and limited affection will go a long way in building a balanced relationship. The most important thing to do during this initial transition time is to clearly but non-confrontationally establish the household rules. Take care *not* to indulge or reinforce any timid, tentative, fearful, or dominant, pushy, demanding behavior. We understand how tempting this may be, however, it does not benefit the dog in the long run. (See TRAINING section)
- One of the many benefits of adopting a dog from foster care is that the foster parent can provide detailed information about their foster dog. Foster dogs will be adopted more quickly if you update information about your foster dog as soon as possible.
- **Potty accidents are common during the first week of transition among dogs of ALL ages.** Do not punish the dog if this occurs, but immediately take the dog outside and show them where they are supposed to go. (See also: HOUSETRAINING)
- Your foster dog may not eat initially. Try to feed on a regular routine, and if the dog does not eat for 15 minutes, remove the food. It can be tempting to leave it out for longer or add extra tasty items if they do not eat, but it is important that you do not do this. We do not want to teach the

dog to hold out for “better” food, or that they can have food available whenever they please. If the dog will not eat after a full 72 hours, try a diet of cooked chicken and rice with a little canned pumpkin (plain 100% pumpkin, NOT pie filling). If the malnourishment is significant or the hunger strike too long, contact your organization’s veterinarian for more instructions.

- Many dogs contract kennel cough (KC), like a human cold. KC is an air-borne illness and is very contagious but does not always require medication to resolve. Keep the dog quarantined from other animals and children as it is unclear if humans can get it.

INTRODUCING YOUR FOSTER DOG TO NEW DOGS & OTHER PETS

Intros to your personal dog(s) and cat(s) may vary slightly with each dog based on information available when they are surrendered. You must exercise additional caution with shelter dogs, about whom very little is known or able to be verified.

Do not hesitate to reach out to your organization for support if you are not comfortable introducing your foster dog to your dogs by yourself. Typically dogs of the opposite sex do better together and this should be considered when choosing a foster dog to come in to your home. **No matter how social or friendly your personal dog(s) is, you MUST [introduce your foster dog to the new dogs correctly](#).** Dogs are like people, and sometimes a dog may not like another dog for no apparent reason. Set yourself up for success by not rushing or forcing the relationship and spending more time in the beginning so that it is smoother overall.

Introductions should be slow, controlled, and focused on calm existence. Walking the dogs together is a must, and it may take multiple walks before the dogs are comfortable with each other. Take turns walking one dog ahead of the other so they can exchange scents. In the house you also need calm existence. Use crates as management, and teach a place (down/stay) command so that all the dogs can be around each other without confrontation. A back tie is very useful with multiple dogs. This simply means attaching a leash to something that can limit the dog's access even if you aren't watching fully. Things such as heavy furniture, posts, or eye bolts drilled into a stud work great. (See also: TRAINING for more details on place command and the structured walk).

If you have a multiple dog home, make sure to introduce all dogs individually, not as a pack unless you have experience and well trained/voice-controlled dogs. No matter how friendly YOUR dogs are, **there is no substitute for slow, proper introductions with a new dog.** Please do not rush this process - we want to set all dogs up for success!

If you have friends or neighbors with dogs, use the same technique to introduce your foster dog to these dogs. Walk, exist calmly, repeat. Over time, explore the addition of more freedom, more engagement and contact among the dogs, and correct/interrupt any pushy, rude, overly amped choice making by any/all dogs in the mix. You are literally teaching your foster dog about what is and isn't acceptable when socializing with dogs, every time you allow them to interact with your dog(s), or dogs belonging to your friends/family. Make sure the lesson is valuable and sets your foster up for success in the real world.

- Be alert and make the introductions gradually and calmly. Even if they got along well at a previous meet on neutral territory, your dog may be territorial in your home.
- Go for a long walk around your neighborhood with both dogs, one person to walk each dog so they do not feel forced to walk together.
- Walk the dogs on leashes and allow them to sniff one another and become familiar with each other, **NOT nose to nose, but nose to tail.** Dogs communicate with scent first. They should not be allowed to confront one another head-on with tense leashes and stagnant humans. Keep things moving, keep it relaxed and loose with the leash, take turns passing ahead of and behind the other dog with plenty of space in between for each dog to scent each other and not meet face to face.

- Do not give physical affection or praise to either dog, this may create jealousy or territorial behavior. Do not tolerate growling, lunging, or barking **from either dog**. If these behaviors are presented, correct the behavior and continue to walk with both dogs controlled until they relax and tolerate the presence of the other dog. Once they're calm, separate and repeat.
- Leave leashes on the dogs when you are in the home, so that you can get immediate control if needed.
- **DO NOT encourage play between the dogs with toys or bones**, these things can very easily encourage a fight and should always be managed in a multi-dog household. Even if your dog typically shares everything, your foster may not have such good manners.
- Be patient and go slowly with your foster dog as they have been through a lot of recent changes. If the intros are not going naturally, take a break and back it up to the beginning. **The best thing you can give both your own and your foster dog is time and clear leadership.**
- Don't leave your foster dog unattended with your dog(s). Even if they seem to get along well in your presence, you should **separate the dogs when you leave your house**. Your foster dog should ALWAYS be crated when not supervised, so this should not be too difficult.

Common mistakes:

- Holding the leash too tensely routinely causes dogs to react or become defensive.
- Leaving food, toys and chews around the house. This can cause resource guarding which can escalate very quickly. (Remove all toys and chews before you arrive home with your foster dog.)
- Feeding your foster dog with your dog. It's best to separate them, and to supervise always. Use the crates for meal times to keep things easiest and safest with multiple dogs.
- Over-stimulating your foster dog with introductions to too many people or dogs.
- Allowing foster dog on furniture/beds, to take toys from other dogs, or to beg for food. These behaviors should not be tolerated. Remember you are helping set this dog up for success in someone else's home. Even if you tolerate these things from your dog, the potential adopters may not want these behaviors in their new dog. Your foster dog should have next to zero freedom so that they can smoothly transition to the new house rules when they are adopted.
- Excessive excitement related to departures/returning home. This WILL create separation anxiety.
- Paying too much attention and asking for too much in the beginning. Your foster dog should be allowed time to process and take things in. Be careful not to over-focus on your foster because they're fun and new - you're telling them something completely different with your affection. Some attention and also purposeful alone time is required to avoid inflating their ego or causing them to act out.

Cats:

Before you introduce your foster dog to cats, wait at least a few days to a week until you have gotten to know your foster dog more, and until you have started basic obedience training if possible.

Ideally, separate your foster from cats by using baby gates, and by consistently crating your foster dog when unattended, so the animals can be exposed to each other in a controlled manner. This set up will also allow you to observe your foster's reactions to the cat(s) prior to allowing a close encounter. You will need to have your foster dog under control and know which behaviors are appropriate when interacting with a cat. For example, it is normal for your foster dog to be excited and aware, but not acceptable for him/her to be fixated/targeting the cat, or to stay in a high state of arousal and excitement.

Allow your foster dog to settle down and get to know your surroundings before you start introductions to unfamiliar animals, and never remove safety measures until you are VERY sure of your foster dog's reliability around said animals.

Intros to your personal dog(s) and cat(s) will vary with each dog based on information available when they are surrendered. You must exercise additional caution with shelter dogs, about whom very little is known.

The most important thing to look for when introducing a dog to a cat is correct-ability and direct-ability. How easily can you get your dog's attention off of the cat? This will determine the potential to create a proper relationship between the dog and cat. **The message that you need to send your foster dog at first is that the cat is actually completely off limits.** Furthermore, you're demonstrating that cats are free to roam, while your foster dog must earn every bit of freedom he/she desires.

