

Long Trail Canine Rescue



Foster Dog Manual

A Guide for Foster Dog Parents

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ABOUT THIS MANUAL

This manual is designed to provide foster parents with an overview of the Long Trail Canine Rescue Foster Dog Program. This manual is meant to be a helpful resource for foster parents and should answer many of the questions that may arise before and during foster care. Throughout this manual, the use of the word "Dog" is in reference to dogs of all ages, including puppies. If something is specific to puppies, then the word "puppy" is used. Furthermore, dogs are either referred to neutrally, or using the male gender (he/his) in this guide, but only for convenience and consistency and is interchangeable with she/hers. Foster parents should always consult with Long Trail Canine Rescue members for specific help and assistance. All information is subject to change.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Thank you for opening your heart and home to one of our rescued shelter dogs. Your generosity will provide young and old, injured and sick, abused and under socialized dogs a chance to grow or heal before finding their forever homes.

Long Trail Canine Rescue began its foster care program in January 2011. Since then, the program has saved hundreds of dogs that might otherwise have been euthanized. The Foster Dog Program plays an integral part in the Rescue's ability to adopt out many homeless animals annually.

How the program works

Volunteers of the Foster Dog Team work with Long Trail Canine Rescue (LTCR) members to determine which dogs are most in need of foster care. As an approved foster parent, you'll receive emails from the Foster Dog Team providing a brief description of those dogs needing foster homes. When you see a dog that might be a good match for your household and lifestyle, you simply follow the instructions in the email.

A LTCR member will contact you and provide more information and determine if the dog is a good match. LTCR will provide you with all the necessary supplies for fostering, support you throughout the entire process, and will be available to address any questions or concerns.

Reasons to foster

Fostering is a wonderful experience for you and your family - you can feel good knowing you have helped save a dog's life. Even better, you've created space in the shelter to accommodate other homeless dogs. Foster dogs provide companionship and purpose - your act of kindness is repaid in rewards that are beyond words.

Dogs needing foster homes

- Neglected or abused dogs that need tender loving care.
- Injured dogs and/or those recovering from surgery.
- Dogs suffering from "shelter stress" in need of a calming home environment.
- Older or senior dogs that will be more comfortable in a home environment.
- Puppies and young dogs that require more socialization than available at the shelter.
- Puppies too young and/or immature to be adopted.
- Dogs with colds or with special medical needs.

- Abandoned mothers with litters of puppies.
- Any dog when the shelter becomes overcrowded.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How long are dogs in foster homes?

It completely depends on the dog and the situation. The average stay in a foster home is about 2 months. However, most puppies and some dogs with great photos and stories on the web may stay only a few weeks. Others, recovering from an injury, certain breeds and senior dogs, may stay much longer.

2. Can I adopt my foster dog?

YES! As long as foster parents meet LTCR requirements necessary for adoption, foster parents have first choice to adopt their foster dog.

3. How are foster dogs promoted?

Photos and stories of all adoptable dogs in foster homes are posted on Petfinder.com and on our Facebook Page. Foster dogs are also promoted at special events throughout the year. Foster parents may participate in various programs and events to increase the visibility of their foster dog to potential adopters. Foster parents can also help promote their foster dog to their family, friends, colleagues and the general public through a variety of means including flyers, emails, social media, like Facebook and blogs, and even just by walking your foster dog in local neighborhoods.

4. What is the process for adopting a foster dog?

The process is very similar to adopting a dog from the shelter. The steps are briefly outlined below:

1. Potential adopters are required to submit an adoption application for LTCR review before they can physically meet a foster dog.
2. Suitable applicants may be contacted by LTCR for additional screening.
3. Once approved, meet and greets with the foster dog and foster parents will be scheduled with qualified applicants.
4. After the meet and greet (and if the applicant is still interested in the dog).
5. Adoption is approved or rejected by LTCR.
6. Once approved, the adopter pays adoption fees to LTCR and signs an Adoption Agreement.

5. If I have my own animals, can I foster dogs?

Keep in mind that it's always a health risk to expose your animal to other animals whether it's walking at parks, vet waiting rooms or other common animal areas. The health risk is minimal if your animals are current on their vaccinations, maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle, and are not elderly or very young.

If you or someone in your household is immune-compromised, consult your doctor before fostering since working or living with animals exposes humans to a group of diseases called *zoonoses*. A zoonotic disease (there are about 200) is defined as a disease

transmitted from animals to humans and also from humans to animals. To find out more about zoonoses, talk to your doctor and/or veterinarian. Proper hygiene, preventative measures and an understanding of these illnesses can reduce the risk of disease.

6. What supplies are needed to foster?

Foster parents provide space, food, basic training, exercise, socialization, and love for the dog. LTCR will provide you with all the other supplies and equipment needed throughout your foster experience. The Foster Dog Program receives donated items regularly, and also pays for vet care and medicine.

7. Do I have to crate-train my foster dog?

No, but it is one of the most efficient and effective ways to house train a puppy or re-train an adult dog. Some dogs do not like crates, and most dogs need to be transitioned or “trained” to use a crate, so it’s up to the foster parent to decide whether to crate or not. Putting the dog in a crate while you are gone will give you peace of mind knowing that they are in a safe place, away from harm, and not doing any damage to your belongings or themselves. For many dogs, a crate can also represent a safe and comfortable place to call their own and provides them with a sense of security. Dogs actually like having a “den” to cuddle up in. Crating should never be used as punishment.

8. Do I need to have prior medical knowledge or expertise?

No, but you may be asked to dispense medicine to your foster dog so you will have to be comfortable following veterinarian’s instructions if fostering a sick or injured dog.

9. What if my foster dog becomes sick?

All veterinary costs are paid by LTCR. If a foster dog becomes sick, foster parents must LTCR unless it is an emergency. Any emergency the foster parent should go to his/her vet.

10. How much time each day is needed to foster?

Commitment and responsibilities depend on the individual dog and situation. It’s essential that foster parents understand that shelter dogs may be stressed and moving the dog from the shelter to the foster home is also very stressful and emotional. Foster parents must be willing to be patient and commit to the dog because our goal is to keep them in a stable and consistent environment.

Many of the dogs at the shelter are “adolescent” dogs between the age of 6 months and 2 years. They typically have a lot of energy and require vigorous daily exercise. This means at least a 30-45 minute brisk walk/run in the morning and again in the afternoon, with plenty of playtime in between. Older dogs may only need a morning and evening stroll.

11. Can I take my foster dog to an off-leash dog park for exercise and socialization?

No. You are not allowed to take any foster dog from LTCR to an off-leash dog park without prior approval. While these parks can be fun for some dogs, there are far too many unknowns for it to be a safe and healthy experience for a foster dog. Diseases are easily transmitted and the temperaments of visiting dogs are unknown, thus creating a huge liability to LTCR. Also, taking a leashed dog to a dog park can create barrier frustration and aggression in dogs.

