

HOW TO BE MORE PATIENT WITH YOUR DOG - ADVICE BY AMY

Use this checklist to: 1) set your own expectations as to what it truly means to "be patient" with your dog; and 2) learn about or further refine your own "being patient" tools and methods. This checklist can be used for newly adopted dogs or as a refresher since we all need "refreshing" every now and then.

Specific to new dogs, it takes time for a new adopter and new adoptee to learn about each other, especially a new dog that is likely stressed, anxious and not sure what to expect. It may take a few weeks or even a couple of months for your new dog to "learn the ropes", begin to trust and relax in his/her new household. Keep in mind that you're trying to teach your dog good lifetime habits and that won't happen overnight. Please be patient! Your dog is depending on **YOU!**

ALWAYS KEEP THE FOLLOWING IN MIND:

- Try to see life from your new dog's perspective. Your dog has a limited understanding of what you're asking of him/her. This new environment is still confusing and your dog doesn't yet have much control over his/her behavior. If you respond to your dog in a loud, angry voice or with rough handling, he/she will less likely trust you or respond to you positively.
- Understand the breed's behavioral traits and temperament. If you've done your homework about your dog's predominant breed (if possible though with mixed breeds it may not be), it will be easier to work with his/her natural tendencies than against them.
- Know your mood because your dog will certainly be sensitive to it. If you're anxious, frustrated and impatient, specifically related to your dog, he/she will certainly sense it, which will make it harder for you to get through to him/her. If you're not in a good frame of mind, take a break until your mood significantly improves. You might need to step away and take some calming breaths. Or you can gently place your dog in his/her crate or gated area and give yourself time to relax and calm down.

If you're stressed out in general, and enough to be snapping at your dog (or your loved ones), you need a change in your life. Help yourself out by exercising, meditating, doing some yoga, taking a nap, going out with friends, journaling, exploring nature, taking up a hobby or perhaps even seeking professional assistance. Life can certainly be overwhelming at times for many of us. Get help. Don't take it out on your defenseless dog. It's not your dog's fault.
- Know your dog's mood. When your dog is stressed, your dog is less likely to be on his/her best behavior. He/she might not be able to focus on training plus revert to old "problem behaviors" that are actually calming or coping mechanisms (like chewing, barking, digging). Use some calming treats, work on a relaxation protocol such as mat training, give your dog some off-leash time in nature (if safe and practical) and let your dog engage in de-stressing behaviors like chewing, running and sniffing.
- Know your dog's limits. A young dog is unable to comprehend the skills that an adult dog may pick up on. Likewise, a senior dog may be a little slower in catching on. The individual nature of your dog also comes into play. If you have a dog that is easily distracted it may take him/her much longer to meet your expectations than a dog that is eager to please.
- Balance interaction and down-time. Spending a lot of time with your new dog is critical to learn his/her habits, body language, expressions and personality. Your dog will be doing the same with you! Just as important is giving your dog down-time plus space to adjust. This strategy will help create a bond and build trust thereby making it easier for your dog to learn what your expectations are and might lower your frustration level.



- Practice makes perfect. Your dog may not understand what you're teaching him/her the first time, or even the fifth time. Allowing your dog to learn and to make a few mistakes along the way is normal and is to be expected. With patience and consistency, you're giving your dog the opportunity to succeed. And don't forget to praise your dog, even for small victories.
- If losing your patience is placing your dog in harm's way, **PLEASE** for the health and well being of your dog and you, **immediately contact** a local rescue organization so they may assist you in responsibly re-homing your dog. There is no legitimate reason in the world to commit acts of neglect, abuse and violence against an animal.

DO THE FOLLOWING:

- Establish daily routines:
 - __ Sleeping. Make sure the area is safe, dog-proofed, easily cleanable, cozy, quiet and filled with familiar scents.
 - __ Feeding. Check with your vet for recommended food, amounts and meal timing plus provide a safe food dish.
 - __ Walking. Keep the walks short at first (5-10 minutes) and in relatively quiet places so you can observe reactions.
 - __ Eliminating. Follow a consistent bathroom break schedule. See next section for Housetraining tips.
 - __ Toy Playing. Use SAFE TOYS to keep them engaged, redirect your dog's attention and tire them out mentally. Avoid rough and tumble, slapping, wrestling and chasing games with your new dog.
 - __ Preventing separation anxiety. Crate your dog, leave for short periods a day and don't make a fuss of coming or going.
 - __ Socializing. Expose your dogs to other dogs to help them become friendly and confident. Be careful of the venue(s) you choose so you're not inadvertently exposing your dog to ill or aggressive dogs or to diseased environments.
 - __ Bonding. Spend quality one-on-one time together, giving your dog the love and compassion he/she deserves.
- Housetrain your dog using a consistent approach:
 - __ Use crate training. Start this Day 1 unless being confined to a crate invokes fear in your dog.
 - __ Give your dog 6 or more bathroom breaks daily (though adult dogs may require less once comfortable with his/her surroundings). Based on your schedule, a dog walker, friend or neighbor might need to assist you.
 - __ Never confine your dog longer than he/she can hold it.
 - __ Use the same "elimination station" each time.
 - __ Don't distract your dog with games and talk.
 - __ Shower them with praise when they do it right.
 - __ Don't punish your dog for accidents. If you catch them in the act, hustle him/her outside.
 - __ Use SAFE (chemical-free) products to clean up your dog's accidents.
- Command train your dog and be consistent with your approach otherwise you will confuse him/her. Training is nothing more than learning the same language – being on the same page. Teaching your dog the basic commands will not only make everyone happy, safe and maybe even save a life, but also will provide physical and mental stimulation which are necessary to your dog's well-being. Training helps your dog settle into your new home, teaches your dog how to fit into a new family and strengthens the relationship between you and your dog. Once your dog has settled in and you are familiar with your dog's responses, take a positive reinforcement style training class if you have never attempted to teach the basic commands to a dog.

You don't always have time to train your dog? Use micro-training! Use either snippets of time (while your food is microwaving or while you're brushing your teeth) or interject training into normal activities (while on walks with your dog, work on basic training out in the world or teach your dog to "stay" on his/her mat while tackling chores around your home).

You want to yell at your dog because he/she is stealing food from the counter top *yet again*? Take a deep breath and firmly yet calmly call your dog away from the counters. Your result will be the same. You won't feel guilty for yelling and your dog will be much happier.

- Seek out a highly recommended and qualified expert if you're experiencing dog behavioral problems. The "best of the best" experts have seen and experienced pretty much everything and are ready, willing and able to help you out!

References include:

Remember when Adopting a new PET: Patience, Empathy, Training, The Durango Herald.

Welcoming Your Adopted Dog Into Your Home, Animal Rescue League of Boston.

Housetraining Adult Dogs, DogTime.

How to be More Patient with Your Dog, Journey Dog Training.