This is a great time to practice the place command (see also: TRAINING), just make sure your cat doesn't bug the dog! If your dog can successfully be calm and ignore the cat, you can then allow them to be free and go check it out. Be sure you have a leash on, just like when you are introducing them to new dogs, and keep the greetings short before putting the dog back in place or in the crate. Slowly increase freedom around the cat as they earn trust.

Keep in mind, there are some dogs that simply should not live with cats, so if you have tried to make it work, and separation isn't an option then you need to contact your organization.

FEEDING ROUTINE AND SAFETY

- Your foster dog should eat in their crate unless you are using meals for training purposes. This will keep everyone safe and create a positive association to the crate/training.
- Food should generally be given once in the morning and once at night, **NO FREE FEEDING**. Very young puppies usually require 3 meals per day.
- Keep treats to a minimum - use your dog's daily meals for training if you are using food rewards.
- Do not feed your foster dog scraps AT your table. This will create horrible meal manners. If you have healthy food scraps or leftovers that can be shared with your dog, they should get these in their bowl with their meal. Be sure you are reducing the amount of kibble equivalent to what you are adding in the way of fresh food. We don't want fat dogs! (See also: HEALTH section for more info)
- Your foster dog's diet may require supplements, especially if they are not healthy when they arrive, or if they are exclusively fed a kibble-based diet. Kibble is incomplete, and there are many key elements to creating a biologically appropriate diet for our dogs that ensures they thrive from the inside out. (See also HEALTH section for supplement examples)

Why you should NOT free feed:

Free feeding is when you place the full food bowl out full time, with no limit to quantity or accessibility. Free feeding can create a multitude of problems, including picky eating, or even food aggression and resource guarding. Food drive and prey drive should be leveraged, and both are a great way to build a better relationship, better manners, increased confidence, and consistent obedience in your dog. Allowing your foster dog to have food whenever they want limits your ability to harness this drive and become more relevant through the distribution of food or play.

Should your foster dog need to go to the vet for something unexpected and major, the vet will need to know when and how much the dog's last meal was. Many procedures, including blood draws, cannot be performed on a dog with a full stomach.

If your foster dog declines food, that's okay. Many dogs will not eat when they are stressed, and often the transition period into a foster home causes a dog to decline several meals at first. Offer the dog his/her meal for fifteen minutes, then pick it up. Offer the same meal at the next meal time and continue this until they start to eat. Your foster dog will learn that if they don't eat when it's offered, they will miss their chance. In addition to not free feeding, SPECIAL attention should be given to food aggressive dogs. Absolutely under NO circumstance, should they be free fed. They should have 2 meals a day, in a crate with a latched door. Do not attempt to take food away from a food aggressive dog, this will only aggravate the problem. If the dog is showing severe signs of food aggression and guarding, you should contact your organization to arrange behavioral assessment and training.

TRAINING

If your foster dog is exhibiting any unwanted behaviors such as jumping, mouthing, soiling in the house or crate, barking, reactivity, destruction or whining, ask yourself:

- Is my foster dog getting enough **QUALITY** mental stimulation, physical exercise, and practiced calmness/direction?
- Did I give the foster dog **too much freedom, too soon?**
- Am I reinforcing the bad behavior? Some examples include simply failing to correct and disagree with bad choices, telling a fearful dog that “it’s ok,” or **offering affection** to a **dominant dog** who is **demanding** too much attention. Another common mistake is expecting too much from a young puppy who requires more boundaries, and inadvertently allowing attention for bad choices.
- Am I providing specific outlets based on energy and breed? **Structured walks/runs, mental stimulation with trick training, basic obedience, structured fetch/tug, agility, scent work?** Remember, it’s not enough to love our foster dogs to success. We must show up to guide, lead, and develop them as part of our love and commitment to helping them succeed.

ANY questionable behavior shown by a foster dog should be reported to your organization as soon as possible in case the dog needs to be further evaluated by a professional. These behaviors include growling or lunging towards humans or dogs, possible human, dog, food or toy aggression, guarding behavior, extreme separation anxiety, extreme submissive urination and so on.

Other behaviors such as being timid or unsure, not wanting to play, declining treats, whining or occasional soiling accidents are not uncommon, especially in the beginning. Remember your foster dog has gone through a lot of stress and transition. The best thing you can do is make it very clear what is expected of them. If these behaviors become worse or continue for a week or more, you should contact your organization’s leadership.

Tools:

There are certain tools that we use and recommend in order to create a better method of communication between you and your dog. However, this does not mean that these tools are the **ONLY** way to achieve a particular goal. Tools should be exactly that - a mechanism used to reach a goal. Before you use any tool, please check with your organization. If you have a tool that you are skilled with and advocate for, we suggest finding an organization that will allow you to use it.

The two tools that we primarily recommend, and specialize in, are the prong collar and the remote collar. We believe that these are effective tools to create reliable behavior change when taught and used correctly, particularly for the most common behavior issues present in rescue dogs such as pulling on leash, over excitement, door rushing, barking, jumping on people, and all manner of basic obedience training/enforcement. These tools also allow new adopters (with proper instruction) to be able to maintain the training foundation and limit the stress of another transition as your foster dog moves on to their forever family.

Of course, any tool can be misused, including a flat collar, halti, slip lead or harness. When used properly, both of these training tools create a physical pressure for the dog to indicate direction and

expectations. During the training process you can effectively teach the dog what that pressure means, and that they are in charge of turning it off by way of their movement or state of mind. You can also endeavor to teach the same commands without these tools. It may take longer and depending on the dog it may be much more difficult, but there are many ways to get to the same result.

The [prong collar](#) provides information through physical leash pressure and has a built in directional component that helps your dog understand where to move in order to comply. The [remote collar](#) uses a muscle stimulation, not an electric shock. This means that the unit simply causes the muscle to contract and release at varying intensity. We pattern the e-collar at very low levels with prong pressure so that the dog can understand what the sensation means.

Once commands are understood, you can drop the leash and prong collar, and be able to communicate at a distance via the remote collar. This off leash connection is often where we see the true behavior change take place, and why we advocate and specialize in these tools. There is a lot of information about training tools available on our training website, home2k9.com, or our [YouTube channel](#) and [Facebook](#) pages if you wish to learn more. We strongly advocate all tools be learned and implemented with a professional, and the express permission of your rescue organization. We have an entire multiple playlists designed to show you how we use these tools to get the [results](#) we do in our board and train programs.

Duration, duration, duration:

When you really dig into the multitude of complaints, or issues people have with a dog, the lack of an “off” switch is at the core of almost every single one. In fact, there’s a very good chance that this is exactly why your foster dog was surrendered in the first place.

Imagine a world in which you can tell a dog to lay down, and that is exactly what they do no matter what is happening around them. This is the power of the [place command](#) and extended duration work. So many dogs lack this skill, so by teaching this to your foster dog, you will be giving both them and their eventual adopters a big head start in creating a successful lifestyle together. This skill allows the dog to be included in a lot of different activities without getting into trouble.

Duration does not mean that your dog can stay for a few minutes, or that you only practice when nothing else is happening. The goal is to build up to hours of duration with distractions and commit to consistently correcting any mistakes. You can make a lot of progress in less time than you may think by simply practicing daily. This exercise also teaches your dog how to self-soothe, and to be calm, and ultimately more confident. Prioritizing this in lots of different situations will create a dog that has a calmer default state of mind and is ultimately more adoptable.

Leadership:

A common missing ingredient in our relationships with dogs is proper leadership. A leader should be calm, even in stressful situations, and does not constantly seek attention or support from others in the pack. Household members of all species should be considered a community, and rules of engagement play a very important role in a successful community.

