



Guide for Dog Foster Homes



Top Tips for Foster Parents

- ♥ Check in regularly with your Foster Coordinator.
- ♥ Ask for advice if your dog has stopped eating.
- ♥ If your dog seems sick, check immediately for hydration – she should be drinking water, urinating, have elastic skin tone and a moist mouth.
- ♥ Wash your hands and change your shirt after handling sick animals to prevent spread of illness.
- ♥ Never let your dog run loose outside; guard against escapes.
- ♥ Don't leave your foster dog unattended with any resident animals.
- ♥ Feed your foster dog separately from other pets in your home.

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1) How long are dogs kept in foster homes?
 - a. It completely depends on the dog and the situation. Keep in mind with great photos and bios, dogs tend to get adopted much more quickly! On average, we say about 2 months max. However if your foster dog doesn't get adopted in that period, check in with your coordinator to talk about different methods or the possibility of the dog coming back to the shelter to get more exposure.
- 2) Can I adopt my foster dog?
 - a. Yes! As long as foster parents meet the shelter requirements necessary for adoption, foster parents have first choice to adopt their foster dog. The same applies to any friends or family that you may have that are interested in adopting your foster dog.
- 3) How are foster dogs promoted?
 - a. Photos and stories of all adoptable dogs in foster homes are posted on petfinder.com and at the shelter where the public can view them. Foster dogs are also promoted special events throughout the year. Foster parents may participate in various shelter programs and events to increase the visibility of their foster dog to potential adopters. Foster parents can also help promote their foster dog to their family, friends, colleagues and the general public through a variety of means including flyers, emails, social media, like Facebook and Instagram, and even by walking your foster dog in local neighborhoods while he wears his "Adopt Me" bandana or vest.

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- 4) What is the process for someone interested in adopting my foster dog?
 - a. The process is very similar to adopting a dog from the shelter. The steps are briefly outlined below:
 - i. Potential adopters that are identified by the foster parents should be shared with Foster Department Staff.
 - ii. If a potential applicant is interested in setting up an official meet and greet with a foster dog, this meeting must take place AT the Humane Society. Please let Foster Department staff know ahead of time and also inform staff if the meeting will be with human family members, animal family members, or both.
 - iii. If the meet and greet went well with all family members, potential adopters can then fill out the adoption application and contract at the shelter.
 - iv. After the meet and greet, foster parents can confer with shelter staff to provide their input on the “fit” of the adoption. Adoptions are always approved or rejected by shelter staff.
 - v. Once approved, the adopter pays the adoption fees at the shelter. If the foster dog is not yet fixed, a spay/neuter appointment will be scheduled prior to take-home (foster dog must stay with foster parents until the dog is fixed). If the animal is already fixed, they can go home with potential adopters once the application is approved
- 5) If I have personal pets can I still foster dogs?
 - a. It is highly suggested that family dogs have a meet & greet with potential foster dogs to make sure it's a suitable match. Keep in mind that it is always a health risk to expose your animal to other animals whether it's walking at parks, vet waiting rooms or other common animal areas. The health risk is minimal if your animals are current on their vaccinations, maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle and are not elderly or very young.
- 6) What supplies are needed to foster?
 - a. Foster parents are asked to provide their foster dog with shelter, food, basic training, exercise, socialization and love. The shelter will provide you with all the other supplies and equipment needed throughout your foster experience. The foster dog program receives donations on a regular basis and the Humane Society of El Paso will provide health care, vaccination and veterinarian visits.
- 7) Do I have to crate-train my foster dog?
 - a. No, but it is one of the most efficient and effective ways to house train a dog. Some dogs do not like crates, and most dogs need to be trained to use a crate, so it is up to the foster parent to decide whether to crate or not. Putting the dog in the crate while you are gone will give you peace of mind knowing that they are in a safe place, away from harm, and not doing any damage to your belongings or themselves. For many dogs, a crate can also represent a safe and comfortable place to call their own and provides them with a sense of security. Dogs actually like having a “den” to cuddle in. Crating should NEVER be used as punishment.

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8) What if my foster dog becomes sick?

- a. All veterinary costs are covered by the Humane Society of El Paso, thanks to donations made to “Shelby’s Fund” If a foster dog becomes sick, foster parents must call the Foster Emergency Cell Phone. This cell phone will be answered by Foster Department Staff or by a member of the Shelter Management Team. These staff members have the authority to either schedule you to bring the dog to the shelter to be looked at by a shelter veterinarian or to authorize a visit to an off-site veterinarian in the community. Please remember, you do not have the authority to bring a foster animal to a veterinarian of your choosing. These animals are the property of the Humane Society so it is imperative that we have our vets or our vet partners care for them. You will also NOT be reimbursed for a vet visit if you choose to take an animal in without consent or authorization from an HSEP staff member.

