



Dear Family,

I am a rescue puppy. I may have been born in my foster family's home or I might have been born at the shelter. Many times, the rescue doesn't know much about my history because they are focused on my future. I might have spent a lot of time with my mom or maybe my foster family had to help out with her job. My foster family and Operation Paws for Homes helped me get healthy by making sure that I had the right vaccines, but I might not have all of them yet. I might be spayed or neutered, depending on my age when you adopt me, but I will definitely need that at some point. 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. 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; plus, if I don't have all of my vaccines yet, the world is a germy place and I don't want to get sick. Some of those germs are really nasty and they actually could kill me. I must get used to all those things you take for granted like feeding and potty schedules, family dynamics and routines, and I am just a little thing who has so much to learn.

Routines are very important for me. At four months old, I can be in a crate for up to four hours. I have a little teeny bladder and I need to have the chance to go potty. I don't like making a mess in my crate because that is my safe place and where I sleep. For each month after four months, you can add another hour for how long I can go before I need a break. Remember, I can't hold it more than 8-9 hours total, even as an adult. Since I am a puppy, I probably will have some accidents. Sometimes it happens when I am excited or scared, I also need to go out after I eat or get up from a nap. For a while, I will need to go out in the middle of the night, I'm sorry about that, but it won't last forever. Also, if you teach me a special word, that might remind me that I need to get down to business with my business rather than sniff all over the yard for the perfect spot. Some potty words might be: "Go get busy" or something like that, you might want to ask my foster. You also might want to think about investing in a Spot Bot or a Little Green Machine if you have a lot of carpet where I will live.

I am really cute right now and I will grow into a beautiful adult dog over time. Please give me lots of age appropriate toys and chew things. Puppies have razor sharp teeth and they do fall out over time. I will chew the most during my first few months. Please put up shoes, books (that glue smells so good to me), remotes, phone chargers, and other valuable items, I don't know how to tell the difference between a toy and something you want to keep. My home needs to be puppy proofed just like toddlers need a baby proofed house to be safe.

I really like your kids, but I don't know them well yet. Roughhousing or running screaming in the house, even in fun, may worry me and make me uneasy. 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. I will grow more quickly than my human siblings, so I need to learn manners quickly so that I don't knock them over.

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. 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 weeks, I am still young and I may not have been feeling my best. Teach me and train me like the puppy I am. 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! 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!

Thank you,

Your rescue from Operation Paws for Homes