12. How can I help my foster dog become more adoptable?

There are two ways to make a foster dog more adoptable. First and foremost is marketing. If no one knows about your foster dog, or how wonderful it is, then it will be next to impossible to find them a forever home. In addition to supplying great photos and a bio and updating these regularly, giving a foster dog additional exposure by telling friends and family about them will help create a "network effect" and will speed up the process of finding a forever home. Simple steps like taking a foster dog on walks in local parks, outdoor shopping areas and other high-traffic areas will help find potential adopters.

Secondly, our rescued shelter dogs benefit greatly from the exercise (with the exception of those with some medical conditions), basic training, special love and attention you give them. While marketing provides you with applicants, it's **always** the dog that "closes the deal." Providing a foster dog with basic training and manners will increase their adoptability. Shy dogs will benefit from your patience, routine and slowly exposing them to new people to build their confidence. Rambunctious adolescents who learn good manners will help show off their trainability and long term potential. And while puppies are adorable, they need a lot of love, attention and hand holding from humans to develop properly and feel secure.

13. Am I responsible for finding my foster dog its forever home?

No, but we do need your help. Once a qualified applicant is identified, you will be asked to schedule a meet and greet with your foster dog and the potential adopter. Your quick response and then final input on the potential adopter is critical to finding a great match. Many times a foster parent will find a perfect match through their own network of friends, family and colleagues. LTCR greatly welcomes these referrals! If you think you have found a perfect forever home for your foster dog, remember they still must go through the application process and be approved by LTCR.

14. Can I return my foster dog to LTCR if I am unable to foster any longer?

We prefer that foster parents continue to foster until we find a permanent home for their foster dog. It's extremely stressful for a dog to be returned. In addition LTCR does not have a facility. We are totally dependent on available foster homes. However, we understand that situations change and it may become necessary to transfer a foster dog. We request that a foster parent provides as much notice as possible (preferably 3-4 weeks) so that we can find an alternative foster home to transfer the dog to.

15. What if I go on vacation or have a business trip?

If given enough notice, we can usually find volunteers that can foster sit for short durations. We ask that foster parents always keep LTCR aware of any temporary foster sitting situations.

16. Are foster dogs ever euthanized?

Much energy, love, time and vet care is devoted to our foster dogs, and LTCR is committed to finding homes for ALL the adoptable dogs within its care. Some dogs are in foster care because they're seriously ill or injured. If, after medical attention, these dogs are too injured or too weak to heal and are suffering without a means for relief or are irreparably aggressive, then LTCR will humanely euthanize these animals. Fortunately, most dogs in foster care heal beautifully. On rare occasions, a dog in foster care may start to exhibit potentially dangerous behavior that was unknown or suppressed when the dog was at the shelter. LTCR may determine that this dog is too dangerous and will humanely euthanize the animal or seek an alternative facility for its care. Your safety is our #1 priority. You must always inform LTCR if your foster dog exhibits any aggressive behavior.

REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL FOSTER PARENTS

In order to become a foster parent, you will need to complete the following:

- Complete a Foster Dog Parent Application and Agreement; these forms are available on the LTCR website.

IMPORTANT RULES AND REMINDERS REGARDING YOUR FOSTER DOG

In addition to the requirements and responsibilities outlined in the Foster Dog Parent Agreement, and throughout this manual, foster parents **MUST** abide by the following rules:

- No off-leash park visits.
- Foster dogs must be on leash at all times and supervised when outdoors unless in your own secured fenced yard.
- No aversive training techniques or tools may be used on foster dogs.
 - Aversives include prong collars, pinch/choke chain collars, electronic collars, spray bottles, physical reprimands including alpha rolls, etc.
- Foster dogs may not be left unattended at any time outside, even in a secured yard.
 - You may not leave your dog loose in the house with an accessible doggie door when you are not present
- Any aggressive behavior must be immediately communicated to LTCR.
- All vet visits must be pre-approved by calling LTCR unless it is an emergency.
- Foster parents must respond within 24 hours to communications from LTCR or potential adopters.
- Foster parents must have internet access and check their email daily, as this is the primary form of communication.

GETTING READY TO FOSTER A DOG

After being approved by LTCR as a qualified foster home, but before you bring a foster dog home, we suggest you prepare yourself, your family and your home for a new canine companion.

Be physically and mentally prepared

Fostering is a family affair, so please make sure that everyone in your household is ready, willing and able to provide a loving home for an orphaned dog. Many adults and children have a difficult time adjusting to a new schedule or routine, and also have a difficult time "giving up" an animal to his forever home. Make sure everyone is ready for this new, albeit temporary, addition to your family.

Be realistic about your time commitment to a foster dog. Many people believe that a shelter is a terrible place and a dog is always better off in a home. While the shelter can be a stressful environment for many dogs, they do receive excellent care during their stay. In addition to a clean, warm and dry kennel, with plenty of fresh water, food and vet care, most dogs should be walked **at least** twice

a day. Don't over-extend yourself when starting out. And even if you have experience with big adolescent dogs, starting with an older dog, a small dog or even a puppy is a great way to build your foster parenting experience.

Where to keep your foster dog

Planning where you will keep your dog **before** you bring your dog home will make the entire process easier for everyone. When you first bring a foster dog home, you'll want to confine them to a single room, such as a kitchen or family room. This room should not be an isolated room, but a room where you spend a large part of your day or evening, as dogs are pack animals and want to be with you. This room is especially important when you're at work or away from the house, as it will be a new environment in which they need time to become familiar and comfortable.

Use a baby gate to block off the entrances to other rooms. By keeping the dog in one room, you're helping prevent "accidents" that may occur because of stress or adjusting to your routine. (Even a house-trained dog might have an accident or two during this adjustment period.) For dogs that are not housetrained, keeping them confined to one room will help start this important training as you must be able to monitor their activities. LTCR recommends you also use a crate in this room for times when you are away from the house. LTCR will be happy to provide you with an appropriate size crate.

The Do's

- Do keep your foster dog indoors in a location with a crate available.
- Do keep your foster dog in a warm/cool (depending on the season) and dry location.
- Do keep your foster dog on a leash at all times when outdoors unless in your secured fenced yard. When in a secured yard, you must supervise him at all times. It is very common for a shelter dog to try and escape so **always** supervise your shelter dog.
- Do keep your puppy indoors in a kitchen, bathroom, mudroom or laundry room (you may want to use baby gates to limit access to other parts of your home) while you are not there. Puppies should be around humans for socialization purposes and should not be isolated.

