



Indiana Bulldog Rescue
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A Letter from Your New Dog

Hi there! I'm your new dog. Thank you SO much for bringing me into your home. Since I only speak dog and I've been told dog doesn't always translate that well to human when spoken, I wanted to share a few things with you in writing before we meet again.

Things have been kind of strange for me lately. All of the people that I know and trust in my current home look and me and say, "You are going to your forever home! Aren't you excited?!? This is the greatest thing ever! They are so excited to meet you!" That is a whole lot of words and my foster family *sounds* so excited for me. I want to be excited, too, but, I don't have any idea what all of those words mean! So I asked my foster brother about it and he explained that I'm coming to live with all of you just like he lives with my foster family.

I don't mean to be disrespectful because you seem like nice people, but I'm not so sure about living with you quite yet. I really like where I'm living right now, to be honest. I know this house, the humans, the other dogs, the routine, the yard, and everything else here.

My foster brother told me that living with you will be great because I'll have my very own family forever and ever and ever, but I'm going to need some time to figure that out for myself. He then told me that you love me so much already that you'll work with me and give me time to get comfortable. He said I just need to tell you what I need and you'll happily do it all to make sure that we have a long and happy life together. So ... here goes ...

1) I need time to decompress and acclimate

As I mentioned, you seem like nice people, but I don't know anything about you yet. I'm a little bit stressed, honestly, because we took a long car ride to get here and there is a lot for me to think about and process with all of these new people, things, smells and sounds. Yesterday, I knew everything around me and that made me comfortable. Today, everything is new and that makes me really uneasy. Plus, I am *really* tired from processing all of this change. That is not to say that I can't get comfortable here. I just need some time to get there.

Do

- Do set-up my crate in a quiet but common area of the house so I can see you and start to get comfortable with all of you and your house, but still feel safe.
- Do let me rest in my crate a lot. A whole lot for at least my first two weeks. It is not mean to leave me in crate. It is quite the opposite. It is the best thing you can do for me. If we aren't exercising or doing training, I should be in my crate.
- Do understand that I am over-stimulated and over-tired so I may act a little crazy. Just ignore me and let me settle down. Do give me soft praise when I'm calm.
- Do block-off a small area outside my crate for me to very gradually start exploring your home. Baby gates work really well. During my third week, I can start spending more time here if I am settling in.

- Do keep your other dogs and pets away from my crate and small area outside of my crate for the first three weeks. If I seem to be settling in during my third week, you *might* try some slow and short introductions through the baby gates or crate, but don't rush it. I think we'll be friends in the long run but, until I get to know you and your home, I'm not comfortable meeting them.
- Do respect my personal space and avoid surprising me. Be especially cautious if I have special needs.
- Do go about your normal life and just let me watch and observe. I'd really appreciate it if you could keep things a little quieter around my crate and not have too many crazy sounds, movements or smells but, other than that, you living life as usual is the best thing you can do for me.
- Do avoid nail trimmings, ear cleanings, etc. during at least the first two weeks, unless these are medically required or recommend by my foster family.
- Do walk by me and give me smiles, softly praise me, tell me I'm good, and reassure me that everything is going to be okay. I really like that kind of stuff.

Don't

- Don't introduce me to new people, places, pets or other things for at least the first two weeks. I know that I'm absolutely adorable and you want to show me off to all of your friends, family and neighbors but they'll be plenty of time for that stuff later. For now, it is important for me to get to know you and your house, nothing else, because all of that other stuff will just overwhelm me more.
- Don't introduce me to the other pets in your home until my third week at earliest. Please don't. They need time to get used to me and I need time to get used to them.
- Don't let me free roam in your house. The best thing you can do for me is to keep me confined to my crate or a small area so I can watch, observe and get comfortable.
- Don't approach me suddenly, make loud noises around me, or do anything else that may be scary to me. My senses are over-loaded right now so I will over-react to anything scary.

2) I need you to show me that you are a leader who I can trust.

I am a bulldog so, by nature, I will rule the roost if allowed. But, to be honest, I'm not at my best when I am in charge. So, for us to make this relationship work for the long-haul, I need you to show me right from Day 1 that you are the leader. If you do show me that you are the leader, I will trust you, follow your instructions and be much more comfortable and happy for years to come.

