

Basil's Forever Sofa



Helping Dogs in Need

BEHAVIOUR  
PACK



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# **INTRODUCTION**

Thank you for offering a home to one of our wonderful dogs. Every dog deserves a Forever Sofa and we hope you find your journey rewarding and fulfilling.

The history of each dog will differ and so your journey will be unique, however, our Post Adoption Support team are on hand to offer help and further behavioural support is available during the dog's first three months with you.

## **THE SETTLING IN PERIOD**

Your new dog will probably be stressed, hungry, thirsty and tired when they first arrive, they will need space and time to decompress from their journey and familiarise themselves with their new surroundings.

### Things you can do to help your new dog settle:

- Ensure fresh food and water are freely available
- Allow them to explore at their own pace, do not force any interaction, be calm and slow in any movements if the dog approaches you.
- Be patient and don't give up, building trust takes a long time, especially when we don't know the dog's history.
- Give them a safe space away from the busiest area of the home
- Consider restricting their access to just a few rooms in the house to reduce overwhelm

### Things to remember:

- The dog may not have ever been inside a house before and so may require house training
- Romanian dogs are notorious for being excellent climbers, jumpers and overall escape artists – let them out in the garden whilst on a lead for exercise. You may think your garden is secure, but you'd be amazed!
- Don't rush to walk your dog, give them at least a week to settle in (the absolute minimum time to keep them at home is 48 hours, in line with DEFRA regulations)
- Avoid having visitors during the first week or so, if this cannot be prevented, allow the dog to meet your visitors in a neutral space.
- Don't try to bathe the dog until you have worked on building up their trust. If the dog has been rescued from a kill shelter, they usually will hose down the enclosures with the dogs in them and so hoses or shower heads can be triggering for them. Don't introduce unnecessary stress or anxiety.
- The rule of three! (see further information on the next page)

## **THE RULE OF THREE**

Patience is a virtue and it can help to remember the rule of three when understanding the behaviour and experience of your new dog.

### **3 DAYS**

#### Feelings:

- Overwhelmed, scared and unsure
- Not comfortable to be themselves

#### Behaviours:

- Not wanting to eat or drink
- Seeming shut down and hiding
- Testing boundaries



### **3 WEEKS**

#### Feelings:

- Starting to settle in
- Letting guard down
- More comfortable

#### Behaviours:

- Getting into a routine
- May start showing personality
- Behaviour issues may start showing

### **3 MONTHS**

#### Feelings:

- Comfortable
- Building trust and a bond
- Sense of security

#### Behaviours:

- Set into a routine



## **OUR APPROACH TO TRAINING**

Training is incredibly important for both you and your dog. It enables you to correct any behaviour you may not want (e.g. jumping up, nipping), and it offers your dog mental stimulation!

### **WHAT IS POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT?**

Positive reinforcement is, in our opinion, the only productive way in which to train a dog. It is an alternative approach to that of negative reinforcement (also known as 'punishment').

The most common thing that owners do when a dog exhibits unwanted behaviour is to get angry and shout at the dog. For most dogs, any attention is better than no attention, and therefore shouting at the dog may actually be reinforcing the unwanted behaviour.



Positive reinforcement teaches the dog that they get no attention or reward when exhibiting an unwanted behaviour.

For this to be effective, when your dog is exhibiting an unwanted behaviour you must give them no attention whatsoever (including no eye contact, no speaking to them). Once they are calm, then you can interact with them and reward their behaviour.

### **POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT HASN'T WORKED**

If you are experiencing behavioural issues, ask yourself how much exercise and mental stimulation they are getting. Often, unwanted behaviour is a result of the dog being bored!

Do not resort to any form of physical punishment (e.g. using a crate as a form of punishment, shock/prong collars or other aversion tactics) as these are not effective and this will not be tolerated by BFS.

If you feel you and your dog are not making progress, please consult with a specialist dog behaviourist.

#### **REMEMBER:**

- Go at your dog's pace
- Remain calm and be consistent
- Use positive reinforcement
- Praise and reward good behaviour

## COMMON BEHAVIOURS

This section will outline some of the common behaviours you may experience with your new dog and some ways in which you can work with your dog to remove unwanted behaviours.