The Don'ts

- Do not place your foster dog around other strange dogs as we often do not know the dog's past history. Foster dogs should not be put in a position of possibly fighting with a strange dog, reducing their chances for adoption and increasing their chances of euthanasia.
- Do not allow your foster dogs outdoors unless supervised by an adult.
- Never take your foster dog to an off-leash park. This is a liability to LTCR.

How to dog-proof a room

Walk into the room in which you plan to confine your foster dog, and ask yourself:

- Is there room for the crate (dog's safe place)?
- Is there quick access to the outside for bathroom breaks?
- Is there anything that can be chewed, such as drapes, a couch or rugs?
- Are there exposed electrical wires?
- Is there anywhere the dog can hide? Will you be able to get the dog out if hidden?
- Are there coffee tables with objects that can be knocked off by a wagging tail?

- Are there plants in the room? If so, check the list of toxic plants in this manual.
- Where will I set up the crate once all hazards are removed?
- Is the crate in a quiet, low-traffic area of the room?
- Is there a blanket in the crate to train your foster dog that it's his bed?

Items you may need

The Foster Dog Program provides supplies, so be sure to ask LTCR when you are picking up your foster dog.

- Food and bowls.
- Crate - you can check one out from LTCR.
- Bedding - a clean, old blanket or towel or a dog bed that is washable.
- Odor neutralizer (like Nature's Miracle); it's the only thing to clean housetraining mistakes.; If you clean mistakes with soap and water, your dog will still smell the urine and go to the bathroom in that spot repeatedly.
- Toys such as: hard rubber balls, Kongs, fleece toys, rope toys or Nylabones. Do **not** give your foster dog hooves, rawhide, pigs' ears or vinyl toys that can cause diarrhea or choke the dog.
- Collar with a LTCR ID tag which must stay on the dog at all times. Collars and ID tags are provided by LTCR.
- Leash.
- Training apparatus such as Martingale collar, Sensation harness, Wonder Walker harness or Halti head collar available upon consult with LTCR.
- Training treats such as string cheese, squeeze cheese, lunch meat or small dog biscuits.
- Baby gate(s).
- Bitter Apple (to spray on leashes, woodwork, drapery — anything you don't want chewed).

SELECTING AN APPROPRIATE DOG TO FOSTER

Now that you're ready to foster, it's time to find an appropriate shelter dog to bring home. After being approved by LTCR as a qualified foster home, you will start receiving a Foster Request email. This email will describe dogs in need of foster homes based on priority. If you see one that looks like a good match, simply reply to the email and LTCR will determine if this is a good match for you and your lifestyle. LTCR may also recommend a different dog based on your lifestyle, experience or situation.

INTRODUCING YOUR DOGS TO FOSTER DOGS

LTCR is available to assist you with introducing your dog to a foster dog.

Once you are home with your foster dog

- Do be alert and make the reintroductions gradually and calmly
- If possible, go for a walk around your neighborhood with both dogs and two handlers.
Walk the dogs side by side on leashes and allow them to sniff one another and become familiar with each other.
- Do give your *own* dog LOTS of love and praise.

- Do leave leashes on the dogs when you are in the home, so that you can get immediate control if needed. You may only need to do this for a short time.
- Do talk normally. Letting the dogs know that you are fine; they are fine; everything is fine!
- Be patient and go slowly with your foster dog as they may have been through a stressful surgery, abusive situation or a lot of recent changes.
- Don't leave your foster dog unattended with your resident dog. Even if they seem to get along well in your presence, you should separate the dogs when you leave your house. If you believe there is a valid reason to leave your dogs together (e.g. your dog suffers from separation anxiety), then talk with LTCR first. If you do leave your dogs alone together, be sure to always removing all toys, food and chews, and start slowly.

Some common mistakes:

- Holding the leash too tensely as dogs may react with defensiveness.
- Leaving toys and chews around the house. This can cause resource guarding which can escalate very quickly. Remove all toys and chews before you arrive home with your foster dog.
- Feeding your foster dog with your resident dog. It's best to separate them initially, and to supervise always.
- Over-stimulating your foster dog with introductions to many people or your neighbors' dogs.

INTRODUCING YOUR CATS TO FOSTER DOGS

Before you introduce your foster dog to your cat, you may wish to wait a few days until you have confirmed or instilled basic obedience in your foster dog. You will need to have your foster dog under control and know which behaviors are appropriate when interacting with a cat.

Allow your foster dog to settle down and get to know your surroundings first before you start introductions to unfamiliar animals. Introducing a cat to a dog is similar to introducing dogs to one another. Take your time and create a stress-free environment. Begin by keeping your cat in a different room. Allow the dog to become comfortable in his own room. Once the dog is comfortable, let him explore the rest of the house for short periods each day while the cat is in another room. This will allow them to pick up each other's scent. After a few days, allow the two to meet but keep the dog on a leash. Observe their interactions - a dog that is showing overt aggression, such as snarling, growling, baring teeth, etc., will probably never accept a cat. The cat and dog should be separated by baby gates or kept in separate rooms.

If all is reasonably calm so far, walk the dog around the room on leash, but don't let go of the leash in case the dog decides to chase the cat. On leash interactions give the cat the opportunity to approach the dog if they choose, or to find a route of escape. During the first few meetings, the cat and dog will probably not interact face to face. A dog is a predatory animal. It's a natural instinct for a dog to want to chase a cat. Assume the dog will chase the cat so you are prepared. Never allow the dog to intimidate the cat by barking or chasing. Each time the dog acts inappropriately (barking), let him know these behaviors are unacceptable; try using a verbal interrupter, like "Oops" to get their attention and redirect their energy. On the other hand, if the cat bops the dog on the nose as a warning, that's a good sign and should not be discouraged. When they set up boundaries between themselves, they are beginning to establish a working relationship.

Let them interact with the dog on leash for about 30 minutes, then return the cat back to its safe haven and bring the dog to its dog crate or bed. Give the dog a treat and lots of praise. Increase the amount of time they are together a little each visit. It's important to be patient and encouraging in their interactions. If you're relaxed, they will be more at ease. Always praise friendly behavior profusely. Don't rush the introduction or force them to interact more than either is willing. Pressing them to accept each other will only slow down the adjustment

process. When the cat and dog seem to be getting used to each other, let the dog go, but keep his leash attached to his collar. Let him drag it around the house as he wanders, that way you can control him at any time. The cat will probably hide at first. You should use your best judgment as to when they can begin supervised sessions with the dog off-leash.

