



FOSTER GUIDE

Thank you!

Thank you for choosing to foster with Brown Dog! Brown Dog Coalition's foster program is the core of our rescue. Without fosters, we would not be able to help animals in need. Thank you for providing a home where our pups can be safe, loved, and maybe learn a thing or two! Please take a few minutes to read through the following pages.

Naomi + Andrea

Fostering dogs is both an exciting and rewarding experience. This packet should help explain our risk-averse approach to fostering and more about your foster dog's journey. If you have questions, after reading through this packet, please do not hesitate to contact us. You will find the following information:

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The Foster Experience

We want the foster experience to be as positive, fun, and rewarding as possible for both you and the dog. We know fostering is exciting but dogs in transition are often overwhelmed, stressed, and unsure of what to do or how to act. The best way to set both you and the dog up for success (and keep everyone safe and sane) is to take things easy, slow, and smart by being risk averse.

Be “risk-averse”

To be risk-averse is to be conservative in introducing new experiences and thus setting your dog up for success. Limiting your dog’s experiences for the first few weeks will limit their opportunities for adverse reactions, which could be a result of being overwhelmed. Slowly and positively introducing your dog to new experiences, while being mindful of their body language, will help safely broaden their world.

- Feed your dog in their crate, as opposed to a more challenging situation like feeding them in an open space with another dog or around small children.
- Walk your dog in a quiet neighborhood or walking trail during a low-traffic time of day and gradually work up to busier routes like state parks or higher-traffic areas.

Do’s of Fostering

- Implement a two-week shutdown period. Please allow your foster dog time to decompress by leaving them alone, creating a routine, and limiting added stimulus.
- Create a routine (mealtimes, potty breaks, crate time).
- Work on house-training, crate-training, leash-walking and general life skills if you can!
- Publicize them online and by word-of-mouth.
- Let us know of any behavioral changes or observations.
- Set your dog up for success by slowly introducing new people, dogs, or activities (trail walks, car rides, meeting one new person at a time).

Don’ts of Fostering

- Don’t put them in challenging situations (PetSmart, Petco, groomers, dog parks, base-ball games, house parties, face-to-face dog meets).
- Don’t promise them to a friend or family member.

[A Dog's Journey: How the Dogs Got Here](#)

Rescue

We work with an overcrowded animal shelter in Alabama and our southern intake team screens for surrendered and rescued dogs with good temperaments. The shelter we work with can receive over 50 dogs each day and without the assistance of rescue groups like ours, many of the dogs would be euthanized. We have taken puppies, adults, seniors, and mothers and litters. We also commit to dogs who need extraordinary medical attention or are deemed “less-adoptable” by other rescue groups.

Rehabilitation

Initial intake: Every dog is evaluated and tested for tick-borne illnesses (heartworm, ehrlichiosis, Lyme and anaplasmosis) with a 4Dx test. Treatment begins immediately for any infections or diseases that a dog has tested positive for. Once a dog is healthy enough, they begin the age appropriate distemper (DHLPP) vaccinations, are de-wormed, given flea/tick medication, micro-chipped and spayed/neutered.
Foster: Every dog spends about two weeks in a foster home where they are able to decompress from the shelter and experience home life. At this time, each dog is posted online, and we begin accepting adoption applications.



Relocation

Transport: Each dog is given a health certificate to travel after a veterinarian examination in Alabama. Dogs travel to a state-approved quarantine facility in Massachusetts.

Quarantine: Due to MA state law, dogs must be quarantined for 48 hours at a state-approved facility before being seen by a veterinarian and cleared for adoption.

Re-homing

Adoption: We set up one appointment per dog to minimize in-person competition.

Foster: **This is where you come in!** If a dog is not adopted at an adoption event, they go to a foster home. At this point, dogs will meet with potential adopters by appt.