Please note that this is intended as an introductory guide only and we recommend that for any complex or particularly challenging behaviour, you consult with a specialist dog behaviourist.

### **FOOD AGGRESSION**

Food aggression is particularly common with rescue dogs who have come from kill shelters or have been living on the streets.

They will have had limited access to food, either due to lack of supply or due to competition from other dogs.



It is really important that this behaviour is corrected to avoid the aggression from getting increasingly worse and more difficult to manage.



#### Look out for:

- Tenseness or stiffness in body language when food is present
- Guarding behaviour when given treats
- Growling or barking when a human or other animal is near to their food bowl

If you recognise this behaviour, don't panic! Remember the importance of keeping yourself and your dog safe. Your dog will still need access to food whilst you work on correcting the behaviour, so be sure children and other animals are kept away to avoid the risk of injury.

#### Correcting Food Aggression:

Remember the positive reinforcement approach, it is important not to punish your dog for this behaviour! Instead, work with your dog on correcting this behaviour. We recommend the use of the 'Empty Bowl Method', which we will walk you through on the next page!



# THE EMPTY BOWL METHOD

So, you've recognised the need to work with your dog on their food aggression?

Well, the good news is that you know the trigger for your dog's aggression and so we can begin to correct this behaviour using positive reinforcement!

**01**

Use food that is as plain as possible (nothing too high value – plain dog kibble tends to work best). Make sure to have plenty to hand!

**02**

Place your dog's empty bowl on the floor and let the dog investigate the bowl. They likely will look at you once they realise it is empty.

**03**

Praise them and put a few pieces of kibble into the bowl. Repeat this process every time your dog looks to you when the bowl is empty.

**04**

Once you and your dog feel more comfortable being in close proximity when there is food around, you can increase the size of the reward (e.g. going from a few pieces of kibble to a handful and so on).

## Why does this work?

This method teaches your dog that you are the provider of food and not a threat to their ability to eat (and therefore survive!). It's a simple method, but it will take time to get consistently correct behaviour around all food types, environments and times.

## Remember:

Your dog will need to learn this lesson for anyone who feeds them in your household, so make sure to repeat this method with anyone who will feed your dog in your household. Do not assume that your dog will be ok with other people being near them when food is around!

## FEAR AGGRESSION

Fear aggression can be particularly scary to deal with, especially when you are still getting to know your dog. Fear aggression is a dog's survival instinct kicking in, to protect itself from harm.

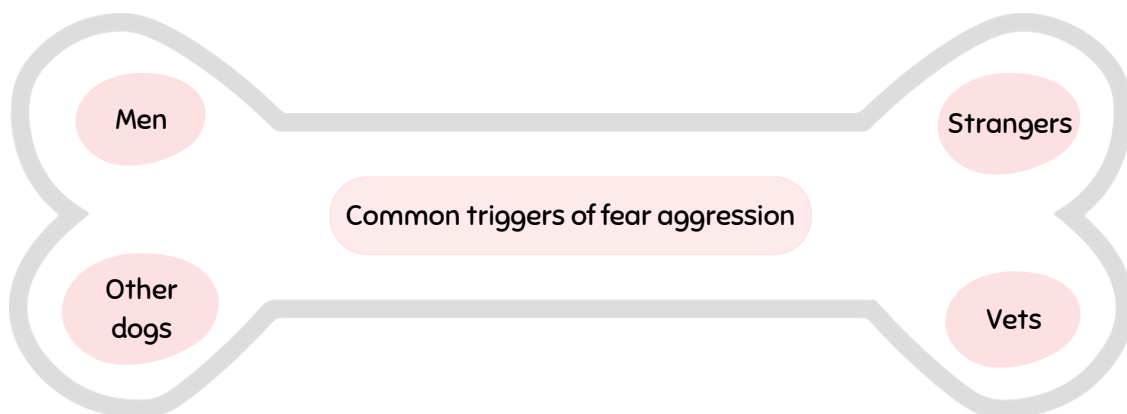
Remember, there is always a root cause behind this behaviour and it will likely come from their past experiences, such as mistreatment, attacks or abuse from other dogs, animals or humans.