FOSTERING – THE FIRST WEEK

Now that you're home with your foster dog, you should start a regular routine so your dog can begin to adjust to your household. During this adjustment period, please keep stimulation to a minimum. Some recommendations include:

- Find a quiet route to walk or run your foster dog (depending on energy level) to familiarize him with his new environment. This also helps start the bonding between you and your foster dog.
- Don't introduce your foster dog to people you meet on your walk. For the first 7-14 days (could be more or less) your foster dog should lay low while he tries to figure out just what this new situation is. You may not see any unwelcome behavior initially. Eventually all will be revealed.
- Do not introduce your foster dog to other dogs (other than your own resident dog). This includes neighborhood dogs, and dogs belonging to your family or friends. Why? There is no way to tell how your foster dog will behave when introducing him to other dogs. If your foster dog bites a person or dog you are required to report it to LTCR immediately.
- Don't throw a party, or have a lot of people over to your home. During the first week you should try to spend quality one-on-one time with your new foster dog.
- The most important thing to do during this initial transition time is to clearly but NON-confrontationally establish the household rules. As well, take care not to "indulge" your foster dog's timid, tentative or fearful behavior; we understand how tempting this may be as many of our orphans have come from less than ideal situations, but in the long run it does not benefit the dog.

Additional information for the first week

If your dog is available for adoption, take new photos and write a new bio for your foster dog.

One of the many benefits of adopting a dog from foster care is that the foster parent can provide detailed, personal and anecdotal information about their foster dog. Your dog will be adopted more quickly if you update this information as soon as possible.

Please check in with LTCR often to ensure that all is going well.

GENERAL INFORMATION ON FOSTERING A DOG

Expectations of behavior

Allow time for adjustment. While it usually takes about 24 hours for a dog to settle in, it will take much longer for their overall adjustment to this new environment. Watch their behavior closely. Remember that it will take up to a month before your foster dog bonds with you, so keep your expectations realistic. On the average, foster parents have their dogs for about 1-2 months before they're adopted. While this amount of time will not be long enough to fully train your foster dog, it will be enough time to give him a good foundation for his new family. Begin training with some basic commands and crate training. Your foster may have been traumatized before coming to you – you'll be teaching that people are good and can be trusted. You should handle and work with your foster dog every day. If he shows any signs of aggression or fear (growling over food or toys, snapping or hiding), contact LTCR for guidance.

FEEDING

What to feed your foster dog

The food you feed your foster dog is important because, as the saying goes, "You are what you eat," and this applies to dogs as well as humans. It especially applies to dogs who have been sick, injured or found as strays. High quality dog food is preferred, rather than grocery store dog food. If you need assistance with dog food, LTCR can help with the 1st bag of dog food.

- If a veterinarian prescribes a particular diet for medical reasons, LTCR will help with this.

Food should NOT contain:

- Meat by-products.
- Fat or protein named generically (animal, poultry fat, meat meal); it should instead read beef or chicken fat or lamb meal.
- Food fragments (brewer's rice, corn gluten, etc.).
- Artificial preservatives (BHA, BHT or ethoxyquin).
- Artificial colors.
- Sweeteners.
- Propylene glycol.
- Corn (this is not good for your dog).

Diet change

Some dogs get diarrhea from a change in diet. If this happens, feed them cooked rice mixed with cottage cheese (2 to 1 ratio) for a day or two. Or you may try adding canned pumpkin puree to their meals: 2 teaspoons (for a small dog) or 2 tablespoons (for a large dog). Then reintroduce the dry kibble.

Feeding schedule and quantity

Create a consistent schedule for feeding your foster dog. Feed at the same times every day.

Create a separate space for your foster dog to eat so they will feel comfortable. If you have other dogs at home, feed your foster in a separate room and close the door - this will help prevent any arguments over food. **Do not feed any "people" food.** You do not know what the adoptive family will want to do, so don't start a habit they will have to break; and by feeding only dog food, you are also discouraging begging. Feeding will depend on the age and size of your foster dog.

- *Adult dogs:* dry adult dog food twice a day, once in the morning and once at night.
- *Adolescent dogs (4 months to 1 year):* dry puppy food, twice a day
- *Weaned puppies (6-8 weeks to 4 months):* dry puppy food three to four times a day. Can be moistened with water or puppy formula.
- *Nursing mothers with puppies and unweaned puppies (4-8 weeks):* Be sure to review the section for "Puppy Care" in the Appendix of this manual.

The quantity of food you provide your foster dog will vary depending on weight, age and activity level. Please refer to the suggested amounts on the dog food package you are feeding your foster dog as the amounts may change depending on the brand. Remember to reduce this amount to compensate for any treats, including chews. Obesity is an epidemic for pets in the US, and can lead to health problems, exacerbate existing health issues and reduces overall quality of life. Please do not overfeed your foster dog.

Food allergies

If your foster dog is experiencing hot spots (red patches of hairless skin), it may be due to food allergies. We recommend sticking to simple, easy-to-digest diets of dry dog food kibble with chicken as the protein ingredient. If your dog appears to be allergic to chicken, look for dog food made with potatoes and duck, or fish.

Some dogs react to food allergies by getting raw sores on the pads of their feet, between their toes. Ask the shelter for some Nolvasan Skin and Wound Cleanser. This mild cleanser will clean and soothe raw spots and prevent infection.

Food supplements

If your foster dog is in need of extra nutrition (very thin, ill or poor coat), we may recommend food supplements like Fish Oils to provide essential fatty acids and omega-3 oils.

Always provide plenty of fresh water!

EXERCISE, TRAINING AND ATTENTION

Exercise

Foster dogs should be exercised every day, rain or shine. The old adage, "A tired dog is a happy dog," holds true for foster dogs. Most foster dogs will need at least two 30+ minute walks a day to release excess energy. If your foster dog is an adolescent, you may need to step up the activity level to include regular runs/hikes/or brisk walks. A dog that is exercised regularly will tend to sleep when you are not at home - and a sleeping dog cannot do undesirable things, such as bark, chew, etc. Even a 10-week-old puppy that plays inside or in a yard needs numerous daily walks as part of the socialization process. The exception to this is if your foster dog is recovering from an illness or injury, then they may need rest.

Leash walking and the six foot rule

LTCR rescued shelter dogs should be walked maintaining a safe distance from other dogs or people as necessary. When walking your foster dog, leave an appropriate and safe distance between your dog and any other dog you meet. This keeps handlers and dogs safe from possible conflicts and also reduces the transmission of diseases. Foster parents will need to be extra diligent because many dog owners seem to encourage their dogs to "greet" every dog they encounter out on a walk. This nose-to-nose greeting is particularly stressful for many dogs.

One simple way to avoid an oncoming dog walker is to just cross the street, or start to walk in a wide semi-circle around them. Most people recognize that this is a sign that you don't want your dogs to meet. If this isn't possible, just announce to the oncoming walker that you are walking a shelter dog, and you would prefer that the dogs don't greet each other. If you do have an on-leash reactive dog, there are some easy ways to maintain and/or add distance between you and another dog.