Foster Dog Supplies Checklist

What to bring to pick up your foster

- 4'-6' leash (please no retractable leashes)
- Hard plastic carrier or foldable metal crate for car*
- Towel for crate, or car seat

What to have ready at home

- Food*
- Food and water bowls*
- Crate*
- Poop bags*
- [Kong](#)
- Paper towels
- Non-toxic cleaner
- [Enzymatic odor neutralizer](#)
- House-training pads (pee pads)*
- Toys (a couple—see what your dog likes first)*
- Treats (small training treats, Dentastix, bully sticks, Made in USA)

*We can provide these on loan!

Sites we recommend

Chewy: [tinyurl.com/ChewyBDC20](https://www.tinyurl.com/ChewyBDC20)

Chewy will donate \$20 to Brown Dog Coalition if you use this link.

PetFlow: ref.petflow.com/gf76h

PetFlow will donate \$10 to Brown Dog Coalition, as well as throw you \$10 to use on your first order with them! We use PetFlow to order Fromm.

Amazon Smile: smile.amazon.com/ch/47-4131168

Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases!

Dog Food Advisor: dogfoodadvisor.com

This is a great resource to help you make a more informed decision (recalls, ingredient lists, etc.) when buying dog food.



[What to Expect at an Adoption Event](#)

If you are scheduled to pick up your foster dog at an adoption event, we want to let you know what you can expect the day to look like. The dogs will travel from a quarantine facility in MA with 10 to 20 other dogs.

[Foster families provide temporary homes for dogs that are not adopted at an adoption event, dogs whose fosters are no longer able to keep them, or dogs that may need time to decompress after their journey north.](#)

Dogs can be in foster homes for a few nights or a few months—every dog is different and attracts a different number of potential adopters.

[If you are coming with a current dog, please do not come in with the dog. Rather, let us know that you are there and we will meet you in a neutral environment \(outside\). We will facilitate a dog meet to ensure the best possible introductions are made. If you are facilitating a dog meet at your own home, please let us know so we can send you a helpful article!](#)

At pick up, a volunteer foster coordinator will also review all of the medical paperwork with you and the foster contract. We will contact you periodically to ensure the transition is going well and answer any questions or concerns that you may have.



Bringing Your Foster Dog Home

Dogs need time to adjust to change. Some take days, some weeks, some months. Try not to overwhelm your dog with new people and new experiences for at least the first week to three weeks.

Pre-foster plan

- Before you come to pick up your foster, take the time to go through your home, pick up anything you don't want chewed/ruined from the floor/countertops, make and freeze a Kong, and create a safe space for your foster like a crate, a room, or a comfy dog bed that is totally their own. To set your dog up for success, set up their space for success!
- Select a limited and quiet space (1 or 2 rooms with easy access to outdoors) for your dog to explore for the first 48 hours at home.
- Discuss household expectations with all members to ensure that safety and responsibilities are understood.

Arriving home

- Keep your foster dog on leash, even in a fenced in yard. Let your dog smell, walk, and do relieve him/herself outside.
- Ask household members to be calm when greeting your dog. Let your dog "vote with their feet" and solicit touch/petting from new people. Some dogs don't want to be pet by strangers, others may only want to sniff to collect information, and some are eager for any attention. Avoid kissing and hugging.

Going inside

- Continue to keep your dog on leash as you introduce him/her to the space you have designated pre-adoption. More room can gradually be made available to your dog once they are more comfortable and reliably house-trained.
- Provide plenty of space and allow your dog autonomy so they can feel safe, make choices, move on their own, and decompress.

Going on walks

- You don't need to introduce your foster dog to any other dogs for the first week. Remember that on-leash interactions can be stressful for many dogs. Utilize treats to keep your dog's attention and focus on you.
- In the beginning, we highly recommend walks on a long leash (15-30'), in a low-traffic area, where they can sniff and move at their own pace to help your dog decompress.

What To Do in The First Week As a Foster

Dogs who have experienced multiple transitions can be stressed and overwhelmed. The best way to set both you and your foster dog up for success (and keep everyone safe and sane) is to take things easy, slow, and smart.

