



THE DOGGY DIGEST

TRAINING TIPS BROUGHT TO YOU BY MUTTS WITH MANNERS

Tips on How To Meet and Greet With a Shelter Dog

Thinking of adopting? Pawesome! Here are a few tips on how to set up your meet and greet so Fido, no matter the outcome, has a successful interaction with a stranger.

Shelter dogs have been abused, abandoned, ignored in yards, surrendered, and given up on. It is not hard to understand that forming attachments to humans, especially strangers, doesn't come easy to a lot of them.

If you are thinking of adopting, this article should help you interact with the dogs you are interested in, and hopefully will leave Fido in a position to be more eager next meet and greet.

FIRST FEW MINUTES IN THE YARD

Always start by reading Fido's initial body language.

Does he need to eliminate first or investigate scents in the play yard? Or, did he come in hot and heavy ready to play, kiss, hug and do 'trick' behaviors?

Give Fido a few moments to himself so he can reset from the loud and chaotic environment he just came out of. Don't take it personal if he seems like he is ignoring you.

If you just came out of a similar environment and a stranger wanted to walk right up to you and start a personal conversation, you would probably need a minute to decompress also.

Alternatively, a lot of dogs come in the yard and know exactly what to do. Let's get ready to rumble! They are ready to play, train, go for a walk, whatever you got in mind, they are game.

ASK THE SHELTER staff FOR SOME TREATS TO GIVE TO THE DOGS YOU SSELECT FOR YOUR MEET AND GREET

-Using food helps the dogs have a positive interaction session with a human. Most of these dogs will bond and want to play and interact with anyone who takes them in to the yard. Some may shut down, while others just want to sniff around. Using food with these dogs can help teach them that it is fun to engage and seek out attention from people other than the shelter staff.

After Fido has had some time to himself in the yard, call him over using his name, kissing noises, or pat your leg to get his attention. Once he starts heading your direction, tell him he is a 'good boy'. When he is standing in front of you, give him a treat. Give him another one if he continues to stand in front of you looking expectantly. Start walking around the yard, encouraging him to follow you, occasionally giving Fido one or two of those food rewards.

If Fido is loving the treats, this is a good time to start exploring what he already knows. A lot of shelter dogs learn how to sit for treats and give their paw. Some of them may even have more hidden behaviors they learned in their previous homes, or through time with volunteers and staff.

PLAY WITH FIDO

Pick out a variety of toys to play with Fido. Does he love balls? Is a game of tug more his speed? Do squeaky toys make his day? Figure out what kinds of toys Fido loves and play and engage with him. He will love you for it and it will make his day so much better just having expended some energy.

Maybe Fido doesn't want to play, or doesn't know how yet.

Some of these dogs were yard dogs and had little human contact outside of being given food and water.

Take some time to get to know them, have multiple meet and greets with the same dog, and see if you can take them for a walk. Even if you decide this isn't the dog for you, you have given Fido a positive interaction with a stranger, and it can help them with the next meet and greet.

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OVERLOOK INITIAL JUMPING BEHAVIOR

While jumping can be one of the most annoying behaviors Fido can do, a lot of it resolves once in a permanent home and with a little training.

If Fido is jumping too much for you, instead of passing on that meet and greet altogether, ask for some help getting him out of his kennel and into the meet and greet yard. Most of the time they just need to get a little exercise and stretch their legs. Jumping in the kennel is a way to burn through some of those energy stores.

Still got some of those treats? Reward Fido for keeping four feet on the floor, or even better a sit. Teaching Fido how to meet and greet is just as important as teaching the potential adopters, and passing on the dog who is jumping too much may be passing on the best friend of a lifetime.

DETERMINE WHICH ENERGY LEVEL YOU ARE LOOKING FOR IN FIDO

Speaking of jumping, maybe you are looking for a running partner? A buddy for long walks on the beach? A couch potato to watch Netflix with? Figuring this out before you enter the shelter will help the staff match make a little easier.

Go with your energy requirements over what the dog looks like. If you want a couch potato, a high energy Fido is not going to be able to relax without mental, physical and psychological stimulation. After a long day of work, what are you willing to commit to?

DON'T PASS ON THE SHY ONE< THE JUMPING ONE< OR THE BARKING ONE

Time after time I have seen the shy dogs come completely out of their shell when taken to the play yard. A few kind rubs on their chest and necks, and a hand full of treats go a long way.

The same goes for the dogs who are jumping and practically doing flips in their kennels. Once on a leash or in the play yard, they are cool as a cucumber and hardly jump at all.

Is Fido barking too much for you? Give him a shot anyway. Being in the shelter environment is tough, and mentally stressful. Having to watch other dogs walk passed his kennel each day can easily lead to kennel reactivity, and that does not always translate to the leash, or at home. Some time to decompress in a consistent, calm home environment goes a long way for these guys nervous systems.

BECOME A VOLUNTEER

Becoming a volunteer is a great way to get to know many different dogs at the shelter. Not only is it fun for you and fido, but you get to know many different personalities and may even get to take some on a doggy day out.

A doggy day out is a great way to interact with a shelter dog in 'real life'. After some initial decompression in the yard, a quick potty break and equipment donning (harness, leash, etc.), you and Fido are on your way for an adventure!

Where will you go? To the beach? Downtown for a coffee? Lunch on an outside patio? I have even taken dogs to the agility park for some fun.

This can be a great way to see where Fido fits in to your life. It also gives Fido time out of the shelter, and he gets to go back more on the tired side.

Keep the above tips in mind the next time you go for a meet and greet with a shelter dog. We can make each interaction more meaningful for Fido with just a few treats, some toys and making sure we put our walking shoes on before coming to the shelter.

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Shelters and rescues all over Texas are at critical capacity. Dogs are in crates, lining the hallways. Humans created this problem, and humans will have to solve the problem. The staff and volunteers at shelters can't do it alone. They are relying on community support and creative ideas, but we can all start by preventing unwanted pregnancies in our companion animals by spaying and neutering them.

How will you help? FOSTER? ADOPT? SHARE this article? BECOME A VOLUNTEER? DONATE?

www.muttswithmanners.com

Until next time, keep it pawisitive!