Leaders do not allow others in the pack to break rules or negotiate with understood commands – especially not ones designed for the health and safety of its members. When a pack member crosses an established boundary, a leader is calm but assertive in the correction of this behavior.

Leaders stay calm and make decisions in high pressure situations, guiding the rest of their pack through these situations confidently. This is what your foster dog (and probably your personal dog) needs from you. Dogs do not always naturally want to lead, but a lack of clarity around leadership in their daily lives will create a dog who perceives they must make certain choices because nobody else appears to have a stronger opinion or just general control of the situation.

Being in an inappropriate position of ill equipped or entitled leadership is too often the root cause of canine anxiety, reactivity, attitudinal issues, and even serious aggression. In order to provide an environment which will help your foster dog not only live but improve and become a well-balanced member of society, you will need to focus on creating this leadership mindset within yourself and your household. Hint: simply *deciding* to “fake it ‘til you make it” is often the most challenging first step, but the benefits on the other side are so worthwhile.

Togetherness Addiction/Separation Anxiety:

[Togetherness Addiction](#) is also known as Separation Anxiety, and if you’ve ever had a dog with Separation Anxiety – it’s BRUTAL. Togetherness addiction is something that humans create in dogs if they do not purposefully teach dogs how to self-soothe and be independent. Crate training and duration work is the best way to create a dog that is able to self-manage when you are gone. Dogs are naturally pack animals, so this skill is not something that they are born with. Just like the “off” switch, it is our responsibility to teach them how to be calm when they are not with us because life demands it on so many occasions. Limiting freedom through crate training is the best way to do this when you are not home as the crate mimics a natural den for your dog, and they will learn that they do not need to worry about anything outside of that space while you are away.

Just because your foster dog is crated while you are gone does not mean that when you get home you should let them out and spend the rest of the day cuddled on the couch, or following you from room to room. This is a great recipe for creating separation anxiety. **Your foster dog needs to learn how to be independent, even when you are with them.** Imagine how irritating and unstable your partner or roommate would seem if they had to be constantly touching you, watching you, and when you left their proximity they began to sob wildly, or even destroy things that belong to you. (Psycho much??) These behaviors in dogs should be taken very seriously, and like humans, they must be disagreed with - and addressed with healthy boundaries and accountability.

Practicing placing your foster dog for nice long stretches at a distance, or even out of sight, is a great exercise to reduce that addiction or insecurity about closeness to you as you do things around your home. Making time for them to be in the crate while you are home will further solidify this skill and reinforce the calmness that the crate should represent.

Limiting Ego and Anxiety through Permission:

Providing too much freedom before a dog has earned it, is another very common problem that we see. This can create everything from a bratty, pushy or entitled dog, to an insecure, anxious and fearful one. How this affects the dog depends on the level of natural defense drive they have, but the formula for success is the same either way.

Once again, duration work and crate training are the first two exercises that will set you up for easy and practical success with your foster dog(s). For entitled dogs, this shows them that the house is not in fact

theirs. Limiting their space and freedom, as well as being sure to emphasize calmness during these exercises will help them create a better default state of mind. For insecure and anxious dogs these exercises give them a place to feel safe, where they no longer feel they need to “handle” the things that are causing their anxiety. You may not know which type of dog your foster is at first but starting off right away with making everything in their life permission based is the best way to not only transition them into a home dynamic, but to set them up for long term success.

Everything your dog wants or needs should be given to them by you, ON YOUR TERMS.

They should not rush the food bowl, but wait until you give them permission to take it.
They do not rush out the crate/car/house doors, but wait for the go ahead to follow you out.
They are not allowed on furniture, unless you INVITE them, and they do not earn this right unless they are calm, respectful, and also follow instructions to get OFF when asked.

It is also important that you do not simply ask them to wait, but that you require that they be calm before engaging in these types of activities. For example, if your dog is in a sit waiting for food, but they are still excited, barking, whining, breaking command, or generally amped up, do not feed them. Wait until they have calmed down to allow them to eat. This is a great time to use the place command as preparation for being in the right state of mind before feeding, walking, play time, or even as a “job” your foster dog completes to earn affection time. By harnessing these daily practices and using small moments to ask for respect from your foster dog, you will be helping them overcome possible past gaps in this area and learn how to politely and respectfully live with humans. This truly is the best gift you can give them.

Thresholds/Implied Respect:

Thresholds are a really practical and simple exercise that does not have to add any time to your daily routine and can make major changes in the dog’s respect and reverence for you. This is also a safety issue since door dashing causes thousands of dogs to go missing, be injured, or even be killed each year.

A threshold is anything that separates two different environments. The three most common thresholds that exist in pretty much anyone’s lifestyle, are the crate door, house doors, and car doors. Other common thresholds may include stairs, yard gates, kitchen areas, and anywhere else that you want the dog to wait for permission before entering – or otherwise have a calmness or reverence and connection to you before proceeding.

The key to this threshold training is not helping your dog by asking for a specific behavior before opening the door. For example, if you always ask you dog to sit, then open the door, then walk through while repeating “wait, wait, WAIT,” this is not the best way to treat a threshold or achieve a calm state of mind in the dog. What happens if you forget to ask them to sit? What happens if the door gets left open, and no one is around to ask them to sit? Implied thresholds and asking for respect instead of an obedience command is going to go much further in these types of situations.

Every time you pass through a doorway your dog should be completely behind you and look to you for permission to pass through. If they do not give you this respect, hold them accountable and correct any pushy, demanding, or rushed behaviors. Once you have decided to go out, invite them out with you, and be sure they remain calm until you give a release command to indicate they have earned some free time.

Training Sessions/Practice makes Permanent:

In the beginning of the training process (unless you have a really young puppy), we have found there is a lot of value in training sessions being 60-90 minutes long. During a longer training session in our program, at least half of the work is *passive*, which means the dog is simply on place and practicing duration work with increasing levels of distraction challenge. The other half would be [active training](#) - working on recall, place, heel, or other priority commands.

Lengthy training sessions, or formal training in general, may not be possible for you to do every day, in which case your goal is to make time for 20-30 minutes of active training (this could be all at once or broken up), and practicing duration during the rest of the time you spend with your dog, or while you also focus on other household activities.

If your foster program results in you having the dog in your care for weeks or months in total, there may be stages to what you focus on with your foster dog. Once you get past the teaching phase (usually 3-5 weeks depending on the dog, and how much time/experience you have), and are maintaining the training, you can cut down on the active training, and simply maintain passive training throughout your everyday life. Be sure to notice any correlations between how that affects your foster dog's behavior, especially around any issues that they came to you with. If you see a backslide in behavior after pulling back on training time/focus, you know you have let up too much in the structure department and need to go back to what was creating their success.

The Messy Middle:

It is important to note that if you have a challenging foster dog with behavior issues, you may now be facing a situation that requires true behavior modification. If this is something you are not experienced or comfortable with, you should contact your rescue organization. There is absolutely nothing wrong with asking for help, especially when there are plenty of dogs that need foster placement who *don't* have major behavior issues.

When dealing with behavior modification, remember that you are asking the dog to essentially rewire their brain and give up an established habit. This habit is most likely somehow self-reinforcing, and this is why the dog is continuing to do it. These changes will take time, and you will experience pushback and negotiation from the dog along the way. Things will likely seem worse before they seem better. It is very common for seemingly new behaviors to crop up, but often they are just like layers of an onion, slowly becoming clear as you remove the bigger and more obvious issues off the top. We work through these layers with every dog we get in for training, and you will have to work through your own messy middle in order to get to the other side of the behavior modification. We want you to know that this exists so that you can expect it, be patient, and use the resources available to support you through it.