Do

- Do make me work for every single privilege before you give it to me. Make me sit and be calm for affection, food, leash, treats, toys, going out the door, etc. Make me be calm and quiet before you give me freedom from my crate. Anything that I seem to want, make me work for it. If I don't do what you ask, walk away from me and try again until I comply.
- Do give me time-outs if I continually refuse to listen to you.
- If it is not too hot outside, do take me on short walks. They are great for our bonding (and my waistline!).
- Do realize that all of this may be a little bit time-consuming and frustrating for you at first. However, if you are patient, calm and consistent at the beginning, it is by far the best thing you can do for me in the long run.

Don't

- Don't let me on your bed or furniture for at least four weeks. Furniture is a huge privilege and I really need to settle in and learn my place in your pack before I earn that privilege.
- Don't give me free reign to food, toys, bones, etc. Make me work for these things and then take them up and put them away when we are done with them. Make me work for them the next time you bring them out.
- Don't introduce me to any other dogs, including resident dogs, before you have established yourself as my leader. Before I am allowed to meet any other dog directly, I should be able to sit calmly when asked by you from a distance.
- Most importantly, don't let me guilt you into giving me all of this stuff for free with my sappy eyes, whining and/or barking. I might be new to your house and a bit uneasy but I am still a bulldog so I know how to work people over. My attempts at guilt are actually manipulation. I want to be in charge but being in charge is not good for me. I need you to be in charge and following these rules consistently is the best way to do it.

3) I need a routine so that I feel comfortable

Don't you feel more comfortable in a new situation when there is structure and you know what to expect? Well, so do I! See, we have something in common already. So, if you establish a routine for me and follow it consistently, it will help me settle in a lot more quickly.

Do

- Do write down a daily routine for me before I even arrive and review it with the entire family. Post it close by my crate so everyone can see it!
 - Feed me at the same time and in the same place each day
 - Schedule my potty times
 - Schedule multiple times each day for short obedience training sessions
 - If it is not too hot, schedule times each day to take me on short walks (but don't take me to the park or to visit neighbors just yet. These walks are for you and I to bond!)
 - Schedule huge blocks of time for rest and relaxing in my crate. Remember, if I am not exercising or doing training with you, I should be in my crate!
 - Schedule sleep and wake-up times
- Do talk to my foster family about my routine and incorporate their feedback in your schedule for me.

Don't

- Don't write down the routine and then not follow it. I get very confused and will feel very insecure if things change each and every day. Just like you, I feel better when I know what to expect!
- Don't change my food or introduce new things into my diet.

4) I need you to set me up for success and not risk failure.

My first weeks in your home are the most critical because this is where we are setting the foundation for our long-term relationship. So, I need you to take it slow and easy with me. Don't rush things. I really want our life together to be a long and happy one but, in order to get there, I need you to spend a bit of extra time with me upfront. I'm worth it, aren't I?

Do

- Do talk to my foster family and make sure you follow all of the guidelines they give you for me. They know me best at this point!
- Do keep my foster family's phone number handy and call them with any questions at all.
- Do introduce me to your home, pets and things around me very slowly. Give me weeks to settle in before introducing new things and, when you do introduce new things, do it very slowly.
- Do watch me closely when introducing new things. If I seem uncomfortable, back off and try again some other time.
- Do keep things short and sweet when introducing new things. The first time I meet another dog, for example, should be a 30 second exercise.

Don't

- Don't get overly excited and rush things with me. I know I am cute and sweet and you have all kinds of big plans for us but there is plenty of time for all of that in the future.
- Don't be scared to slow down. If you have any inkling that you might be moving too fast, back off and try again later.

Well, I think that is all for now. I appreciate you reading all that I've written here. If you do these few things for me, I *promise* I will be the best fur kid and friend to you that I can possibly be. But, please remember the only way that I can communicate with you in real life is via body language, barks, growls or possibly snapping. So, if I do any of those things as we get to know each other, it probably means you've rushed one of these things that I've told you. Don't worry; I won't hold a grudge ... as long as you don't give up on me.