



Dear Family,

I am a rescue dog. For whatever reason, I found myself in a scary place with some really nice people who do amazing things with very limited resources. Many times, the kind folks at OPH don't know much about my history because they are focused on my future. My life was saved when I was taken from the shelter, that is all that is important. My foster family and Operation Paws for Homes helped me get healthy by making sure that I had the right vaccines and that I was spayed or neutered. They also worked hard to make me feel safe. They loved me until my forever family adopted me. You, my new family, have promised to share your home and love with me for the rest of my life. But I don't know any of that yet. I just know that I am being moved to yet another place with some more really nice people. Please don't feel discouraged because we can figure this all out, but it could take some time and there may be some hurdles along the way. Let me try to explain what I need from you.

In our beginning as a family, please let my world remain small. Keep me at home. The stress of all these recent changes will follow me for at least a couple of weeks. I just need to be able to relax and get comfortable with you and my surroundings. I must get used to all those things you take for granted like feeding and potty schedules, family dynamics and routines, and I must do this all at once. Too much freedom and "newness" is overwhelming for me and it might make me frightened or defensive. All I desire is quiet and you. The OPH volunteers call this a "shutdown" or a reset.

I really like your kids, but I don't know them well yet. This may be the first time I have ever lived with kids. Roughhousing or running screaming in the house, even in fun, may worry me and make me uneasy because it might remind of the noisy shelter. Good games for children to play with me at first might be to have me sit for treats or walk on a loose leash in the house. Please help teach your children how to do this because they might not know that the best way to give me a treat is with an open palm with the treat right in the center. This will teach me and the kids how to interact with each other. After all, wild behavior only gets all of us more wound up and makes mistakes more likely.

Actually, the same goes for your dog. We dogs have to work out our relationships with a language all our own and forcing us together too quickly may set us up for failure. If anything happens, it then makes it even harder to for us get along for a while. We are big on first impressions. Allow us to get to know each other while on walks next to each other or behind gates. Face to face meetings are confrontational to a dog. Remove bones, antlers, or toys before bringing me home. And feed us in separate rooms. We will have less to argue over that way. The more time you can give us to get to know each other the better. I mean possibly weeks, not hours. Keep us separated. Crate, gate, and rotate us for as long as you feel it is needed, it might seem to be a pain at first, but the results will be worth the time. You cannot move too slowly here. Dog friendships are even more important and delicate than that of owner and dog. They are built on trust and we need time to develop that.

Make me sit to do everything. I should be calm before going out, coming in, meeting someone at the front door, before treats and eating, and getting my leash on. I need to recognize that you are in charge here and that I need to listen. While bouncing off the walls before walks is funny, you are teaching me to act that way every time. Show me that only calm behavior gets rewarded. An obedience class we can do together is always recommended. It helps us work with each other successfully, so we learn to trust each other.

There are some rules of three that you may need to be aware of.

- For the first three days I may exhibit nervous behaviors like barking or pacing. I may whine, have accidents, refuse to eat or be argumentative. I'm terrified and stressed. I need that small world and quiet that I talked about at the beginning of this letter.
- After about three weeks, I will begin to get the hang of things in our home. And then I will start to push some buttons or act out in ways you have not seen before, I'm kind of like a teenager that way. It's a test to see where I fit into this household and how much I can get away with. Be calm and firm and stick to your guns. Maybe leave a leash on me so you may remove me from mischief or trouble. Praise me for what I do right. Redirect me when I am doing something I shouldn't. This is the toughest time of adjustment.
- After about three months I will begin to really feel at home. My issues will have reared their ugly head and you will have had a chance to get them under control. Don't give up on me. Seek help from a reputable trainer if you feel you need it; a good one is worth the investment.

Speaking of issues, there will be some that you will have to deal with. My foster home will share their experiences, but I may act differently in your home. And remember, I was only in foster care for a few days or maybe a few weeks and I may not have been feeling my best. I am adult dog who was raised by someone else. They may or may not have done a good job. However, I am still trainable. Instead of waiting to see what I know, assume I know nothing. Teach me and train me like I was a puppy. This way I can quickly learn what you expect from me and I will not make as many poor decisions on my own. I am happy to take your direction and live up to your expectations. If you still have questions, please ask someone at OPH like my foster or adoption coordinator! Sometimes it is easier to change my behavior early on before bad habits set in.

I want to be the dog you want me to be. I can be a wonderful companion for your family if given the guidance I need. Give me consistency, patience, and time and I will give you all the love I have to give in return. I may not know what being rescued means, but I will thank you for my life every day with tail wags and slobbery kisses. Let's do this together!

We are going to make the best family,

Your rescue from Operation Paws for Homes