9) How much time each day is needed for my foster animal?

- a. Commitment and responsibilities depend on the individual dog and situation. It’s essential that foster parents understand that shelter dogs may be stressed and moving the dog from the shelter to the foster home is also very stressful and emotional. Foster parents must be willing to be patient and commit to the dog because our goal is to keep them in a stable and consistent environment.

Many of the dogs at the shelter are “adolescent” dogs between the age of 6 months and 2 years. They typically have a lot of energy and require vigorous daily exercise and stimulation. This means at least a 30-45 minute brisk walk/run in the morning AND again in the afternoon, with plenty of playtime in between. Older dogs may need less frequent and less intense exercise.

10) Can I take my foster dog to an off-leash dog park exercise and socialization?

- a. NO! You are not allowed to take any foster dog from the Humane Society of El Paso to any off-leash park. While these parks can be fun for some dogs, there are far too many unknowns for it to be a safe and healthy experience for a foster dog. Diseases are easily transmitted and the temperaments of visiting dogs are unknown, thus creating a huge liability to the Humane Society of El Paso. Also, taking a leashed dog to a dog park can create frustration and aggression in dogs.

11) How can I help my dog become more adoptable?

- a. There are two ways to make a foster dog more adoptable. First and foremost is marketing. If no one knows about your foster dog, or how wonderful they are, then it will be next to impossible to find them a forever home. In addition to supplying great photos and a bio and updating these regularly, giving a foster dog additional exposure by telling friends and family about them will help create a “network effect” and will speed up the process of finding their forever home. Simple steps like taking a foster dog on walks in local parks (only ON-LEASH!), outdoor shopping areas and other high traffic areas will help find potential adopters.

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Secondly, our shelter dogs benefit greatly from exercise, basic training, special love and attention you give them! While marketing provides you with applicants, it is ALWAYS the dog that “closes the deal”. Providing a foster dog with basic training and manners will increase their adoptability. Shy dogs will benefit from your patience, routine and slowly exposing them to new people will build their confidence. Rambunctious adolescents who learn good manners will help show off their trainability and long term potential!

- 12) Am I responsible for finding my foster dog its forever home?
- a. No, but we do need your help! Once a qualified applicant is identified, you will be asked to schedule a meet and greet with your foster dog and the potential adopter here at the shelter. Your quick response and then final input on the adoption is critical to finding a great match! Many times a foster parent will find a perfect match through their own network of friends and family. The shelter greatly welcomes these referrals! If you think you have found a perfect forever for your foster dog, remember they still must go through the application process and be approved by the shelter staff.

Important Rules & Reminders

- No off-leash dog parks.
- Foster dogs must be on leash at all times and supervised when outdoors.
- No flexi-leads
- No aversive training techniques or tools may be used (prong collars, choke collars, e-colors, spray bottles or alpha rolls)
- Foster dogs may not be left outside unattended at any time outdoors, even in a secured backyard
- Any aggressive behavior must be reported to staff
- All vet visits must be pre-approved and set up by staff
- Foster parents must respond within 24 hours to communications from shelter staff
- Foster parents must have internet access/cell phone, as these are primary forms of communication. Foster parents also must have reliable transportation to and from shelter or offsite adoption events.

Health & Wellness

Veterinary Visits

All vet visits must be pre-authorized by Foster Department Staff or shelter management! Check with your Coordinator first to find where and when you should bring your foster dog in. PLEASE NOTE: Do NOT bring your foster dog to a veterinarian on your own. We may not be familiar with the vet and if you do not get prior consent, you will be responsible for vet costs.

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We must be very cautious when deciding whether or not a foster animal needs to go to the vet, as office visits add up very quickly. Each case will be evaluated individually by what is best for the animal as well as economically feasible for the shelter.