Sometimes you must broadcast this loudly if their dog is off-leash or on a retractable leash. Keeping your dog to your side (rather than at the end of the leash) and creating a "body block" with your own body is also helpful. Sometimes it's impossible to avoid another dog, so just stay calm, walk between your foster dog and the oncoming dog and move past quickly. Also try talking to your dog, "Fido, keep with me" and giving them treats as you pass an oncoming dog will help keep their attention on you, not on the other dog. Please do not use retractable leashes when walking or running your foster dog. It's impossible to have control with a retractable leash, and they can easily tangle or break. (We have long-line training leashes available for foster parents to practice recalls.)

Training

Most potential adopters are looking for dogs with basic manners. You might feel it's appropriate to let your own dog jump on people, get mouthy during play, or beg for food, but please don't let your foster dog have these same indulgences. Set boundaries for your foster dog, and be consistent. Additional training may be suggested and provided for by LTCR.

Training Tip: Building a positive relationship with your foster dog.

Establishing leadership: A leader in a dog pack is not the biggest dog, not the meanest dog and not necessarily the oldest dog. It is the one who controls the resources! Within a pack of dogs, strong canine leaders rarely use physical means to control other dogs; this is true in both wild and domesticated dogs. Humans can apply this concept of hierarchy by controlling all the resources in the home and doling them out contingent upon desirable behavior.

Training: We require positive, rewards based training for dogs. Increasing your foster dog's obedience skills has many benefits. Not only will the future adopter appreciate these skills, but your foster dog will "show" better when visiting with potential adopters and you will have a much happier fostering experience. Some basic obedience cues that your foster dog should learn are: sit, down, come, crate/bed, stay, heel, and an attention cue such as "watch me." These are very helpful in managing any dog. If you have a dog that does not like other dogs, these cues will be helpful on walks as well. For example, a dog that can heel nicely and that has been taught to "watch" you has less likelihood of making eye contact with another dog and getting aroused.

Why positive training? Many times, owners ask why one should use positive based methods. Please understand that force-based methods including "alpha rolls," "flooding" techniques (i.e., forced exposure at an uncomfortable distance to the object or being that the dog has an issue with), the use of choke chains, prong collars, electronic shock devices, and "correction" can all be problematic for a number of reasons. First, if a dog has aggression issues, using force can further exacerbate an already potentially dangerous situation. Second, using "correction" only or force does not teach the dog what you WANT him to do; only what you don't want him to do. Third, a foster parent can damage his relationship with the dog if they are always correcting the dog or using aversive methods.

Recently, the public has become enamored with the supposed results of certain high-profile trainers, however, we must keep in mind that what we see on TV is also presented via the magic of editing! In addition, force based methods can often temporarily suppress undesirable behaviors, but under certain stressors, when a dog feels threatened and has no other options, he may resort to aggression to remove the unpleasant stimulus or to escape the situation.

Positive training methods, on the other hand, are very unlikely to yield such undesirable and unsafe results. Using positive training methods can in fact, increase the likelihood of your dog wanting to respond correctly, increase your dog's motivation to work, and they are fun for you and the dog! If you would like to find out more about positive training methods, how they work, and why they work, visit www.pbrc.net/training_nfl.html for an explanation of this type of non-confrontational leadership program.

Additional training tips:

- Short 5 minute training sessions 4-6 times a day is more effective than one long session.
- Dogs need and respond to positive rewards when learning new behaviors. Remember, most behaviors that we want are boring to a dog, so it's important to make it more interesting to them. A positive reward is a tasty treat, or a game of fetch, or anything that your foster dog enjoys.

- You provide the guidance and information he needs to succeed and build his confidence. Always praise your foster dog when he is doing something good.
- Be consistent with your terminology and routine. Your foster dog will become confused if you let them steal your socks sometimes, but not others.
- Start small and easy and **slowly** build from there. Most people jump too quickly into advanced environments (outside on a walk, etc.), so make sure you start inside in a safe and quiet location.
- Use Oops or Ah-Ah instead of the word “no.” Use sparingly; if it is overused then your foster dog will no longer respond. It is better if you ask your dog to do a behavior that you do like.
- Be patient and calm. Dogs respond to your tone of voice and facial expressions as well as your emotions. Dogs can read your body language quickly. Don’t try to fake your emotions, as your foster dog will know.
- Never lose your temper with a foster dog or strike him—EVER. We want to create and support a harmonious canine/human relationship.

Housetraining

Be patient with your foster dog. Even housetrained adult dogs will make mistakes, especially if they’ve been at the shelter for a long time and have been eliminating in their kennel. If there are smells in your house from another dog or cat, some foster dogs may “mark” out their territory. This action should be re-directed immediately with a calm “Oops” and escort him outside where he can finish. You will then want to use some odor neutralizer (like Nature’s Miracle) on the areas where the foster dog “marked” to insure he will not smell and mark that area again. You can begin to housetrain a puppy at 8 weeks of age. Even if you bring home an adult dog that is housebroken, you will want to follow these guidelines until your foster dog adjusts to his new situation and to your schedule.

- Determine where you want your foster dog to eliminate - it could be the backyard, side yard or an indoor substrate such as a Pup Head, litter system or one you have designed.
- When you have determined where he should do his business, take him to the same place every time, and tell him to “do his business.” Take him out when he wakes up, after he eats or drinks, after a play session, or at least every 2 hours. Puppies should go out every 45 minutes until you learn their pattern. Stand with him for 5 minutes. If he eliminates, reward him (with treats, praise, a favorite game and your own special happy dance). If he doesn’t go in 5 minutes, take him back inside and try every 15 minutes until he goes. Every time he goes, make sure you reward him!
- Supervise the puppy closely while you’re inside. If he starts to sniff the floor, or even squats to go, interrupt with a calm “Oops”, scoop him up quickly and take him to the approved spot and praise when he finishes.
- If he goes in the house while you’re not paying attention, don’t correct him - it’s not his fault. Clean it up and go back to your schedule. Use an odor neutralizer (like Nature’s Miracle) to get rid of the smell. **Never** put the dog’s face in his mess, or yell at him, he won’t understand you, and you will only be teaching him to fear you.

Crate training

Crates provide safe havens and dens for dogs. They calm them and can help prevent destructive chewing, barking and housetraining mistakes. Puppies should not be crated for more hours than they are months old, plus one. For example, a 4-month-old should not be crated longer than 5 hours. How long an adult dog can be crated will depend on many factors. For example, if your foster dog was left outside, it has never been required to hold it for any period of time. It will take time for this dog to learn to hold it and you will need to start slowly. Older dogs and dogs with some medical conditions may only be able to successfully hold it for short periods of time.