The Structured Walk/Cruisin' Like A Convoy:

The walk is a great leadership exercise through which to engage with your dog, and it is also a very common area of struggle and frustration for many dog owners and fosters. Teaching your foster dog to walk politely on leash will put them miles ahead of the majority of adoptable dogs out there. The first step is to teach the dog a proper [heel position/command](#). The position of the dog is very important, and should be something you are very picky about when teaching and enforcing on the walk. Your foster

dog's head should be 100% behind your leg. This puts you in the leadership role, ensures you are the main focus within their field of vision, and limits opportunities to be distracted or reactive.

In a military convoy the most experienced soldiers ride in the front car and take responsibility for recognizing any potential threat. They are the most aware, and their job is to observe what is coming, and get the rest of the convoy past any threats unharmed. You should be the front car, doing all of the work, and [taking care of whatever comes your way](#) (people, dogs, cars, skateboards etc.). Once your dog learns that all they have to do is stay behind, and that you will be advocating for their space and leading them through situations, they will be able to relax. Once you have taught the heel position with minimal distractions, you can incrementally add to the challenge of your walks with confidence in your ability to hold your foster dog accountable, as well as navigate through or around distractions as they come up.

Drive Outlets:

Giving your foster dog an outlet to express their natural drives is very important. This is true for all dogs, as they are in fact predators with innate drive and instincts, but especially for dogs with problem behaviors or working genetics. For a lot of these dogs, boredom is playing a role in their *bad* behavior, and while you can make a ton of progress by teaching them to have an off switch, you cannot (and don't want to) try to take the drive out of the dog. Once you teach the dog how to turn off, you then need to allow them to turn *on* when it is appropriate. Use these targeted outlets for a better-quality energy drain, as well as a reward for good behavior. **Some examples of useful drive outlets are tracking, agility, scent work, trick training, spring pole, and structured tug or fetch.**

Proper Socialization/Tips and What to Focus On:

This has been covered already in the section on how to introduce your foster dog to new dogs, however this is very important, so here it is again.

As a rule, we do not allow dogs to meet while on leash. The tension in the leash can create frustration and reactivity in otherwise sociable dogs. Dynamics associated with the human handler, or the environment, can also have a significant effect on the dog's choice making when interacting on leash. Take your time introducing new dogs and whenever possible begin with a structured walk together, allowing the dogs to become accustomed to each other without confrontation. In addition to walking together first, even multiple times before further interaction, we recommend managing the play energy once you do allow the dogs to have more freedom and social time making their own choices about how they interact. It's always better to go slow, and build a solid foundation, then to rush the process and create resentment or bad habits among the pack.

We also do not recommend dog parks, as the dogs that frequent these often have behavior problems of their own, and this dynamic can actually create or teach bad behaviors to your foster dog. Just like with kids, you want the dogs you socialize with to be well-mannered and balanced role models, and they often need a playground monitor until they're mature and well patterned.

Quality is much more important than quantity, even for young puppies. Finding balanced adult dogs can be difficult, but it will be worth the time and effort when you find a good match. If you are local to Home2K9 Dog Training, we offer a free monthly class that includes a pack social, and also a very affordable weekly social club. We cannot guarantee that your foster dog will be ready for this right away, so please speak with us beforehand, however, we are always willing to evaluate, and work towards this with you.

House Training:

No matter what the age (or estimated age) of your foster dog, they may not be house trained. This means you need to get them on a structured routine right away. Be patient with your foster dog. Even house trained adult dogs will make mistakes, especially if they've been at the shelter for a long time and have been eliminating in their kennel, or they are stressed and nervous. If there are smells in your house from another dog or cat, some foster dogs may "mark" territory as well.

Reinforcing appropriate house training behavior is partly why we instruct you to keep your foster dog on leash in the beginning. If your foster dog is not trustworthy, meaning they may pee, poop, or chew things if given freedom, then they should not have any free time for a while. If they are out with you it should be doing an activity such as structured walk or play (See also: ROUTINE section) or practicing the place command and duration. Otherwise your foster dog should be crated.

This is true even if YOUR dogs do not need this routine in order to be successful. Your responsibility is to set your foster dog up to be successful in a NEW home, not just in your home. This means keeping rules and boundaries very strict whether or not your personal dogs follow the same ritual. Over time your foster dog may earn more freedom, but less is more in this department as you represent a temporary transition space.

Puppies and younger dogs need to be given adequate opportunities to go to the bathroom, so if you work a normal 9-5 job and are unable to arrange mid-day bathroom breaks for your foster puppy, please consider fostering more mature dogs that can handle this schedule.

Crate Training:

Crates provide safe havens and dens for dogs, as well as create calmness and help prevent anxiety, destructive chewing, barking, and housetraining mistakes. That is why [crate training](#) is so important. Crates should NEVER be used as a means of punishment, but that does not mean you cannot use the crate as a *management tool* when you cannot supervise or handle your foster dog.

The key is that your energy around putting your dog away in the crate should be upbeat and positive, even if they just chewed your new pair of nice leather shoes and you are seething inside. Remember, if they had access to chewing your shoes, then they had too much freedom, and it's ultimately your fault! One of the best ways to create this positive association with the crate is to ONLY feed your foster dog in the crate. The crate should be a place dogs like to be, and somewhere they feel safe and secure when they are there.

How long an adult dog can be crated will depend on many factors, including whether your foster dog was left outside for long stretches, or has ever been required to hold their bladder for any length of time. It will take time for this dog to learn to increase their bladder control, and you will need to start slowly. Very young puppies and older dogs, or dogs with some medical conditions, may only be able to successfully hold it for short periods of time.

Exercise and/or mental stimulation should be given before and after any long periods in the crate. This means if you work a normal 9-5 job you need to plan for at least a 30-minute structured walk and/or play session before and after work. If you cannot commit to this, you may need to re-think your decision to foster a dog.

You can use bedding such as crate liners, dog beds, and/or blankets in the crate IF your foster dog is responsible with these items. If you do not know the history of the dog, it may be best to start with a bare crate to reduce the potential for the dog to mark/soil the bedding or destroy/ingest it. As you get to know the dog, and if they do not seem too fixated on chewing things, you can test them first with a towel or small blanket and save the high value items for when you're surer they will be respected. Be sure this item isn't something that you care *too* much about, just in case it ends up suffering from some "modifications." Anytime you see signs of chewing or soiling in the bedding, take it out and go back to a bare crate liner, or limit your foster dog to rubber stall matting or a primo pad - depending on your budget.

If your foster dog exhibits poor behaviors in the crate such as whining, barking, digging at the ground or bars, licking or chewing the edges/liner, or pushing on the edges to escape, you need to disagree with this behavior. Sometimes, simply choosing an out of the way, quiet space to crate your dog, then covering the crate with a blanket will be enough to diminish the protest. If disruptive or dangerous behavior continues, shake the covered crate firmly when the behavior starts, and it is optional to use a command such as "no" or "quiet" before this correction.

By quaking the crate, you are creating an organic "earthquake" that he/she associates as caused by the behavior itself and learns that they can shut this off by stopping the behavior. You may also need to try a [bonker](#) (a rolled-up towel with rubber bands on either end, which is used to pitch at the crate following the "no" command when the behavior starts), or compressed air can such as a Pet Convincer. For dogs with extreme and persistent anxiety in the crate, contact your organization about professional help.