Authorization to foster parents for vet visits can be given for any of the following:

Dogs older than 12 weeks of age:

Diarrhea that lasts for more than 1-2 days

Diarrhea and occasional vomiting for more than a day

Vomiting more than 2-3 times in an hour

Not eating for more than 24 hours

Lethargy without fever for more than a day

Lethargy with fever

Your foster dog may not display any signs of illness until quite ill. Therefore, it's up to you to observe your dog closely each day. Call your Foster Coordinator if you see:

- Unusual discharges from the eyes, nose or other body openings
- Abnormal lumps
- Limping
- Difficulty getting up or down
- Loss of appetite
- Abnormal waste elimination
- Other abnormal behavior

Diarrhea

Diarrhea can be caused by several factors, including stress, change of diet, poor diet, eating garbage, parasites and viruses. If your foster dog has diarrhea and has no other symptoms, rule out change of diet by feeding your dog 2 cups of cooked rice mixed with one cup of cottage cheese for a day or two, and then reintroduce dry kibble.

Provide plenty of fresh water since diarrhea can cause 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. Call your Coordinator immediately if you suspect your foster is dehydrated. In an emergency, take your foster directly to your vet.

Distemper

Distemper is an extremely contagious and often fatal viral disease. It is an airborne infection that can be transmitted with or without direct contact with an infected dog through mucus, urine and feces. Some of the

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symptoms include squinting, congestion of the eyes, pus from the eyes, weight loss, coughing, vomiting, nasal discharge and diarrhea.

Contact your Coordinator immediately if you suspect Distemper.

Fleas

Most foster dogs have been treated when arriving at the shelter, but additional flea treatments are available if needed. Puppies younger than 4 months should not be treated with toxic chemicals. Puppies over 8 weeks of age and adult dogs can be treated with topical flea treatment.

Flea treatments contain insecticides that can cause nerve and liver damage, impair the immune system and even cause cancer. Regular flea combing is the best way to control and monitor the fleas. Vacuum all areas of your house that your foster uses at least every two to three days. Good food, minimal stress, proper hygiene and TLC help keep the dog from getting fleas or an illness.

To check for fleas, inspect your dog daily, including rear groin, belly, tail, neck and under the chin and head. Look also for black specks of flea dirt, which is actually digested blood. Before you begin combing, get a bowl of tap water and put a few drops of dish soap in it. You can put any fleas you find in the water and they will drown. (If you don't use soap, the fleas may swim to a fluff of fur and jump out of the water.) If fleas are present, treat as soon as possible. Change bedding and vacuum the floors daily. The washing machine will remove fleas, eggs and dirt.

If your foster dog had fleas, watch his stools for short pieces of white rice that are tapeworms, which come from ingesting fleas. Tapeworms can cause diarrhea. If you see tapeworms, call your Coordinator, who can provide you with medication.

Injured Dogs

Injured foster dogs will have specific needs. They'll most likely be recovering from surgery and will come with veterinary orders. Generally fracture, cast or other surgery patients may need to be confined to a crate or a small room to limit mobility.

This type of foster situation may require you to schedule follow-up appointments with the dog's veterinarian. As with all foster dogs, watch for signs of illness, since injured foster dogs are under additional stress and are more prone to illness. Lots of human contact is important for healing injured dogs. Active play should be limited, but cuddling, petting, talking, brushing and massaging are all good social activities for a recovering animal.

Kennel Cough

The shelter is much like a child day care – as soon as one dog has a cold, most all the dogs in the shelter get a cold. Just like people who have colds, kennel cough develops when the dog is stressed or when the immune

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system is compromised. Kennel cough usually goes away as soon as the dog has a warm, quiet and soothing place to sleep, where they can drink lots of water, eat healthy food and receive lots of TLC!

Kennel cough is typically a dry, hacking cough. There may be some discharge from the nose and a clear liquid that is coughed up. It's 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.

Because kennel cough is contagious, infected dogs should not be around other dogs until they're over their cough. If you have a dog at home and plan to foster a dog with kennel cough, we have found that if your own dog is healthy and has been vaccinated annually, then he will most likely not get sick.

Talk to your vet about giving your own dog the Bordetella nasal vaccination. Immunity to kennel cough is usually established 3-4 days after vaccination.

Make sure your foster dog has plenty of fresh water and healthy food. If your dog is not eating, try cooking up something special and smelly such as eggs, chicken or steak. Take short, leashed walks. If your dog's energy is good and the cough seems mild, try some Vitamin C (5-10 mg/lb, 2-3 times a day with food) and Vitamin E (3-5 mg/lb, once a day). If you don't see improvement of the cough or cold after 3 days, or if the condition worsens, call your Coordinator.

Strenuous activity can bring on coughing episodes, so limit activity and encourage rest. Even baths can be stressful to the system and should be avoided. However bringing your foster dog into the bathroom while you're taking a shower can be beneficial as the steam 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. Fever, lack of appetite and a yellow-green-brown nasal discharge can indicate secondary infections. Call your Foster Coordinator if any of these symptoms occur.