### So how do we correct this behaviour?

We cannot begin any intervention until we know what is causing the fear aggression.

If you don't feel comfortable or confident dealing with fear aggression, it's important you seek the advice of an experienced professional dog behaviourist to support you during this process.



Once you have successfully identified the root cause of the behaviour, you can then begin training! We've got some key tips to help you along the way:

- Take it slow, do not rush this process and go at the dog's pace
- Don't feel defeated, it takes a lot of time and courage from both you and your dog to build confidence.
- The aim is to desensitise the dog to the trigger – when the trigger is close, get your dog's attention and give praise and treats to keep their focus on you. This will need to be repeated to increase your dog's tolerance (e.g. by bringing the trigger closer).
- Use a friend or family member to support with training if strangers are your dog's trigger, but make sure to let them know about the aggression ahead of time.

## FEAR OF THE LEAD

It is common for Romanian rescue dogs to fear the lead as often dog catchers are rough and may drag dogs around using catching poles, so having anything around the dog's neck might cause them to panic.

### Lead Training

Put the lead in front of your dog and allow them to sniff and explore.

Grab some high value treats and distract the dog with them whilst clipping the lead on

Once clipped, praise your dog and reward with a treat, place the lead on the floor and walk away for 5 minutes

Once your dog is comfortable with this, try holding onto the lead instead of walking away

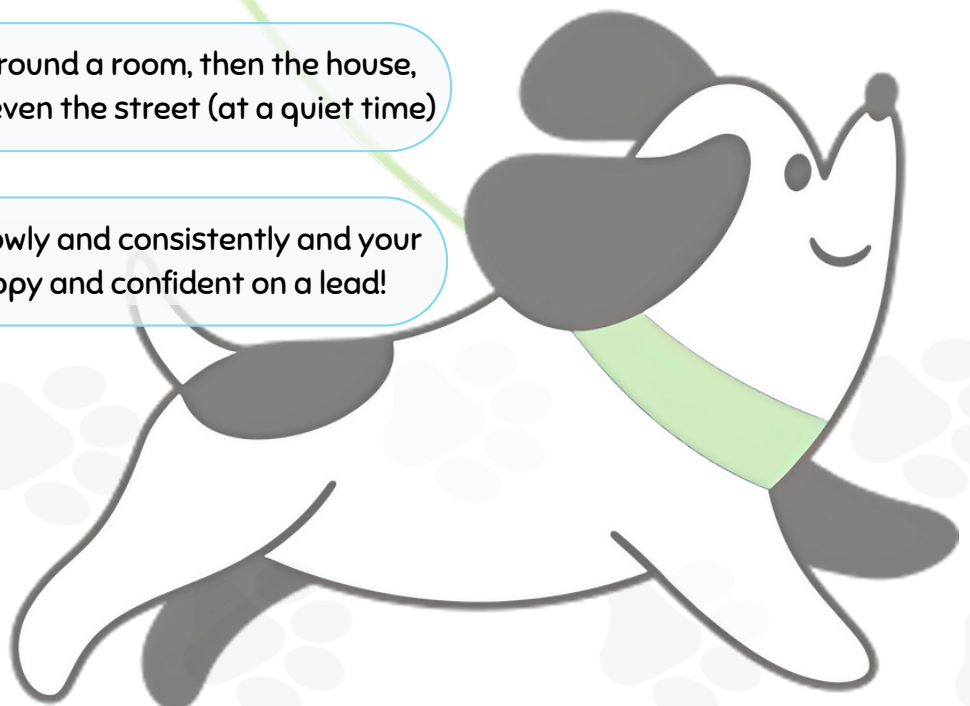
The next step is to try and move with the lead attached, just a step or two at first!

Then, try and move with the lead attached, a couple of steps first!

Increase to walking around a room, then the house, then to the garden or even the street (at a quiet time)

Repeat these steps slowly and consistently and your dog will become happy and confident on a lead!

LOTS &  
LOTS OF  
PRAISE!





## EXCESSIVE DOMINANCE

Dominance behaviour is natural for all dogs, but it can cause behavioural issues if clear boundaries aren't set. In fact, lack of boundaries is one of the most common causes of behavioural issues in dogs.