Rigorous exercise should be given before and after any long periods in the crate, and good chew toys should be in the crate at all times. You may want to crate your new foster dog for the first few nights in your bedroom—most of them feel more secure in their crate and it protects your house from accidents.

Crates should **never** be used as a means of punishment for your foster dog. If used for punishing, the dog will learn to avoid going in the crate. Crates are not to be used for keeping puppies under 6 months out of mischief all day either. Crates should be thought of as dog playrooms - just like child playrooms, with games and toys. It should be a place dogs like to be and feel safe and secure when they are there.

Introducing the crate

- Place the crate (with a blanket inside) in a central part of your home. Introduce your foster dog to the crate after a good walk, when he's tired and sleepy. Keep all chew toys in the crate so that he can go in and out as he pleases, selecting toys to play with. Feed your dog in the crate with the door open. If the dog hesitates going in, place the bowl inside the door so their head is in and their body is outside.
- If your foster still refuses to go near the crate, put the smelliest, tastiest wet food (or a steak!) in the crate and shut the door. Let the dog hang outside the crate for a while, smelling the food inside. Soon he should beg you to let him in!
- Now that the dog is familiar and willing to go near the crate, throw some of his favorite treats in the crate. Let him go in and get them and come right out again. Do this exercise three or four times. Then, throw more treats in and let him go in and get them. When he is in, shut the door and give him another treat through the door. Then let him out and ignore him for 3 minutes. Then, put some more treats in the crate, let him go in, shut the door and feed him 5 bits of treats through the door, and then let him out and ignore him for 5 minutes.
- Next time, place treats, peanut butter, freeze-dried liver or frozen food and honey in a Kong , so it is time-consuming to get the food out of the ball, and put the Kong in the crate. After your foster has gone in, shut the door and talk to him in a calm voice. If your dog starts to whine or cry, don't talk to him or you will reward the whining/crying/ barking behavior. The foster dog must be quiet for a few minutes before you let him out.
- Gradually increase the time in the crate until the dog can spend 3-4 hours there. We recommend leaving a radio (soothing music or talk radio) or TV (mellow stations: educational, art, food) on while the dog is in the crate and alone in the house. Rotate the dog's toys from day to day so he doesn't become bored of them. Don't put papers in the crate - the dog will instinctively not go to the bathroom where he sleeps/lives. Instead, put a blanket in his crate to endorse the fact that this is his cozy home.
- To help your foster get accustomed to the crate, place his favorite bed inside it and place it in your bedroom. If you're fostering a puppy, you can try placing a warm hot water bottle wrapped in a towel next to him. Warmth makes puppies sleepy. Make sure the sides of bedding are tucked in firmly so the puppies don't get lost or suffocated in a fold of the bedding. Be wary of dog crates during hot weather - a dog may want to lie on the cool floor, instead of the crate. Make sure the crate is not in direct sun.

Attention and playtime

Gentle and calming human contact is important for recovering, sick, injured or neglected dogs. Human handling is especially important for the healthy development of puppies. Attention and playtime is a reward for your foster dog. Be sure to give your foster dog several minutes of playtime periodically through the day.

As a general rule, children under 16 years old should NOT be left alone and unsupervised with any dog, but specifically a foster dog. Do not allow children to behave with the foster dog in a manner you would not want the child to behave with a younger sibling. Teach children to

leave a dog alone when he is eating, chewing and sleeping. Never allow a child to remove a toy or any other “prized” possession from a dog. A child will not differentiate between a foster dog and a dog they have grown up with, so you must make sure to keep everyone safe.

Do not play tug of war or wrestle with your foster dog. If you have a shy or fearful dog, do not throw the toy toward the dog, because he may think you are throwing things at him and become more fearful. After you have finished playing with a toy, put it away. You are controlling the toy and the playtime. When giving the dog a toy or treat, have him sit before giving it to him. That way he has to work to get the toy or treat - making the toy a reward. After your foster dog has settled in and has acclimated to his new home, it’s time to get him out into the world. The more you can do this, the better socialized he will be. Get him used to different people and different environments.

Start slowly and don’t over-stimulate as many foster dogs may not have had exposure to what seems like a “normal” environment. When you are out and about, you should remain calm, as this will help your foster dog key off of your behavior. But always be aware of your surroundings. Always keep a good handle on your leash and be extremely careful around busy streets, or in parks where there are squirrels or birds or other distractions. If your dog reacts to someone/ something on your walk, interrupt the behavior by crossing the street or walk in a different direction. If you’re a runner/jogger, start off slow and keep an eye on your foster dog and see how they react. Many dogs pull when they are in front of you, and running can intensify this behavior. Keeping them at your side, rather than in front can help eliminate this pulling behavior. You may need to start and stop many times, but be patient. Remember, these runs should be about the dog, not about your own exercise. Puppies under 6 months old should not run with you and only occasionally, for short distances after 6 months. Also, remember your foster probably is not used to running regularly, and like a person, will have to improve his conditioning and stamina over a period of time to avoid injury.

If you’re fostering puppies, make sure they have lots of new experiences, so they are well socialized and will be adaptable as an adult. Since it’s best not to take puppies out in public until they are fully vaccinated, bring new experiences to them. Find out from your LTRC if there are other puppies in foster care and schedule a puppy play date. Expose them to men and children as much as possible. Have friends over and invite children over to play. Always supervise playtime with children and dogs closely! Take your foster puppy in car rides (crate them for safety) to get used to the car. Keep in mind that puppies need to go to the bathroom frequently so be sure they eliminate before you go on a car ride, and keep the ride brief, since they will have to go again soon. See the PUPPIES section in the Appendix of the Manual.

BEHAVIORAL ISSUES

Some foster dogs will have specific needs regarding behavior, training or socializing. LTRC will advise you if your foster dog has a behavior problem that may require your help, such as an abused or fearful dog who needs socializing or confidence building with other dogs or people. A dominant puppy may benefit from an adult dog in your home to “show them the ropes” and appropriate behavior. A dog with an unknown/questionable history may just need to be observed in someone’s home before being adopted. Many times it is the foster parent that is the first to learn about a foster dog’s specific behavior so constant communication with LTRC is important. There are many resources that we can provide to help you manage most behavioral issues.

Many of the behaviors that we find problematic, such as barking, whining, digging, chewing, scavenging and hunting other animals are really just normal dog behaviors and can be explained as “dogs truly being dogs.” But we should keep in mind that these behavioral “problems” are not necessarily abnormal or unusual. The easiest way to coexist with our canine companions is to provide more appropriate (aka human accepted) outlets for these behaviors.