Several days or a week of intermittent crate anxiety that does not cause the dog to harm themselves can be extremely common in dogs who are going through a stressful transition. Be prepared for some sleepless nights or a few annoying "conversations" with your newly crating foster dog and be patient while they learn the ropes. If we put ourselves in their shoes, it is easier to understand their aversion to new boundaries and structure, but we are responsible to build these skills in them so they can be successful long term, so it is important to not give in to the temptation to let them out of the crate.

If you've got an escape artist we recommend either a sturdy plastic crate such as a Kennelmate, or Ruff Tough Kennel, or even impact crate if you're up for the investment. You can also use a reinforced wire crate. If you choose a plastic crate (other than Ruff Tough) be sure there is a horizontal piece to reinforce the door. This is generally found in plastic crates with "airline doors" that lock shut. This horizontal piece will keep the dog from being able to push hard enough to pop the vertical piece out of their intended locking position. To reinforce a wire crate, we recommend using zip ties around all edges, and any doors that you do not use. The door that is used can be reinforced with leash clips at the corners and even middle of the door for added security.

Handling/Grooming:

It is very important to evaluate and practice how your foster dog tolerates handling for things such as veterinary exams or grooming. Proceed with caution the first few times you explore how your foster dog feels about, or tolerates, certain palpations and investigations of their ears, teeth, paws and hips. Even seemingly friendly dogs can get quite nasty while being handled if they were not taught to tolerate certain things, or if they have pain or sensitivity around certain parts of their body. Move slowly and consider using a safety leash back up to mitigate any risk of your dog becoming snappy or avoidant. An initial bath upon arriving to your home is a great way to assess their tolerance to touch and mitigate contamination. Be sure to report any incidents or concerning finds to your organization immediately, sometimes a place of tenderness for your foster dog simply needs to be monitored but tracking and

documentation is extremely important to prevent overlooking a serious issue long term.

If you find an area of challenge/tenderness for your foster dog, and the behaviors they display show avoidance or discomfort, then working on improving their experience and tolerance is extremely valuable for their long-term success in an adoptive home. For example, if your foster dog does not like having their feet touched, you can feed them their meals during *only* the short sessions in which you are touching their feet. By consistently doing this, you can teach your foster dog to enjoy the activity that made previously them uncomfortable.

It is especially important for puppies to have consistent, daily experiences tolerating or even learning to love handling and physical examination. If you are fostering a puppy, you are creating or contributing to the foundation (or lack thereof) on which they will build the rest of their life's handling associations. The more you can support your foster puppy/dog in becoming accustomed to handling, the better.

Muzzle Training:

For a dog that has a history, or shows potential to bite, even if it's only in certain circumstances, one of the best things you can do for that dog is [condition them to wear a muzzle](#). Choosing the [right size](#) and type of muzzle is the first step. A basket muzzle is the best and most humane type of muzzle to get your dog used to, because your dog can still eat, drink, take treats, and pant while wearing the muzzle. That means that they can wear it for longer periods of time, such as out on a walk, without risking overheating or dehydration. The most common brands are [Baskerville](#) and Jafco.

Conditioning your dog to wear a muzzle is something that can be done relatively easily, by simply taking 5-10 minutes twice a day and only offering your dog food through the muzzle. This creates a positive association to wearing the muzzle, so that as you slowly increase the amount of time they wear the muzzle, they will not be bothered by it. For most dogs it takes 1-2 weeks of consistent practice for the dog to be truly comfortable. Then you can practice 1-2 times per month as well as using the muzzle for stressful situations, such as vet visits etc., as needed.

Routine:

So what does all of this structure, fulfillment, training, and leadership actually look like day to day, and [why should you do it](#)? It may sound difficult or even overwhelming in parts, especially if you are new to a lot of these concepts, or new to fostering in general. The following routine is meant to be an adjustable example of what your day should/could look like with your foster dog, but there are always plenty of exceptions to this. Of course, everyone has different lifestyles, schedules and interests, so hopefully this basic guideline will give you a more tangible example from which you can create your own routine. **No matter what, you have the ability to help a dog in need if you simply cover the basics of keeping them safe, giving them food, water, potty breaks, and leadership**, so don't worry if you can get it ALL done with every dog, you are still very valuable and needed as a foster for dogs in transition.

Again, here's an **example** of how to bring it all together in a daily routine with your foster dog:

A.M.

- Wake up, let the dog(s) out to go to the bathroom, practice proper threshold manners on the way out and back in!
- Come back in, put the dog on place, and practice duration while you get ready (you can also put the dog back in the crate if you aren't able to watch and correct mistakes while they are on

place).

- Structured walk, ideally at least 20 minutes, can be longer based on your schedule and the needs/limitations of the dog.
- Feed breakfast, be sure the dog is calm before they are allowed to have their food.
- Crate time - if you work or have errands, the dog should be crated while you're gone. If you don't work, still practice crate time even if you will be home.

Midday

- If you have a job in which you are gone most of the day, this should be fine for a lot of foster dogs. If you have a really high drive, high energy, or young dog you may need to hire a dog walker or find a friend to come and get the dog out for another 20-minute walk midday. Most dogs (even seemingly high energy dogs), are fine with 8-10 hour days in the crate as long as they are given an outlet for the energy before and after.
- If you are lucky enough to have more free time during the day, then simply take the suggestions below for the evening routine and spread these out more throughout the day.
- Keep in mind, even if you have lots of time to spend with your foster dog, the new adopters may not. **It's SUPER important for you to purposefully put them away in the crate and practice longer stretches in there** (4-6 hours at least sometimes). This will help make your foster dog more adaptable to their new home dynamic if their family has work or personal time constraints.

P.M.

- Come home from work/errands etc, put your things down and settle in. **DO NOT** rush to take the dog(s) out of their crates, unless you have a young puppy that is still working on extended times between potty breaks, and even then, it is vital to enforce a good crate threshold.
- Let the dog(s) out for a potty break, remember proper threshold manners at all house doors too!
- Structured walk together, and/or structured play time or other drive outlet. **In the first two weeks**, focus primarily on the walking skills and place command/duration work, then as this becomes more of a habit for the dog, you can add some playtime if they earn it and are appropriate during play.
- Place duration while you feed yourself, watch TV, read, or whatever else you do for yourself in the evening. (Ideally this is at least an hour or two of duration work!)
- Final potty break before bed, and into the crate for the night.

HEALTHCARE

Your foster dog's healthcare consists of their diet, toxin/vaccine history, veterinary treatments (antibiotics, steroids, etc.), and environmental influences – both in and around your home. Be as conservative as you can in how you treat and address immune issues or injuries. Often the simplest treatments are more than sufficient to support your foster dog in healing/developing naturally, as opposed to bombarding their system with elements that require detoxing and recovery from side effects.

Diet:

Dogs are predators, which means their digestive system was designed to process raw meat/high protein diets, and a small amount of partially digested plant matter from their prey. Their teeth were designed to rip and tear at carcasses, and in the process, they experience a natural flossing/cleaning - which contributes to their overall immune health as well.

Many dog owners are unaware that gum disease from poor diet is a serious contributor to other systemic disease in our dogs. Kibble does not provide anything close to an approximation of a biologically appropriate canine diet, which is why you can find many enthusiastic advocates of a raw or fresh feeding program. With that said, a lot of dog owners, and certainly financially limited rescue organizations, cannot afford to feed this way, so there are also relatively inexpensive solutions to dramatically boost the nutritional value of a kibble-based meal.

It is ideal to educate yourself on the commercial pet food industry, on raw and fresh feeding, as well as to connect with great sources of holistic health care solutions and nutrigenomics. The internet is FULL of tremendous resources on social media, YouTube, or medical journal reviews, and many fabulous books have been written to help guide you in developing a better understanding of where commercial pet food is lacking and even harming our pets.

