



Congratulations on your new family member!

**A word from Dr. Roberta Westbrook,
Chief Animal Welfare & Medical Officer**

Welcome to the beginning of a wonderful journey. You have chosen to give yourself and one of our family members a lifetime of memories filled with love and happiness. Though your pet may miss their previous family or have bad memories of a life they are trying to forget, they will be looking to you to guide them through all the unique challenges that they may encounter.

For many of them, this will be their first home, their first bed, and their first night in a new place where they have been shown love. It will take time for them to settle, so please be patient and forgive their mistakes and social awkwardness. In time, these will be the memories and stories that will make you laugh as you retell the story of how you met and how they won your heart. Eventually, you won't be able to remember a day that they weren't in your life. And each day as they gaze into your eyes as if to say "Thank you for finding me," your bond will grow. We hope that with our help and your compassion, they will see in themselves what we see in them.

We, your friends at the Houston SPCA, hope that these resources we have provided will give you what you need to take those next steps forward into this new beginning together.

New Adopter Information

What's Inside

Adopting a New Pet • P. 1

Settling Your Pet • P. 2

Meeting the Family • P. 3

Helpful Tips • P. 2/3

Resources • P. 4



GETTING YOUR NEW PET SETTLED

During the first few weeks with your new pet...

KINDNESS COUNTS

Your new pet may have been abandoned or rehomed, and he or she had to adjust to the Adoption Center and is now going to a new, unfamiliar place with strangers. Kind of scary, when you think about it. Being gentle, considerate, kind and patient will help ease your pet into the new family.

"I'M SCARED"

Your pet might be afraid and unsure of their new surroundings. If your pet appears to be scared, provide a small, quiet area (such as a laundry room or bathroom), along with food/water and with a cat, a litter box. Do not allow your children to bother a frightened pet; fear can result in bites or scratches. Give your pet plenty of time to adjust to their new surroundings, taking it one step at a time. **Don't give up!**



EXPECT MISTAKES

Even a housebroken dog or cat can make mistakes in a new home. A new dog does not know which door to go to or how to ask you for anything. A new cat may have had a different kind of litter or food. Adjusting to a new routine will take some time, so please be patient. Keep a watchful eye on your pet and when you can't watch, confine your pet in a safe area.

EXPECT BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

Teaching proper behavior takes time and patience, and can sometimes be frustrating, especially if your pet had another set of rules in their previous home. It's up to you to teach your pet how to behave in your home. If you need more help, please don't hesitate to call the Houston SPCA or your local VCA Animal Hospital.

THINGS CAN GET TOUCHY

Many pets are uncomfortable with being picked up and/or held, but they might sit in your lap happily for hours or prefer to cuddle right beside you. Let your pet do what is most comfortable. Petting and cuddling are important, but do not overwhelm your pet with too much attention. Respect your pet's need for rest and privacy.



MEETING THE FAMILY

TIPS FOR CHILDREN

- Children should respect a pet's need to sleep and eat **undisturbed**. A frightened or overwhelmed animal may bite in self-defense or become timid and skittish.
- Don't leave children alone with a new pet.
- Teach your children the difference between playing and teasing.
- Don't expect children to assume full responsibility for the care of your pet. All family members should share in the responsibility.
- Sometimes children show affection by hugging and kissing the people and pets they love. Some dogs can see this face-to-face contact as a threat and a dominant gesture, which could result in a dog bite.
- Teach children to respect your pet's space.



NEW AND CURRENT PETS

The personality of each pet in your household will determine how they interact with each other. The first few weeks will be frustrating. It will take time for all pets involved so be patient.

- Introducing dogs can involve walking together on separate controlled leashes, exchanging blankets with the animal scent on them, and feeding each in a separate space.
- Introducing cats can involve keeping them separate so each can have a safe space, allowing for rotational time into the communal space, and having levels and perches available to help with introductions.
- Watch body behavior closely. Your pets will let you know when they are ready to move on to supervised play. Don't leave your pets unsupervised until you are confident in their attitude toward each other.

YOUR NEW DOG

FIRST STEPS

Every dog is going to adjust to your home differently.

A new home means new smells and new territory! Don't leave your dog unsupervised until you are absolutely sure they won't chew or potty in the house. We suggest confining them to a crate or small room when you're away from home.

RESIDENT DOGS/SMALL PETS

Make introductions with resident dogs slowly and under direct supervision. On neutral territory first, then walked home together.