Some of the most common behavioral issues include:

- Barking
- Digging
- Attention seeking
- Leash pulling
- Destructive chewing
- Submissive and/or excitement urination
- Fearfulness
- Resource guarding
- Humping
- Begging
- Garbage hunting
- Greeting manners
- Puppy nipping and rough play
- Urine marking behavior
- Separation anxiety
- Prey drive

If your foster dog is exhibiting any behavioral issues, ask yourself the questions below:

- Is my foster dog getting enough exercise?
- Is he being left alone for long periods of time?
- Does he have interesting toys to keep his mind engaged and stimulated?
- Is he getting enough attention and playtime?
- Am I reinforcing bad behavior? Some examples include verbally scolding a dog when they are seeking attention or engaging the dog when he uses bad manners to get you to play.
- Does my foster dog have a safe place that is dog-proofed with appropriate chew toys, or am I leaving my own belongings within reach?
- Am I providing specific outlets based on his natural instincts and drives?

We don't expect foster parents to be miracle workers. If your foster dog requires more attention, exercise or training than you can provide, the best solution for you and your foster dog might be transferring the dog to a different foster home.

Regardless of the issue, we don't condone punishment, as this is rarely effective in resolving behavior problems. Punishment will not address the cause of the behavior, and in fact it may worsen any behavior that's motivated by fear or anxiety. Punishment may also cause anxiety in dogs that aren't currently fearful. Never discipline your dog after the fact. People often believe their dog makes this connection because he runs and hides or "looks guilty." But dogs display submissive postures like cowering, running away, or hiding when they feel threatened by an angry tone of voice, body posture, or facial expression. Your dog doesn't know what he's done wrong; he only knows that you're upset. Punishment after the fact will not only fail to eliminate the undesirable behavior, but may provoke other undesirable behaviors, too.

SPAY AND NEUTER

Most foster dogs are altered prior to going into foster care. However, puppies or injured dogs may need to be spayed/neutered during foster care or just before going into their new adoptive homes. If you are fostering an unaltered dog that is healthy and old enough for surgery, it is beneficial to have the procedure done while in foster care. Most spay and neuter surgeries are done at VT-CAN Spay/Neuter clinic.

The foster dog needs to be cleared for surgery by LTCR and LTCR will schedule the surgery.

Most dogs can be spayed/neutered at 8 weeks of age or older, as long as they are healthy.

need these supplies. You may want to take this list with you to your vet appointment so you know what medications can be filled through the shelter.

General guidelines for seeking vet visits

Puppies younger than 12 weeks must see a vet for the following:

- Diarrhea that lasts for more than a day
 - Vomiting and diarrhea for more than 6 hours
 - Vomiting more than once in an hour
 - Not eating for more than 12-24 hours
 - Lethargy without fever for more than 12 hours
 - Lethargy with fever
- Dogs older than 12 weeks must see a vet for the following:
- Diarrhea that lasts for more than 1-2 days
 - Diarrhea and occasional vomiting for more than a day
 - Vomiting more than 2-3 times in an hour
 - Not eating for more than 24 hours
 - Lethargy without fever for more than a day
 - Lethargy with fever

For all of the above, please call LTCR.

Illness

Your foster dog may not display any signs of illness until quite ill. Therefore, it's up to you to observe your dog closely each day. Call LTCR if you see abnormal behavior; unusual discharges from the eyes, nose or other body openings, abnormal lumps, limping, difficulty getting up or down, loss of appetite or abnormal waste elimination.

Diarrhea

Diarrhea can be caused by several factors, including stress, change of diet, poor diet, eating garbage, parasites and viruses. If your foster dog has diarrhea and has no other symptoms, rule out change of diet by feeding your dog 2 cups of cooked rice mixed with one cup of cottage cheese for a day or two, and then reintroduce dry kibble. Provide plenty of fresh water since diarrhea can cause dehydration.

Fleas

Most foster dogs have been treated when to LTCR from the shelter. But additional flea treatments are available if needed. Puppies younger than 4 months should NOT be treated with toxic chemicals. Puppies over 8 weeks of age and adult dogs can be treated with topical flea treatment. Only use LTCR approved flea/tick treatment.

Kennel cough

One of the common reason dogs go into foster care is because they have kennel cough, or the equivalent of a human cold. The shelter is much like a child day care - as soon as one dog has a cold; most all the dogs in the shelter get a cold. Just like people who have colds, kennel cough develops when the dog is stressed or when the immune system is compromised. Kennel cough usually goes away as soon as the dog has a warm, quiet and soothing place to sleep, and where they can drink lots of water, eat healthy food and receive lots of TLC! Kennel

cough is typically a dry, hacking cough. There may be some discharge from the nose and a clear liquid that is coughed up. It's generally a mild, self-limiting illness of the trachea and bronchi encountered in all age groups of dogs, but especially in those under unusual stress, crowding or close confinement. Kennel cough exists in shelters, boarding kennels, groomers, veterinary offices, off-leash areas, etc.

Because kennel cough is contagious, infected dogs should NOT be around other dogs until they're over their cough. If you have a dog at home and plan to foster a dog with kennel cough, we have found that if your own dog is healthy and has been vaccinated annually, then your dog will most likely not get sick.

Talk to your vet about giving your own dog the Bordetella nasal vaccination. Immunity to kennel cough is usually established 3-4 days after vaccination. We can compare this situation with humans in an office atmosphere - if you're healthy, well-rested and your immune system is not compromised, and a coworker has a cold, then you will not catch the cold. But if you're worn-down, stressed out and not eating or sleeping well, you probably will catch the cold. So if your own dog is ill or older, we would not recommend fostering a dog with kennel cough.

Kennel cough treatment

Treatment for kennel cough involves bed rest and relaxation! Make sure your foster dog has plenty of fresh water and healthy food. If your dog is not eating, try cooking up something special and smelly such as eggs, chicken or steak. Take short, leashed walks. If your dog's energy is good and the cough seems mild, try some Vitamin C (5-10 mg/lb, 2-3 times a day with food), and Vitamin E (3-5 mg/lb, once a day). If you don't see improvement of the cough or cold after 3 days, OR if the condition worsens, call LTCR. Dogs rarely develop a fever and lethargy with kennel cough. In fact, it can be difficult to keep them quiet. Strenuous activity can bring on coughing episodes, so limit activity and encourage rest. Even baths can be stressful to the system and should be avoided. However bringing your foster dog into the bathroom while you're taking a shower can be helpful as the steam can help loosen mucus. Incubation of kennel cough is 5-10 days; its course is 10-20 days with symptoms generally more marked the first week. Fever, lack of appetite and a yellow-green-brown nasal discharge can indicate secondary infections

Parasites

Parasites can cause diarrhea, stomach bloating or vomiting. Parasites include tapeworms, round worms, hookworms and mange. Tapeworms will look like pieces of rice coming out of your foster dog's anus or in his stool. Round and hookworms may be vomited, and roundworms look like spaghetti (hookworms are smaller and rarely distinguishable without the aid of a microscope). Mange is an infestation of tiny mites that bite and cause intense scratching, reddened skin and loss of fur. Only rare cases of mange (sarcoptic) are contagious to humans. If you suspect your foster dog has parasites, call LTCR.