Parvo

Parvo attacks the intestinal tract, white blood cells and heart muscle. Signs of infection are depression, loss of appetite, vomiting, severe diarrhea, fever and sometimes kennel cough symptoms. The illness is contracted through contact with the infected feces of another dog. Call your Coordinator immediately if you believe your foster dog may have this illness.

♥ Learn more about parvovirus:

www.aspcapro.org/resource/shelter-health-disease-management/canine-parvovirus-timeline

Parasites

Parasites can cause diarrhea, stomach bloating or vomiting. Parasites include tapeworms, roundworms, hookworms and mange. Tapeworms will look like pieces of rice coming out of your foster dog's anus or in his

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stool. Round worms and hookworms may be vomited, and roundworms look like spaghetti (hookworms are smaller and rarely distinguishable without the aid of a microscope).

Mange is an infestation of tiny mites that bite and cause intense scratching, reddened skin and loss of fur. Only rare cases of mange (sarcoptic) are contagious to humans. If you suspect your foster dog has parasites, call your Coordinator immediately.

Vaccination & Worming

Your foster dog's vaccination and worming history will be given to you. Your dog has most likely been vaccinated for Distemper, Canine Hepatitis, Leptospirosis, Parainfluenza, Parvo and Bordetella.

Rabies vaccinations are given in limited circumstances. Contact your Coordinator for more information.

Most likely, your foster dog had one dose of wormer upon arrival to the shelter. If you see worms in the dog's stool, return to the shelter for more wormer. You will be instructed on the correct dosage and frequency.

♥ These tips can help keep your home free of infection:

www.aspcapro.org/infection-control-foster-homes

♥ Learn about household toxins that cause seizures:

www.aspcapro.org/resource/shelter-health-poison-control/most-common-causes-seizures-dogs

Spay/Neuter

Spay and neuter surgeries are generally done at our clinic at the time of adoption, but any time a dog has to undergo anesthesia for a procedure, he should be altered at the same time.

Behavior

Housetraining

Be patient with your foster dog. Even housetrained adult dogs will make mistakes, especially if they've been at the shelter for a long time and have been eliminating in their kennel. If there are smells in your house from another dog or cat, some foster dogs may "mark" their territory. This action should be redirected immediately with a calm "Oops" – then escort him outside where he can finish. You will then want to use some odor

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neutralizer (like Nature's Miracle) on the areas where the dog "marked" to insure he will not smell and mark that area again.

You will want to follow these guidelines until your foster dog adjusts to his new situation and to your schedule.

Determine where you want your foster dog to eliminate – it could be the backyard, side yard or an indoor spot such as a pee pad, litter system or one you have designed. Then take him there every time with a spoken command (such as "do your business"). Take him out when he wakes up, after he eats or drinks, after a play session, or at least every 2 hours.

Stand with him for 5 minutes. If he eliminates, reward him (with treats, praise, a favorite game and your own special happy dance). If he doesn't go in 5 minutes, take him back inside and try every 15 minutes until he goes. Every time he goes, make sure you reward him!

Supervise the puppy closely while you're inside. If he starts to sniff the floor, or even squats to go, interrupt with a calm "Oops," scoop him up quickly and take him to the approved spot and praise when he finishes. If he eliminates in the house while you're not paying attention, don't correct him – it's not his fault. Clean it up and go back to your schedule. Use an odor neutralizer to get rid of the smell. Never put the dog's face in his mess or yell at him; he won't understand you, and you will only be teaching him fear.

Crate Training

Crates provide safe havens and dens for dogs. They calm them and can help prevent destructive chewing, barking and housetraining mistakes. Puppies should not be crated for more hours than they are months old, plus one. For example, a 4-month-old pup should not be crated longer than 5 hours.

How long an adult dog can be crated will depend on many factors. For example, if your foster dog was left outside, he has never been required to hold it for any period of time. It will take time for this dog to learn to hold it, and you will need to start slowly. Older dogs and dogs with some medical conditions may only be able to successfully hold it for short periods of time. Rigorous exercise should be given before and after any long periods in the crate, and good chew toys should be in the crate at all times. You may want to crate your new foster dog for the first few nights in your bedroom – most of them feel more secure in their crate and it protects your house from accidents.

Crates should never be used as a means of punishment; they're not to be used for keeping puppies under 6 months out of mischief all day either. Crates should be thought of as dog playrooms, just like child playrooms with games and toys. It should be a place dogs like to be and feel safe and secure.

