

Decompression Tips for New Fosters

STEP 1: Chill out time. AT LEAST 3 days, UP TO 2 weeks depending on the dog.



Shelters are stressful environments full of strange noises and smells. All of that can be overstimulating for a dog. Your new foster is going to need quiet time in your house before anything else. Basically, the dog needs to **CHILL OUT**, which we call "decompression time." **Skipping this step is a sure-fire way to make sure you have problems.**



- Set up a quiet, crated area for your new foster to decompress in
 - Crates are not a form of punishment here! Crates give dogs a safe, "den-like" to relax
- Provide your foster with lots of ways to be stimulated mentally (Kongs with frozen peanut butter, interactive toy games, food releasing Kong toys, etc).
- Have music playing 24/7 in the room. Specifically, classical music to slow down racing heartbeats if they are stressed
- Feed your foster breakfast/dinner in the crate. No feeding with other animals in the home.

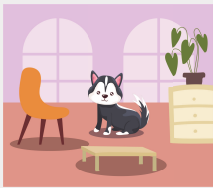
Stressed dogs destroy crates and act out. Calm dogs do not.

This period of time is referred to as 'crate and rotate'. This means that while your personal animals are **OUT**, your foster is **CRATED**. While your foster is **OUT**, your personal dogs are **CRATED** (or in a separate room).

STEP 2: Smell Before See. See Before Touch. Repeat.



Dogs learn a lot about the world through their nose. It is their most powerful sense. **Not only does decompression time let the dog relax, but it also allows the dog to explore your house with his nose, while crated and secure while still learning about your other pets, children, etc without the stress of a face-to-face meeting where body language might be misunderstood.**

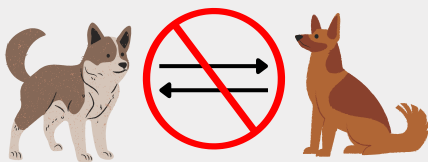


Foster explores the house (supervised) while personal pets are outside.



Smell Before See. GOAL: New dog smell = GOOD.

- Using 'crate and rotate', allow your personal pets to sniff the new fosters' area (while the new foster is outside or in another room)
- Switch to allow the new foster to explore your house and sniff your personal dogs areas (while your personal dogs are outside or in another room)



See Before Touch. GOAL: Sight of new dog = GOOD.

- Using 'crate and rotate', allow your personal pets and new foster to **SEE** each other from a distance while the foster is safely crated
- Don't let them sit in one spot and stare at each other
- Take turns treating your personal pet and new foster so they associate the sight of one another with a positive experience

Foster Intros to Home & Personal Pets

Setting everyone up for success. Preventing fights, bites, and resource guarding.

STEP 3: OUTDOOR INTRODUCTIONS – Pack Walks & 6-foot Walks

When you're ready for introductions, you have to think like a dog if you want a good interaction. Humans like to stand in one spot, make eye contact, and talk. Dogs like to run around and move, they avoid too much direct eye contact, and they'd rather smell than talk.

STRUCTURED PACK WALKS

Start with a 'structured pack walk'. With one handler/dog out in front and the other handler/dog behind. After a few minutes, take a wide circle around and switch who is leading the pack. This allows each dog to get a chance to sniff the other while having a chance to feel confident in the front of the pack and at the end of the pack.



6-FOOT WALKS (PARALLEL WALKS)



- Keep everyone moving forward, dogs/handlers walking parallel to each other, 6-feet apart
- Remember the 5-second rule about eye contact: Nothing good ever comes from more than 5 seconds of two new dogs locking eyes.
- Watch them, count silently in your head, and around the 3 to 5 second mark, take the lead and redirect the dogs BEFORE any negative body language, growls, or snaps happen.
- Reward them positively for the good, short interaction.
- Then repeat. And repeat. Always short interactions, always ending on a positive note.

INDOOR INTRODUCTIONS – Monitor closely in the home.



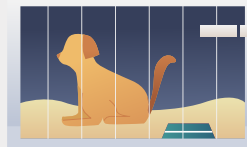
When first introducing the dogs in the home, use a sturdy, tall baby gate to separate them. Observe how they interact through the gate. Reinforce positive behavior by providing high-value treats to the dogs for positive interactions.

- No toys, food or treats should be left around the home that the dogs could potentially fight over.
- Be aware of situations that could lead to conflict—for example, when the dogs get overly excited.
- Closely monitor the dogs when they are together, rewarding them with treats, until you are 100% confident they are comfortable and safe with each other.



DO NOT feed your foster and personal pets together!

To prevent resource guarding fights from breaking out, and to also help with crate training, please only feed your new foster in their crate.



Crate your new foster when you leave the house

This will avoid any fights from breaking out with your foster and personal pets when you're not home and keep everyone safe.



Make sure your foster is wearing a Renegade tag

That way if they ever get out, the finder will immediately know who to call! It happens more often than you would think.