Teaching simple commands such as 'sit', 'stay', 'paw', 'down' and 'wait' is a huge help in setting and maintaining boundaries with your dog. For example, telling them to 'sit' before setting their food bowl down.



## JUMPING

A dog jumping up usually is a result of them being overly excited, but it can be dangerous for the dog and the person it jumps up at.

Using positive reinforcement, you can correct this behaviour by asking a friend or family member to visit so you can practice using the following steps:



1. Tell your dog to 'sit', once sat, have your visitor enter the room
2. If at any point your dog stands up from the sit position, your visitor must walk away immediately.
3. Repeat steps 1 and 2 until your dog remains in the sit position when the visitor enters the room.

## NIPPING

Nipping is very common in dogs who haven't learnt bite inhibition, like jumping up, it typically is a result of a very excited dog!

There are a couple ways of correcting this behaviour:

1. The Yelp Method
2. The Time Out Method
3. The Switch Out Method

All of these methods require you to play with your dog as normal, and you can read more about each method on the next page!



## The Yelp Method

- Play with your dog as normal.
- When they nip too hard, yelp in a loud and high-pitched tone and let the location they nipped (e.g. arm) go limp.
- If the nipping stops, reward and resume play.
- If your dog continues to nip after yelping, discontinue play.



Only allow a maximum of three yelps within 15 minutes of play, If you have yelped three times, stop play.

## The Time Out Method

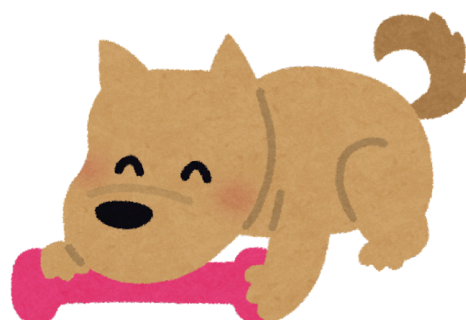
- Play with your dog as normal.
- When they nip too hard, yelp in a loud and high-pitched tone, stand up with your arms folded and ignore them for 30 seconds.
- If the nipping stops, reward and resume play.
- If your dog continues to nip after yelping and ignoring them, leave the room for 30 seconds before coming back and resuming play.



As with the Yelp Method, only allow up to three yelps within 15 minutes of play before stopping play altogether.

## The Switch Out Method

- Play with your dog as normal.
- When they nip too hard, switch out your body part for a chew toy or offer an alternative, non-contact form of play (e.g. fetch or tug of war).



All dogs are different and so you may need to get creative with how you tackle behaviour such as nipping. If you find none of the above methods useful, it would be beneficial for you to reach out to a professional dog behaviourist for specialist advice.

## PULLING ON THE LEAD

Walks are a wonderful way to provide physical exercise and mental stimulation for your dog. There are so many scents to sniff which can often result in us feeling like our dog is walking us!

A dog who pulls (especially a bigger or stronger dog) can cause injuries to themselves and their owners and so we'd recommend using a suitable harness to keep your dog safe, secure and prevent strain on your dog's neck.

### What type of harness should I use?

Ideally, for a larger or stronger dog, you'll want a chest-led style harness, these are harnesses which have a loop for the lead at the front (rather than between the shoulders) as this will force the dog to turn around and away from the stimulus when they start pulling.

Eventually, your dog will learn that pulling doesn't get them to the smell or thing of interest any quicker, in fact it means it takes them longer to get there if they pull!



### What if my dog isn't that big?

You'll naturally have more control over a smaller dog, but harnesses are still a great way of reducing strain on your dog's neck and also are generally more comfortable for the dog.

The process of training a smaller dog to stop pulling can look the same as above (using a chest-led style harness) with the same effects.

We recommend that for smaller dogs you:

- Stop walking and stand still when your dog begins to pull.
- Wait until the lead is relaxed until you continue to walk

Again, this teaches the dog that pulling does not get them to the thing of interest quicker and actually means it takes longer!



## RECALL

Recall is arguably one of the most important things to teach your dog! It increases trust when out and about and means that if your dog gets spooked during a walk, you've got a better chance of getting your dog to return to you.