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Attention & Playtime

Gentle and calming human contact is important for dogs. Human handling is especially important for the healthy development of puppies. Be sure to give your foster dog several minutes of playtime periodically through the day.

Do not allow children to behave with the foster dog in a manner you would not want the child to behave with a younger sibling. Teach children to leave a dog alone when he is eating, chewing and sleeping. Never allow a child to remove a toy or any other prized possession from a dog.

Do not play tug of war or wrestle with your foster dog. If you have a shy or fearful dog, do not throw a toy toward the dog, because he may think you are throwing things at him and become more fearful. After you have finished playing with a toy, put it away so that you are controlling the toy and the playtime. When giving the dog a toy or treat, have him sit before giving it to him. That way he has to work to get the toy or treat – making it a reward.

Behavior Issues

Many of the behaviors that we find problematic – such as barking, whining, digging, chewing, scavenging and hunting other animals – are really just normal dog behaviors and can be explained as “dogs being dogs.” The easiest way to coexist with our canine companions is to provide more appropriate outlets for these behaviors.

If your foster dog is exhibiting any behavioral issues, ask yourself the questions below:

- Is my foster dog getting enough exercise?
- Is he being left alone for long periods of time?
- Does he have interesting toys to keep his mind engaged and stimulated?
- Is he getting enough attention and playtime?
- Am I reinforcing bad behavior? Some examples include verbally scolding a dog when he is seeking attention or engaging the dog when he uses bad manners to get you to play.
- Does my foster dog have a safe place that is dog-proofed with appropriate chew toys, or am I leaving my own belongings within reach?
- Am I providing specific outlets based on his natural instincts and drives?

We don't expect foster parents to be miracle workers. If your foster dog requires more attention, exercise or training than you can provide, talk to your Coordinator – another foster home might be best for both you and the dog. Regardless of the issue, we don't condone punishment, which will not address the cause of the behavior and in fact it may worsen behavior that's motivated by fear or anxiety.

Punishment may also cause anxiety in dogs who aren't currently fearful. People often believe their dog makes the connection to discipline because he runs and hides or “looks guilty.” But dogs display submissive postures like cowering, running away or hiding when they feel threatened by an angry tone of voice, body posture, or facial expression. Your dog doesn't know what he's done wrong; he only knows that you're upset. Punishment

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after the fact will not only fail to eliminate the undesirable behavior, but may provoke other undesirable behaviors, too.

♥ Try these easy enrichment ideas:

www.aspcapro.org/resource/saving-lives-behavior-enrichment/tips-canine-enrichment

Showcasing Your Foster

Web Presence

If your dog's picture is already on the shelter's website, you should write a biography about his personality. A good bio makes a big difference in the number of calls the dog gets, so be descriptive! Try to include things like:

- What does the dog like to do? (play fetch, go for walks, etc.)
- Is he a cuddler?
- Does he have experience with other animals and children?

Of course, any cute things that he does or anything you want to point out about his fur or appearance is good as well. It can be as long as you want, but the typical description is a paragraph or two.

If the dog has some bad habits, this can be discussed during the first phone conversation. The bio should generate interest, not turn people away. We don't want to mislead people; however we really try to focus on the positive. Please email the bio to the Coordinator.

Photos

If your dog's picture is not yet on the website, there are several options for getting pictures taken and posted. If you have access to a digital camera and would like to take the pictures yourself, you are welcome to do so. Please email them in .jpg format to the web site posting team with the dog's bio.

You are welcome to take your dog to the shelter during one of the regularly scheduled digital photography sessions.

Another option is to have a traveling photographer come to your home to photograph your foster dog. This is a nice option for shy dogs and those who don't travel well, or for foster parents with schedule and transportation difficulties. Please contact your Coordinator to arrange this option.

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Getting to Adoption

Out and About

Pack up your pup in her adoption vest and really pound the pavement – visit outdoor festivals and cafes, parks, etc. And be sure to bring your dog's business card to share with any potential adopters.

♥ For more helpful tips on marketing your foster dog, see our Adoption Ambassadors section:
www.aspcapro.org/ambassadors

Home Sweet Home

Use your best judgment, coupled with guidelines given to you by your Coordinator, in choosing a home for your foster dog. You know his needs best and can explain them to potential adopters. Once you have found a good fit, follow the shelter's procedures for accepting payment for the adoption.

And, of course, let your Coordinator know immediately when a match has been made, so that everyone can celebrate another life saved!