Allow separate areas or crates to start.

Until you are certain the new dog is getting along well with your resident dog(s), do not leave them unsupervised.

Make sure resident cats or small pets have a safe place they can hide.

Litter boxes should be inaccessible to your dog.



GIVE THEM SOME TIME!

We know settling in with a new pet can have some challenges, so here's a good rule of thumb to keep in mind as you begin your new life together.

3 DAYS

In the first **three days** after coming home, a new pet is overwhelmed, scared, and might not want to eat or drink.

If you see signs of stress, try to give your new pet some space and **be patient**.

3 WEEKS

It really takes about **three weeks** for your animal friend to learn new routines and start to feel comfortable. During this time, some behavior issues might appear.

Don't worry! This is also an exciting time! Your new pet's personality begins to blossom and shine.

3 MONTHS

In **three months**, the bond between your family and your new pet is strengthened and solidified, and there is a real sense of trust and security.

You did it!



YOUR NEW CAT

FIRST STEPS

Every cat needs a different amount of time to adjust to a new home. Scared cats will hide under a couch or bed and won't come out until they're alone.

Tip: Take your cat to a small room with food, water and kitty litter. Open the carrier and let your cat come out on their own time.

Allow your cat to stay in that room until they appear to relax, keeping in mind that it may take several days. Then you can allow your new cat out into other parts of the house.

MORE THAN ONE CAT?

Cats use their urine and feces to mark their territory. As a rule, there should be one more litter box than the number of cats. This helps prevent your cats from developing elimination issues.

If the cats refuse to get along and/or mark in your home, you are welcome to bring your cat back to Houston SPCA, guilt-free.



IT'S TIME TO TAKE ACTION!

Join Us as a Monthly Donor Your Generosity Can Make a Lasting Impact

LASTING IMPACT

Monthly donations provide a stable foundation for our organization, empowering us to make a sustained difference in the lives of those animals we serve.

ENHANCED ENGAGEMENT

As a monthly donor, you will receive regular updates and exclusive communications, giving you an inside look at the impact of your ongoing support.

COLLECTIVE EFFORT

Joining our community of monthly donors allows you to connect with like-minded individuals who share your passion for our cause.

SCAN ME



Vaccinations

The Houston SPCA has provided your new pet with updated vaccinations. Please note that your pet may require additional vaccinations in the coming weeks in order to maintain good health. The cost of any additional vaccinations are not covered.

Your VCA veterinarian will set up a vaccine schedule for your pet after reviewing the medical history provided by the Houston SPCA. Bring the medical history with you to your complimentary veterinary visit at any VCA Animal Hospital.

Return Policy

Within 30 days of adoption, pets may be returned for an exchange. The Houston SPCA will always accept back adopted pets regardless of timing. The Houston SPCA will not provide a refund once an animal is adopted.

Health Coverage

We do not reimburse veterinary expenses. VCA Animal Hospitals will cover certain illnesses within the first 14 days after adoption. During that time, make sure to keep your newly adopted pet separated from your current pet/s to prevent the spread of any unknown illness. Please contact the nearest VCA Animal Hospital for an appointment and reference your VCA handout for details.



OUR TRUSTED PARTNERS



Pet Identification

Your new pet has received a Home Again microchip. The Houston SPCA will register your contact information with Home Again, but we recommend that you make sure the information is correct by visiting HomeAgain.com.



Veterinary Care

VCA has a wealth of information on their website regarding pet health and care topics.

VCAHOSPITALS.COM/KNOW-YOUR-PET

- Behavior
- Characteristics
- Diagnosis
- Emergency Situation
- Medical Conditions
- Medications
- Parasites
- Puppies
- Care & Wellness
- Tumors



Pet Nutrition

Hill's provides great up-to-date information and tips to help keep your pet healthy and happy.

HILLSPET.COM/DOG-CARE
HILLSPET.COM/CAT-CARE

- Behavior & Appearance
- Dog/Cat Breeds
- Healthcare
- Nurturing & Feeding
- New Pet Parent
- Play & Exercise
- Routine Care
- Tools & Resources

Share Your Adoption Story!

We'd love to hear from you!

- Email us a few of your favorite pics.*
- Include their Pet I.D. and their name in the subject line.
- Follow us on social media; your story may be featured!

*By emailing your story, you give Houston SPCA permission to share on social media.

Tag us on socials:



STORIES@HOUSTONSPCA.ORG