Here is a quick list of just a few fantastic resources to get you started if you'd like to learn more about best customizing your foster dog's diet and healthcare to meet his/her needs. Many of these resources also have their own Facebook page that you can follow, and some put out free content frequently.

[Dr. Karen Becker](#)

[Dr. Jean Dodds](#)

[Dr. Christina Chambreau](#)

[Dr. Laurie Coger](#)

[Dr. Tom Lonsdale](#)

[Dr. Richard Pitcairn](#)

[Dr. Martin Goldstein](#)

[Dr. John Robb](#)

[Rodney Habib](#)

[Andrea Partee](#)

There are many common misconceptions about the health and nutritional value contained in commercial pet food products. Below are examples of areas where ALL traditional kibble is deficient, and simply cannot meet the requirements for a biologically appropriate canine diet.

Calcium – Dogs need a lot more calcium than we do. Some dogs need up to 50% of their diet to be calcium, and kibble has next to zero (particularly if we talk about the quality and limitations of highly processed calcium once baked). The calcium that is in kibble is so highly processed that most dogs do not get the benefits they require from it. Adding a calcium source or supplement can hugely reduce the risk of bone and joint atrophy as the dog ages. Without enough calcium in their diet, the dog's body will start to steal calcium from its own bones, causing atrophy. You can also find natural sources of calcium, such as egg shells (yes - your dog can eat egg shells), or raw marrow bones. If you do feed marrow bones, always supervise this as some dogs get too intense in their chewing and can crack their teeth or choke.

Omega 3's – The protein in kibble is primarily a source of omega 6 fatty acids, and dogs need this, as well as omega 3's. You can add omega 3's through [fish oil](#) (just be sure its responsibly sourced), sardines, or eggs. Your dog can eat a raw egg on top of their kibble, which is a great source of fresh protein *and* omega 3's. Bonus points if they will eat the shell too!

Digestive Enzymes – These are usually found in the digestive tract of the prey animal, so finding a quality canine-formulated digestive enzyme supplement is an excellent way to complement and complete your dog's kibble-based diet. If your foster dog has a history of poor health/diet (stray dogs, overbred mothers, sickly puppies...), or has been given antibiotics and other medical treatments that bombed the digestive tract and kill all the good bacteria, they are even more in need of these supportive supplements.

Probiotics – These fabulous and living bacterial soldiers are also naturally found in the digestive tract of prey animals, so adding probiotics as a supplement can support a healthy gut, which is the basis for a healthy dog overall. A great brand for most dogs is a [probiotic](#) made by Nature's Farmacy.

Fresh Food – Since kibble is so highly processed, a lot of the nutritional value of the ingredients has been lost. Adding fresh foods to your dog's bowl, such as lightly steamed or pureed veggies, fruits, or even cooked meats (no cooked bones), can greatly increase your foster's overall health. By replacing a portion of their kibble with some of these items, even a few days a week, you can reduce the cancer rates in dogs by 80-90%. Be sure you check to see if a specific food item is safe for dogs before feeding it. Leafy greens, and berries are a great source of minerals and antioxidants, and most of us keep these healthy additions in our homes for ourselves anyway.

Additional Suggested Supplements and Their Benefits:

Turmeric Paste – Anti-inflammatory and immune boosting

- 1 Cup Water
- ½ Cup Organic Turmeric Powder or Freshly Ground Turmeric Root
- ½ Cup Organic Coconut Oil
- 1 ½ Teaspoon Freshly Ground Black Pepper

- 1 tsp Organic Ginger Powder or Freshly Ground Ginger Root (optional)
- 1 tsp Organic Cinnamon Powder (optional)

Place water and turmeric in a small saucepan over medium heat. Stir constantly until you have a thick paste, approximately 7 to 8 minutes. Remove from heat and whisk in coconut oil, black pepper, ginger and cinnamon. Cool and put into a glass jar. Store in the fridge, lasts up to 2 weeks.

Apple Cider Vinegar – Immune boost and stomach acid balancing support

Thuja – Homeopathic vaccinosis remedy

Liquid Fennel and Catnip – Helps with nausea, and acid reflux

Silica – Vaccinosis remedy and urinary tract support

Arnica – Natural pain relief for sore muscles and/or bruises

D-Mannose – Urinary tract supplement for leaky bladders or chronic UTI

Flower Essences, *some* essential oils, and many Chinese herbs or other homeopathic remedies are other excellent solutions to pursue as a means of boosting immunity, promoting calmness from the inside out, and rehabilitating a dog who has suffered a rough start.

If you are unsure of where to begin, or what quantities to provide, please consult a holistic veterinary professional before determining which supplements and in what amounts to give your foster dog. The great thing about nearly all of these supplements is that they are essentially risk-free but could create digestive upset or other indications of detox and/or sensitivity depending on the dog and their overall state of health/disease.

Your Canine Medical Kit:

The following are suggested staple items to keep on hand in your emergency medical kit, and most of them are tried and true natural solutions for helping to get your foster dog back on track from tummy aches, allergic reactions, small scrapes or bruises, and other common ailments that come up on account of regular everyday adventures.

As with anything medical or behavior related, it is necessary to inform your rescue organization's director, or foster coordinator if applicable, any time you notice an abnormality in your foster dog - and before beginning a natural remedy protocol. Before running to the veterinarian, however, do not be afraid to try some of the following solutions, and be sure to take notes of what you learn by paying attention to the dog's stool, temperature, and overall demeanor with patience and consistent application.

Plain Canned Pumpkin (not pie filling) – Soothes upset stomach

Bentonite Clay – Helps firm up diarrhea and soothe digestive tract

Diatomaceous Earth – Great topical flea and pest killer and repellent. You can put directly on the dog, on carpet or other affected areas of your yard, simply rub it in and let sit for a few minutes before you brush/vacuum away

Aspirin (5mg per lb of body weight) – Pain relief, does has blood thinning side affect, do not give if the dog has had or will have surgery, a cut, or other injuries

Tea Tree Oil and Epsom Salt – Tea Tree oil is a great antibiotic (DO NOT let your dog ingest this, topical use only). Many skin issues, small cuts, or even lick granulomas can be helped or even completely eliminated through either a soak of tea tree and Epsom salt, or a spray of diluted tea tree oil. Be sure you dog is not able to lick any areas that are treated.

Benadryl (1mg per lb of body weight) – Allergy relief, sleepiness for anxiety (short term), can be doubled in acute situations of obvious exposure to bee sting, spider bite, etc.

Robitussin (1tsp or 5ml per 20lbs body weight) – Can be given to help suppress coughing, works great for KC symptom management

Pepto-Bismol (1tsp or 5ml per 10lbs of body weight) – Used to help calm upset stomachs for symptoms such as acid reflux, vomiting bile, or diarrhea

Zantac Acid Reducer (0.5-1mg per 1lb of body weight) – Can be used for short term relief of acid reflux symptoms

Antibiotic Ointment – Use as topical antibiotic for cuts, or surgery incision site

Gauze – Use to stop bleeding and pack a larger wound, or apply antibiotic ointment underneath a wrapped area

Self-Adhesive Tape – Wrap an injury with this without sticking to the dog's fur

Styptic Powder – Stops bleeding, especially useful if you cut a nail too short, but can be used anywhere. Will not help much with large wounds unless you have a lot.