### How to train your dog

01

Begin in your garden using a training lead (also known as a longline). Make sure you have a treat or toy that they love to get their attention.

02

Let your dog play without restraining them. You'll still have control via the training lead.

03

Using a positive and happy tone of voice, call your dog back to you. They probably won't come to you the first few times!

04

If your dog isn't coming to you when called, use the treat or toy to lure them to you, you may also need to nudge using the training lead.

05

When your dog returns to you, tell them to sit, praise them and give them the treat or toy!

**REPEAT THESE STEPS UNTIL YOUR DOG RETURNS TO YOU EVERY TIME YOU CALL THEM.**



## Building on your dog's recall

Once you feel confident in your dog's recall when on the training lead, repeat the steps on the previous page, but without the lead on. Make sure your garden is secure and as escape-proof as possible before doing this!

Great, what next?

After consistent success you can venture out with your dog and the training lead to repeat the steps with the training lead on in a new environment, such as a quiet park or field. You can try a busier time as you progress!

### Our top tips:

- Call your dog back at random intervals throughout their play and praise them.
- Don't fall into the trap of only calling your dog back when it's time to go home or they will learn that being called means playtime is over!
- No matter how many times it takes for your dog to return to you, make sure you reward them and do not punish them for not coming back!
- Keep your tone positive and happy when calling your dog back – no one wants to go towards someone who sounds angry.
- Do not let your dog off the training lead until you have full confidence in their recall. Removing the training lead too soon could result in a lost and/or injured dog and lots of heartbreak for you!
- Be consistent and positive with your training, your dog will learn eventually.



## SEPARATION ANXIETY

An incredibly common behavioural issue in dogs where they are so distressed when left alone that they may howl, bark, cry and do just about anything to try and find their owner again.

This can be really dangerous for the dog as they may harm themselves in their attempt to reunite with you.



### Correcting this behaviour

First we must understand what your dog's threshold is. Some dogs may be able to be left for 10 minutes without incident, whilst others may have a much lower threshold and get incredibly stressed after only 1 minute.

The important thing is that you meet your dog at their threshold and do not push your dog beyond its limits.

Training and resolving separation anxiety is not a quick process, so if you need to leave your dog alone, please be sure to have someone who can look after your dog whilst you work with them on their separation anxiety.