House-training and crate-training

House-training and crate-training go hand and hand. Be sure to set your dog up for success by utilizing the crate. If they will not be supervised, they should be in their crate, exercise pen, or gated off area. This will eliminate accidents in the house and prevent any household destruction. Help your dog to love their crate by feeding meals in the crate and providing them with a Kong with a peanut butter, dog food, or pureed pumpkin frozen inside.

Set expectations low when it comes to house-training. Take your dog out frequently and reward your dog with treats and praise for relieving him/herself outside. Many dogs don't generalize well, so although your dog may be house-trained in their foster, they may need a refresh with you!

Positive reinforcement

We encourage adopters to research and use [positive reinforcement training](#) methods by using food as a reward for behaviors you like. Our contract states that prong collars, shock collars, choke chains or other aversive training methods may not be used on any Brown Dog. Please note that most "Board and Train" facilities use aversive training methods that are not approved by Brown Dog Coalition.

If you would like more information or training resources email Brown Dog. We have a list of trainers who we recommend and who have been recommended by past adopters!

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I specify my criteria for a foster dog? Yes, we take into consideration any requirements/preferences you have including gender, breed-mix, good with cats/kids/other dogs, puppies, shy dogs etc. However, there may not be a dog in need who meets especially specific requirements.

Do I get to choose my foster dog? Usually not. We do our best to match dogs that need foster with an appropriate and available foster home. We take into consideration your preferences. If there is a choice available we will offer it, but the more flexible you are able to be, the better!

What if my dog starts to limp, is coughing, has eye boogies, needs medical attention? If it is an emergency medical situation (hit by car, bleeding etc.) please bring your foster dog to the nearest vet hospital and contact Naomi (774-292-9587) as soon as possible. For all non-emergency situations, please take a photo or video and text it to us. We are only able to fund emergency medical and pre-approved vet visits.

Even if your dog doesn't need to see a vet, it's still great to communicate with us about such things as diarrhea, itchiness, eye boogies, etc.

Can I adopt my foster dog? Yes! If you are considering adopting your foster dog please email/text us and let us know. If the dog does not already have a potential adopter scheduled to meet them we will take the dog offline for 7 days for you to decide if you would like to adopt or continue fostering. We do need to honor scheduled appointments with approved adopters.

Can I promise my friend that they can adopt my foster dog if they apply? Although we encourage you to publicize the dog for adoption, the best thing to do is to have your friend fill out an adoption application on our website and allow us to call references and meet our adoption criteria.

Do I provide food? As a foster parent/family, you are asked to provide food, water, shelter, daily exercise and love to your foster dogs.

How long do I keep the dog? Until they are adopted which may take only a few days or a few weeks. If you are no longer able to care for your foster dog, please give us appropriate notice, at any point we will take him/her back and arrange for another foster home.

Do I need to train the dog? You can indicate on your application what degree of training you are willing to do. Some dogs need house training, leash training, and can benefit from learning basic commands.

Do I meet with adopters? It can be arranged that adopters can come to your house or you can bring the dog to Brown Dog in Hopkinton. If the adopters come to your house, a Brown Dog representative will also be there for the meeting.

How long is my commitment for? Every two weeks we ask who is available to foster. If you are not available at that time, that's fine.

Is my foster dog house-trained? It is best to assume that any dog is not housetrained. When it comes to housetraining it is important to set expectations low and hopefully they will be exceeded! Take the dog out frequently and reward the dog with treats for relieving him/herself outside. Just because they've been house-trained in one location doesn't mean that behavior will generalize to another. Dogs are unable to generalize and will act differently in different places and situations. Some adult dogs have never been in homes before. It is not at all uncommon for dogs be "outdoor dogs" in the south. So, please be patient and compassionate as your foster dog settles in and learns your expectations. Most puppies will need more time and patience to learn house-training—that's where pee pads and lots of positive reinforcement come into play!

What is my foster dog's story? There are more than 50 surrenders and rescues a day at most southern shelters. Every dog's story is not known but it is not uncommon for dogs to be found on the side of the road, dumped inside the shelter fence, or surrendered without reason. We open our hearts to these animals regardless of their stories and try to make their future much brighter than their past.