Vetericyn – topical saline wound spray

Thermometer – Used to take a rectal temperature reading

Elizabethan Collar or Cone – Used to prevent licking wounds, sores, allergy spots, or irritation, especially when you are not around to supervise

Hydrogen Peroxide – Used for wound cleaning, or to induce vomiting if your dog ingests something poisonous

If your dog ingests something poisonous and you catch it quickly (within an hour or so), you can use hydrogen peroxide to induce vomiting. **YOU MAY STILL NEED TO TAKE THEM INTO THE VET**, however, you can improve the chance of survival by using hydrogen peroxide. First you must know what it is that they ate, **caustic chemicals such as bleach can cause more harm if you force**

regurgitation because they cause chemical burns to the throat, nose, and mouth.

Likewise, anything solid and sharp, such as pieces of plastic, glass etc., need to be surgically removed, and would cause more damage if you force regurgitation. If your dog ingests something like chocolate, onions, grapes, coffee beans or dirt, hydrogen peroxide may help you avoid a vet visit.

Dosage: 1 tsp (5ml) for every 10lbs of body weight. You can repeat this after 15 minutes if your dog does not vomit. Only repeat once or twice before going in to your vet/emergency clinic. When in doubt, **CALL YOUR VET**, and always notify your rescue organization of any steps taken at home.

Common Non-Urgent Health Issues:

Diarrhea – There are many causes of loose stool in dogs, some as benign as stress and anxiety (common during transitions or times of general change and uncertainty), as well as new or poor-quality food, vaccines, or illness related issues. Some diarrhea is not a cause for concern, for example if it's slight and temporary, or if your foster dog is not running a fever or exhibiting any other symptoms. If your foster dog has diarrhea, but no other symptoms, you can rule out a change of diet by feeding your foster 2 cups of cooked rice with a couple tablespoons of plain, canned pumpkin for a day or two, then reintroduce dry kibble. Provide plenty of fresh water, since diarrhea can cause dehydration.

If your foster dog has mucus in their stool, this may be an indication of detoxing, common again when the diet has been changed or supplements introduced (especially for the better). Prolonged diarrhea for 24 hours or more, or intermittent diarrhea wherein the stool improves for a time, but then worsens, could be a sign of more serious issues. **Giardia is a very contagious issue that can cause sustained or intermittent diarrhea in dogs, and you do not want to miss the diagnosis of Giardia as it is a risk to your own personal dogs, or those your foster may come in contact with.** Best practices in rescue would include a fecal to rule out any risk of parasites in your foster dog **BEFORE** they enter your home, or you may need to pursue one if your foster dog presents with diarrhea during their time with you.

Dehydration - To check for dehydration, pull the skin up over the shoulder blades. If it snaps back quickly, the dog is not dehydrated. If the skin goes down slowly, then the dog is dehydrated and needs fluids. If your foster dog is not volunteering to hydrate themselves over a prolonged period, they may require veterinary attention and IV fluids.

Temperature – Check your foster dog's temperature at the first sign of any concerning physical or behavioral changes, to indicate if there could be something more serious brewing in their system or not. **Normal canine temperature range is 101 – 102.5.** Be careful if you have not handled your foster dog in this way before, always ensure you have safety backups in case they try to bite. Contact your organization and/or rescue vet if you do not feel comfortable doing this yourself.

Kennel cough (KC) - Just like people who have colds, kennel cough develops when the dog is stressed or when the immune system is compromised. Shelter dogs routinely contract KC. The most common symptom of KC is a dry, hacking cough, and there may be some discharge from the nose as well as a clear mucus that is coughed up. KC is highly contagious for weeks, so keep your foster dog away from all other dogs during their treatment and recovery.

KC is generally a mild, self-limiting illness of the trachea and bronchi encountered in all age groups of dogs, but especially in those under unusual stress, or close confinement. Kennel cough exists in shelters, boarding kennels, groomers, veterinary offices, off-leash areas, etc.

Because kennel cough is contagious, and there are many different strains of the virus, keeping your own pets vaccinated is a good idea, however does not guarantee your personal pets will not get sick or prevent the virus from being transferred between others.

Dogs with KC, even suspected KC, should NOT be walked outdoors or in any public place until all symptoms are resolved. That means no crusty eye boogers, no runny nose and no active coughing. It is an airborne and very contagious illness, so they need to be kept away from a general population of dogs. It is also spread by saliva. At the first symptoms of KC, the dog should be quarantined away from all dogs.

Treatment for KC involves rest. Make sure your foster dog has plenty of fresh water and healthy food. If your foster's energy is good and the cough seems mild, try some Vitamin C 2-3 times a day with food. Robitussin DM can be given twice a day, dosage is 5mg/lb. For supplements such as vitamin C, a preferred brand we can suggest is Nature's Pharmacy.

If you don't see improvement of the cough or cold after 3 days, OR if the condition worsens, call your organization. Activity can bring on coughing episodes, so limit activity and encourage rest. Steam from the shower can help loosen mucus. Incubation of kennel cough is 5-10 days; its course is 10-20 days with symptoms generally more marked the first week.

Illness - Your foster dog may not display any signs of sickness until they are quite ill. Therefore, it's up to you to observe your foster closely each day. Call your organization if you see abnormal behavior such as unusual discharge from the eyes, nose or stool, abnormal lumps, limping, difficulty getting up or down, loss of appetite, or abnormal waste elimination.

REMINDER: Always get in touch with your organization before starting any kind of treatment with your foster dog.

Poisonous Foods and Household Items:

Many household products can be toxic to dogs. Remove any rat or mouse poisons, anti-freeze, and windshield wiper fluid from your home before fostering. Store all cleaning products and other items listed below, out of reach of pets. See **Your Canine Medical Kit** for use of hydrogen peroxide to induce vomiting if your dog ingests something poisonous.

Common food items that are poisonous for dogs include:

- Chocolate Candy and gum
- Caffeine (coffee, tea, etc)
- Some dairy products
- Grapes/raisins
- Toothpaste
- Macadamia nuts
- COOKED Bones
- Mushrooms
- Onion
- Large Amounts Garlic
- Avocado Pits

- Yeast dough
- Baking soda and baking powder

Common plants that are poisonous for dogs:

- Azalea/Rhododendron
- Palm
- Castor bean
- Tulip/Narcissus
- Cyclamen
- Yew
- Kalanchoe
- Oleander
- Lilies
- Sage

CAUTION: DO NOT USE TILEX! TILEX CONTAINS ANITFREEZE AND IS DEADLY IF INGESTED BY ANIMALS!

WRITING A BIOGRAPHY FOR YOUR FOSTER DOG

A biography may be used for several purposes, but most especially it is the key connecting point to a potential adoptive match. Check with your organization for specific guidelines, and any requirements based on the media platforms that they use. Below are some common strategies to help market your foster dog to potential adopters, keeping in mind that sharing the absolute truth of that dog's behavior, personality, temperament and training/need for training should be a top priority at all times.

It is NOT recommended that you write a biography until you have had your foster dog for at least 10-14 days. This allows you to get to know your foster dog beyond the "honeymoon period," and gives time for any suppressed behaviors to come out before you start to market them to the public.

The most valuable thing you can do as a foster when writing a dog's biography is to BE HONEST. No dog is perfect, and if a biography implies that they are, you are greatly risking attracting the wrong adopters, and/or setting potential adopters up for disappointment and unnecessary struggle when the dog is in their possession.

If your foster dog has behavioral issues, or certain needs that have to be met every day, adopters need to know about this. Many people think that this will put off potential adopters, but while it is true that there will be certain people who read an honest description and recognize something they *don't want*, the right adopter for that dog will see exactly the personality, temperament, or quirks they *do want*. Sharing honestly and with transparency is what will help your foster dog find a successful and long-term home. When lying and/or sugar coating the truth of what it takes to live with your foster dog successfully, you are not giving that dog a chance to find adopters that are willing and able to meet his or her needs. Although you may be well intentioned, this deception or manipulation of facts only feeds the cycle of rescue and puts your foster dog at risk of being adopted, out and then returned - or worse.