## FINDING YOUR DOG'S THRESHOLD

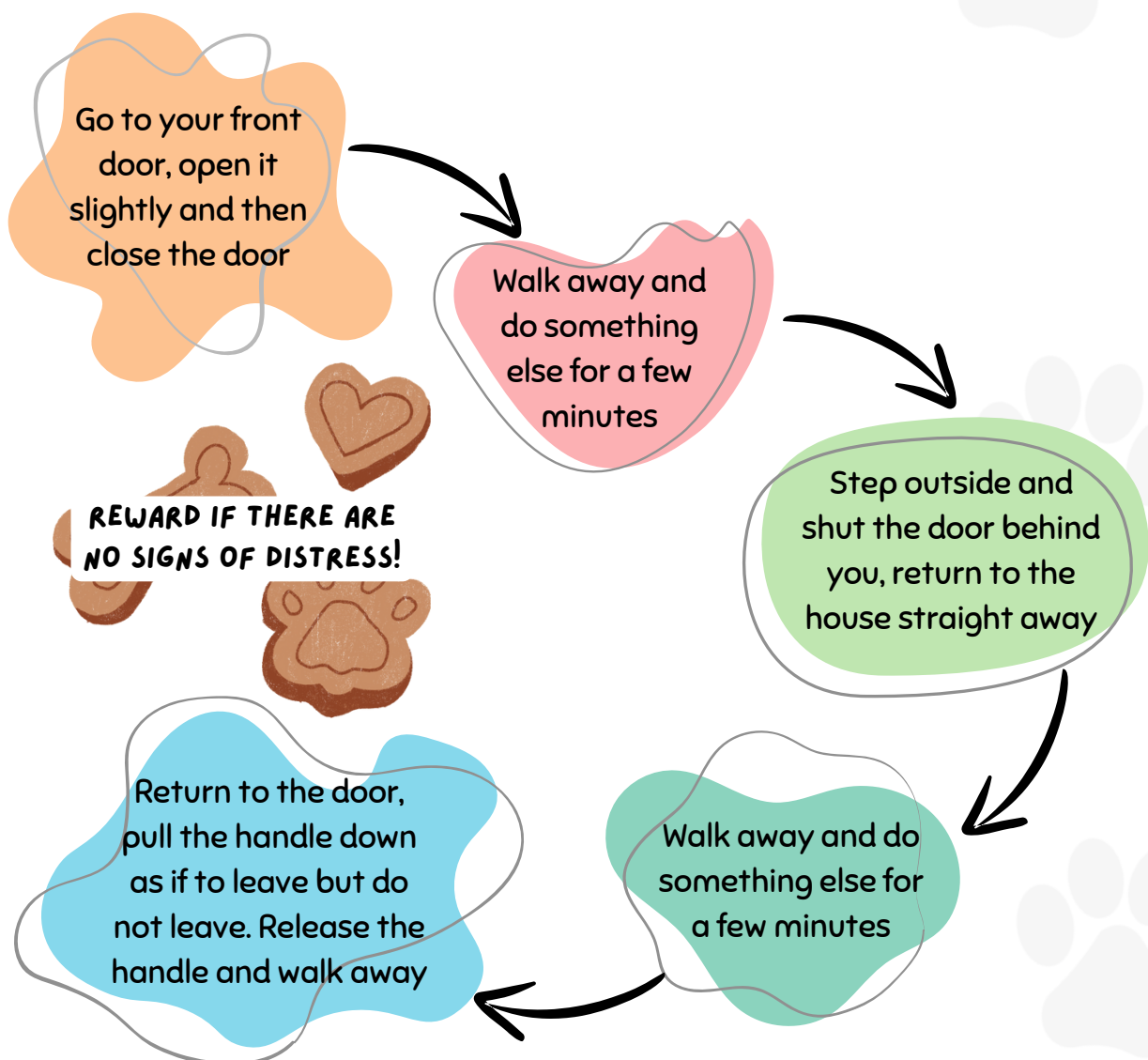
1. Have a timer ready and leave the house
2. Stand at the front door listening (or install a camera to observe behaviour).
3. Start the timer as soon as the door is closed.
4. Stop the timer as soon as there are any signs of distress and re-enter the house.
5. This is your starting point which you will gradually increase over time during training!

## TOP TIPS

- Make sure your dog has a safe space (such as a crate) where they can settle
- Leave your dog alone for small amounts of time in a separate room first if leaving the house is too much.
- When leaving, do not make a fuss or drag out the process
- You may want to wear your dog out ahead of you leaving to help tire them out and increase the likelihood of them sleeping and resting while you're out
- Train at different times of day so your dog doesn't learn your routine
- Make sure everyone in the household takes part in the training
- You may want to leave puzzle toys or similar down for your dog to distract them from your absence.

## THE TRAINING PROCESS

Remember to switch up this routine every few days & gradually increase the time you're away for!



## INTRODUCTIONS TO DOGS

If you already have another dog in your home, it's vital you introduce the dogs to one another correctly, even more so as you will not get the opportunity to introduce them before your new dog arrives in the UK!

In preparation for these introductions, we recommend:

- Removing anything from the garden and house that could cause possessive behaviour, such as toys or chews.
- Asking a friend or another member of your household to support with introductions
- Making sure you have an easy and secure way of separating the dogs (such as baby gates) so each has its own space if you do need to keep them separated.
- On the day your new dog is arriving, asking your helper to take your existing dog out on a walk so your new dog can explore and get used to the scents and environment of its new home.

### TIME FOR THE DOGS TO MEET!

- Keep both dogs under control and on their own leads, having your helper control one dog and you controlling the other.
- Watch the body language of each dog, keep your eyes out for behaviour such as bearing teeth, tail tucking under, snapping etc as you will want to separate and give the dogs more space to get used to each other from afar.
- If one dog walks away from the other, be sure to allow this, do not force interaction between the dogs, they will tell you if they need a break.

If you're happy with how the dogs have been interacting, you can then try taking them into the house (still on their leads). Be sure to let the new dog into the house first to have a good sniff of everything before bringing in the other dog.