Vaccination and worming

Your foster dog's vaccination and worming history will be given to you. Your dog has most likely been vaccinated for Distemper, canine Hepatitis, Parainfluenza, Parvo, and Bordetella.

Rabies Vaccinations

Rabies vaccinations are given if the foster is old enough to receive this vaccination. Dogs must be 3 months of age or older. If the dog's birth date is unknown, they can be vaccinated if they have their adult incisors and/or if they weight 3 ½ pounds or more. If they have a confirmed birth date or age, we can use that.

If you're fostering a puppy, you need to return the pup to the shelter for the following vaccination boosters:

- 8-10 weeks: DHLPP and Bordetella vaccinations.
- 11-13 weeks: DHLPP vaccination.
- 14-16 weeks: DHLPP vaccination.
- Annual boosters are recommended.

Poisonous foods and household items

Many household products can be toxic to dogs. Remove any rat or mouse poisonings, antifreeze and windshield wiper fluid from your home before fostering! And store cleaning products and other items listed below out of reach of pets.

The following common food items are poisonous for dogs:

- Chocolate
- Macadamia Nuts
- Mushrooms
- Grapes/Raisins
- Onion and Garlic
- Caffeine

The ten most common poisonous plants are:

- Azalea/Rhododendron
- Kalanchoe
- Marijuana
- Oleander
- Yew
- Castor Bean
- Lilies
- Cyclamen
- Sago Palm
- Tulip/Narcissus bulbs

GETTING YOUR DOG ADOPTED

Many dogs that go into foster are already available for adoption. If not, and you are unsure if your foster dog is ready to be adopted, ask yourself the questions below:

- Did your foster dog or puppy gain or lose enough weight?
- Is your foster dog healthy? (Some dogs can be adopted with kennel cough)
- Has the dog recovered fully from an illness?
- Is your foster puppy at least 8 weeks old and weaned from its mother?
- Is your foster dog or puppy successfully socialized with no major behavioral issues?
- Does your foster dog or puppy have good basic manners?

If your foster dog is ready for adoption or is already available, the first step is to create or update his bio and take new photos. Once you have your bio and photos ready, send this information to LTCR. Make sure that you include the following specific details:

- Name
- Gender
- Breed
- Weight
- Age
- Case Number
- Has your foster dog been spayed or neutered?

Also very helpful—is your foster ok with cats? Ok with other dogs? Ok with children (indicate appropriate ages)? If you are unsure, contact your LTCR for assistance. If you are fostering a dog that does not have a name, select a happy and positive name rather than one with negative connotations. The Foster Dog Team may edit or expand your bio based on past experience. If you need help writing a bio for your foster, please contact LTCR for assistance.

TIPS FOR TAKING GREAT PHOTOS

We can't stress this enough...a picture is worth a thousand words.

The picture is the first thing people see when they visit the shelter's listing on Petfinder.com or if they view the bio in the shelter. If the dog has a poor picture, visitors may move on to another dog without clicking or reading your dog's description. If you want to give your dog the best chance possible, take large, clear, good quality (high resolution) pictures of the dog alone. A good picture is often the difference between a dog who generates inquiries and one who doesn't.

- Take a lot of digital pictures. You may have to take 50 pictures to get 1 or 2 really great shots. If you don't have a digital camera, borrow one from a friend or contact LTCR and we can arrange for a special photo session.
- Pictures taken outside in natural light are usually much better than those taken inside or with a flash. Lighting is very important for accurately capturing a dog's coloring and detail. Have the sun or light source behind you and check to make sure you're not casting a shadow on your subject.
- Use treats and/or a squeaky toy to capture the dog's best expression. Sometimes having two people makes this process easier.
- Try taking pictures using a neutral backdrop. Select a background that contrasts with the dog's coloring. Darker-colored dogs will show up better against a lighter backdrop. Most dogs look great against a lush green lawn.
- Try different props. If the dog likes to fetch, you might get a picture of the dog with his favorite ball. Wrap a bandana around the dog's neck to add a streak of color (especially good for solid and darker-colored dogs). A bright, cheerful collar, ball or stuffed animal is a nice touch.
- The dog is the subject of your picture so the dog should take up the majority of space in your picture. Avoid excessive amounts of background. The dog's eyes should be focused on you. Try to capture at least one "hero" shot, where the focus is on the dog's face. A full body picture is also a great way to show size and scale.
- Exercise the dog before your photo shoot. A calmer dog is easier to photograph, and a panting dog looks like she's smiling! Before snapping the photos, take the time to get the pet as calm and relaxed as possible, so the photos don't show an animal that looks anxious or scared.
- Check out the competition. Visit Petfinder.com and look at the photos of similar dogs and see which ones pop out to you. Then try to mimic these shots with your own foster dog.

- If your first attempts fail, don't be discouraged. Just keep trying and have fun. When you are having fun, your foster dog will probably be having fun too and it will show!

TIPS FOR WRITING A GREAT BIO

Accentuate the positive and let potential adopters know why they should consider your dog.

You will improve your dog's chances of finding a home if you write a thorough description. A good bio is part press release, part story telling. Don't turn it into a lengthy restaurant review, but instead try to pull the reader into the bio so that they can start to imagine a life with this new canine friend. It can be very helpful to read the bios of other similar dogs on Petfinder.com.

Tell it from the animal's perspective - the most compelling thing you can write on behalf of an animal is what you imagine the animal is thinking, feeling or remembering. Most bios start off with the basics - but the most appealing bios are written so that they are not just a list of facts. One intro paragraph on "who your dog is" can help a potential adopter visualize the dog. Your second paragraph might go into personality traits, and provide information about any training, tricks or cute behavior. Your final paragraph should outline the required forever-home environment.

Tell potential adopters what you know about your dog. Be honest and avoid negative statements. Choose wording carefully. A dog that is not potty-trained might instead be, "working on her house training." A dog that doesn't get along with other dogs or cats merely "wants to be your one and only." A dog that desperately needs obedience training is really "looking forward to attending class with his adopter."

If dog has special needs, mention them, but don't dwell on them. You can go into these details once you have someone hooked on your dog.