The next thing to consider with biography construction is what perspective you'd like to write the biography from. Many bios are written from the dog's perspective, which can be very helpful in connecting with potential adopters. Don't forget to include the basics (age, gender, personality traits both good and bad, any special health requirements, etc). Try to make your writing interesting, with descriptive "stories" of what life is like with your foster dog to help connect with the reader. Just don't forget to be honest about the not so good stuff as well!

Audiences are scrolling and skimming more and more these days, so get to the point and share lists of pertinent facts, with small amounts of correlating narrative. Most people on social media skim through when they see paragraphs so don't be afraid to use bold font or capitalized words to GET PEOPLE'S ATTENTION (see, I got your attention didn't I?). The beginning of your foster's bio should have a hook to get your reader interested, then you can go into the more factual, but pertinent details, and end with a description of who this dog's ideal adopter would be.

Again, this is just a guideline, and if you are having trouble you can take some time to become a student of creative and engaging bios by browsing other rescues and paying attention to which ones draw you in and why. Read through listings on PetFinder and other national databases, this will give you a good sense of what is commonly used, so that you can make your foster dogs description delightfully uncommon and attractive to his/her right match.

Pictures/Videos:

Visual media is **super** important and can do wonders in promoting your foster dog. When you can, try to snag photos of both everyday life, and also more posed, scenic portraits. You want people to see and feel

just how adorably squishable your foster dog is (because let's face it, that's a big reason why people want to adopt them), but you also want your audience to be able to picture the dog in their home, doing everyday activities with them.

Your foster dog's photos are the first connection an adopter will make with the dog and will hopefully grab their attention enough for them to take the time to read your awesomely captivating biography. Try different angles: above, below, at eye level, and show the dog in various actions such as sit, down, playing, interacting with kids, cats and other dogs (of course only show activities your foster dog is able to do safely), or out on adventures as well as being calm and well mannered.

Be aware of the background in your photos, clutter from children's toys, clothes, garbage or dishes, all distract from the dog you are trying to feature and promote for adoption. Either try to fill most of the frame with your foster dog, or go somewhere with a better background, and better lighting if needed. You will have to check with your organization about how they would like you to get this media to them, and how often, but a good rule of thumb is to take a brief "photo shoot" of your foster dog immediately upon their arrival to your home, then to add to your collection as much as possible while they're with you.

Do NOT be offended if your rescue organization doesn't use all of your photos/videos, they may have different reasons for declining to use some (or all) of your content, but if you're worried it may be because of quality, just ask! **Fostering isn't about you**, it's about the animal you're helping, and the way to improve in your captures/service/support is to be open to feedback and to continue to study what works. By keeping our attitude and intention in the right place, we can help more dogs!

Video is king in marketing, so taking quality video clips of your foster dog participating in the same above-mentioned activities is hugely helpful for prospective adopters to connect with the dog and visualize sharing life with them.

- **Focus on capturing one minute or less clips**; video clips that are too long may bore viewers or overload your media team when they try to create compilations. Shorter videos are faster to upload, easier to share across multiple platforms, and are more likely to force you to be efficient in your message anyhow.
- Be mindful once again, to **create clutter-free backgrounds**, wear appropriate attire (no profanity or vulgar messages on t-shirts/tanks/hoodies, no skimpy clothing or chronically grungy attire either). Raise your standards and mitigate the risk that your viewers will be distracted from the dog or perceive a less than high vibe impression about the organization you serve.
- **Watch out for background noise/music**; if your kid is screaming, dogs are barking, or you're blasting AC/DC, prospective adopters will be put off, and have an increased chance of discontinuing the video play. Distracting noise will cause prospective adopters to struggle to see the available dog in the midst of too much chaos.
- **Share helpful facts, and a call to action**; *your* video can be the first or *only* thing your rescue organization viewer has seen about this available dog so far, which means it can be hugely helpful to indicate a few consistent facts each time you record. Since social media posts are often shared far and wide, be sure to state the whereabouts of your foster dog (ie: "Fluffy is being fostered in San Diego, CA – reach out to Hope2K9 Rescue through our website, hope2k9.com, for more information about adopting Fluffy."). If you are directly responsible for social media posting, you may want to include hyperlinks and easy/quick call to action links that will take an

interested adopter to ANOTHER prior posted video (YouTube, Facebook, Instagram...), or to the adoptable dog's album/bio if found elsewhere on another platform.

- Share generously and with humor, don't worry about how you look, sound, or whether you are a pro on camera or not. Remember, it's not about *you*, it's about the dog you're serving, and what will best help them find their right match for a forever home.
- Update your foster dog's media content as frequently as possible, providing new and improved pictures and videos as you get to know your foster dog, and as you explore what he/she is interested in, skilled at, nervous about, and so on.

ADOPTIVE PLACEMENT & HAPPILY EVER AFTER

If you begin with the end in mind, it will come as no surprise that your beloved foster dog will ultimately leave you to settle in his/her best match adoptive home. If you've done your best to show that dog how to be a good citizen, have enforced manners and impulse control while in your home, exposed them to new and scary things that build confidence and better assess their right match adopter, then you've played a wonderful and essential role in your foster dog's journey to success.

Seeing your [foster dog's journey](#) come full circle will be so worthwhile, even if you've grown to love them very much, or will miss them as if they were your own. When the time comes to evaluate a proper adoptive match for your foster dog, each organization is a little bit different in how they make this happen. As the foster family, you may be asked to be present at a meet and greet, or your dog may be picked up by an organization representative and the outcome of the potential adoption meeting relayed to you after the fact.

Some rescue groups will also host events or large gatherings, during which time multiple dogs and approved/prospective adopters can gather and meet, even sending matches home that same day if a good fit is found. Be sure to communicate with your organization if your foster dog has issues with reactivity or fear, as a large event may not be a good or safe fit to bring them to unless or until they have more training/time to adjust.

In the case of Hope2K9 Rescue in San Diego, CA - the adoption process begins by making a *likely* match, thoughtfully and behind the scenes, then scheduling a meet and greet that is pretty certain to be a perfect fit right off the bat. If a match is confirmed, following an in person meet and greet, it is then followed up with TWO separate **go home training sessions** that are customarily scheduled on back to back days. The first go home session may begin on the same day as the meet and greet - if there's time, but in some cases, it is scheduled out separately in order to allow for the entire family to be present, or to ensure there's enough time to cover everything that applies both days.

The two go home training sessions are carefully designed to break up information that needs to be shared with a new adopter, showing the training commands, tools, and specific behaviors their new dog knows/exhibits. **Whichever way your rescue organization does it, you are encouraged to at least share as much as you can during this transition time, as you are the one that now knows the most about your foster dog after living together for the time you've shared.** Feel free to draft a parting letter to the new adopter if you have been unable to chat with them prior to your foster dog going home, sharing your experience and insights about your special rescue guest will help them know what to expect in the adoption transition as well. It is also perfectly okay to provide your contact information in a go home letter, if you wish to make yourself available to staying in touch, receiving updates, and supporting the new adopter.

For foster families who have existing personal dogs, **pay attention to the changes that take place in your own pack and household dynamic when you bring a foster dog in, or send a foster dog out.** There is something to be said for taking breaks from fostering, to ensure you do not overload your plate, or create a dynamic of imbalance and neglect for your own dogs. Some foster dogs will assimilate easier than others, and you'll want to be careful to maintain a reasonable balance of rest and recovery following those tough/demanding cases.

THANK YOU for serving your community, and the world of animal rescue as a whole, we could not do it without you!