### WALKIES!

Once your new dog has been with you for at least 48 hours, you can try walking the dogs together as this will really help with bonding.

Let both dogs continue to sniff and investigate one another, including if they're sniffing where each other has urinated as this is how they learn the most information about one other!







## OFF LEAD PLAY

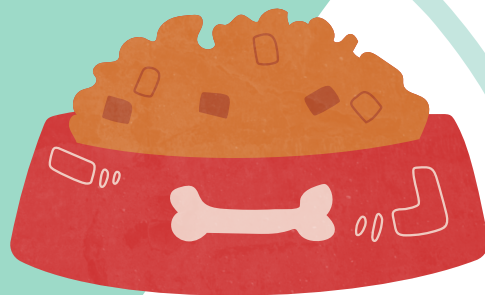
Once you're comfortable with how the dogs are getting on, allow them to meet in the garden again, except this time without leads.

At every step, continue to monitor their body language for any potential negative signals from either dog.

## DINNER TIME!

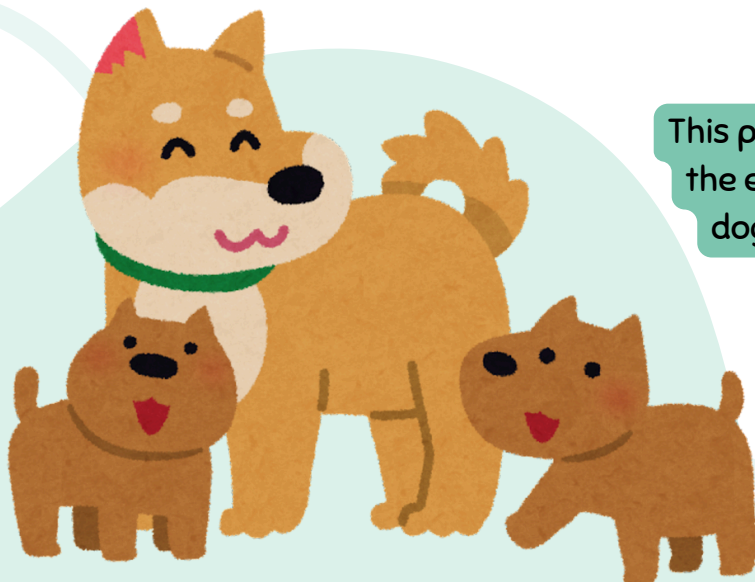
Depending on the temperaments and behaviour of the dogs, you may need to feed them separately.

If you are ever feeding them together, make sure neither dog is bullying the other and make sure both have access to the appropriate amount of food.



## SLOW AND STEADY WINS THE RACE

As the bond between your dogs grows, you can begin to introduce toys and bones slowly to prevent guarding issues over these items.



This process may take some time but at the end of it, you'll have two (or more!) dogs who are confident and happy around one another!

## INTRODUCTIONS TO CATS

The aim of introducing your new dog to your resident cat (or cats!) is to allow them to feel safe around each other. Some cats take longer to get used to a new dog so don't be discouraged if they don't seem to like one another!



### Our top tips:

- Ensure your cat has a safe place out of the dogs reach
- Keep your dog on a lead and allow the cat to free roam
- Baby gates are a good way of allowing the cat and dog to get used to each other's scent without getting too close.
- Praise your dog when it is calm and ignoring your cat.
- Continue this behaviour until you feel your dog will remain calm off lead in the same room as the cat.

## INTRODUCTIONS TO CHILDREN

Children can be very intimidating to dogs as they may see the dog as a play toy and might try to climb on or cuddle the dog. Make sure to:

- Explain that your new dog needs space and not to approach or touch the dog unless the dog approaches them, especially when the dog is resting or in its safe space (e.g. crate).
- Always supervise any interactions between your dog and children and make sure to model the behaviour you want your children to exhibit.
- Keep children away when the dog is eating and vice versa, this prevents children feeding the dog scraps and prevents risk of injury if the dog has any food aggression.
- Tell your children not to take toys or food off of your dog.

If you perceive any signs of aggression towards your children, keep them separated and seek the advice of a professional dog behaviourist.

