



**Best Friends**  
ANIMAL SOCIETY

# Rehabilitating Your Rescued Dog: Using Positive, Gentle and Kind Techniques

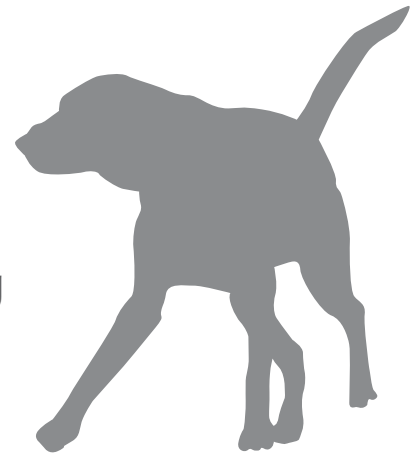
A tool kit for puppy mill and hoarding rescue cases

[www.bestfriends.org](http://www.bestfriends.org)



## Our Mission: No More Homeless Pets

Best Friends is working with you and with humane groups all across the country to bring about a time of No More Homeless Pets® when every healthy dog and cat in our nation's shelters can find a good life in a caring home.



### The Puppies Aren't Products Campaign

Right now, millions of adult dogs are suffering on the "production line" in America's puppy mills. Typically confined to cages for their entire breeding lives, these dogs have little to none of the human contact they desire, and it's all because consumers are creating a demand, in most cases unknowingly, by purchasing puppies at pet stores and over the Internet instead of choosing adoption.

With your help, we can reduce the number of animals who are euthanized in the country's shelters every single day from 11,000 to zero. Together, we can create a world of No More Homeless Pets by fighting against puppy mills and irresponsible breeding. Help us make a difference by educating the public about the connection between puppy mills, pet stores and Internet puppy sales; encouraging people to adopt rather than buy pets; and advocating for better laws to combat puppy mills.

To read more about the Puppies Aren't Products campaign and the other efforts you can help with, visit:

[puppymills.bestfriends.org](http://puppymills.bestfriends.org)

#### Questions about our campaigns or this action kit?

Contact us:

**e-mail:** [info@bestfriends.org](mailto:info@bestfriends.org)

**website:** [puppymills.bestfriends.org](http://puppymills.bestfriends.org)

**phone:** (435) 644-2001

**Regular mail:**

Best Friends Animal Society  
Attn: Puppies Aren't Products Campaign  
5001 Angel Canyon Rd.  
Kanab, UT 84741

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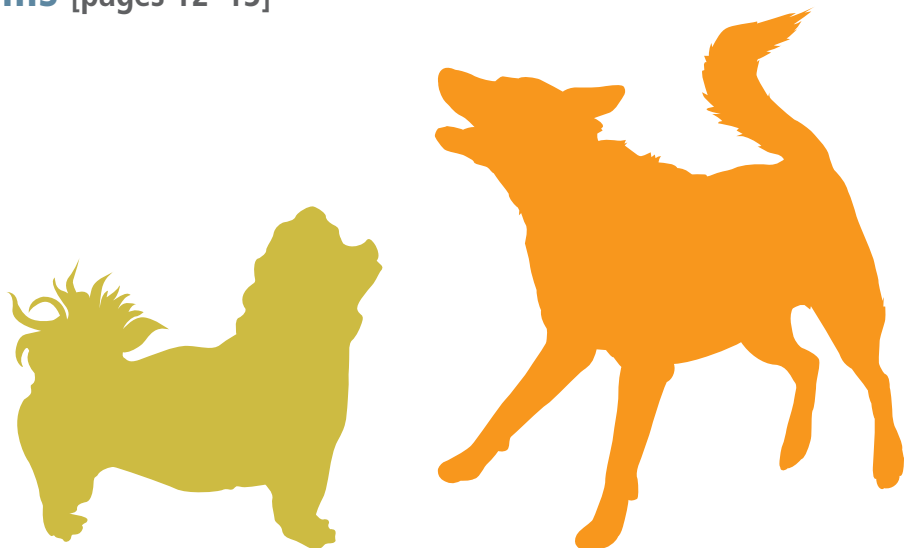
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# Rehabilitating your rescued dog: The positive, gentle and kind way

## Congratulations — you have saved a very special life!

Bringing an under-socialized dog into your home can be an extremely rewarding experience. Across the country, animals are rescued from unfortunate situations such as puppy mills\* and animal hoarders.



These rescues, while considered lifesaving victories, can put immense strain on the organizations that are suddenly responsible for many and often

hundreds of new animals at one time. Placing animals from these situations into foster homes is a good deal for everyone; animals get valuable life experience, the burden on shelters is lessened, and families get to bring a new pet into their home. Foster homes make it possible for rescue organizations to save thousands of animals each year.\*\*

Living in a foster home is especially beneficial for animals from situations of neglect and overcrowding — typical to puppy mills and hoarding cases.

## Understand what you're getting into.

Often, dogs rescued from puppy mills or hoarding situations have lived their entire lives in a cage with very little human contact. They don't know how to live in a home, or how to do "normal" dog things. They don't know about stairs, noises from televisions and dishwashers, kids, vacuum cleaners, and other everyday things.

In the beginning, your dog may not trust any human being. But by using positive, gentle and kind training techniques, you can become the first person your dog learns to trust. Here are some common conditions seen in dogs from these types of situations. Your dog may show all of the behaviors below, or just a few:

- Fear of people
- Fear of the outdoors
- Fear biting
- Difficulty with house-training
- Fear of loud noises

Don't expect your dog to know how to do any of the following at first:

- Go to the bathroom outdoors
- Play with toys
- Accept petting
- Accept treats from your hand
- Walk on a leash
- Come when called
- Be handled or held

Dogs' fear level and reaction to their environment can vary widely. Your dog may not need all the items or even the techniques outlined in this guide. We have included information to help the most under-socialized dogs, though much of it is relevant to even slightly shy dogs.

### The good news!

With patience and kindness and using the techniques in this manual, your dog **will** show improvement. Some dogs eventually become normal, happy (and grateful) household pets. Others will always have special needs, but in an understanding environment they too can be happy, healthy, wonderful pets.

Please note that the trajectory of improved behavior varies for each dog, and while you may see a marked improvement one day, don't be discouraged if your foster seems to revert to unwanted behavior the next. You will see an overall improvement, but it is rarely a linear journey.

There is nothing more rewarding than knowing you've given a neglected or abused dog a chance to live in a real home and a loving environment.



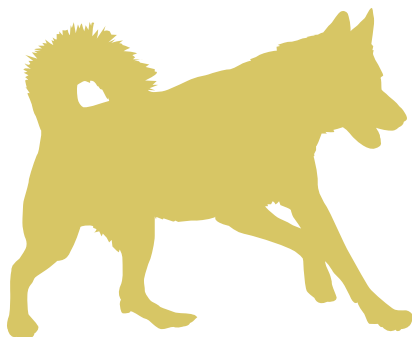
\* To learn more about puppy mills, please visit [puppermills.bestfriends.org](http://puppermills.bestfriends.org).

\*\* Dogs from neglectful situations often have multiple medical problems. If you are fostering or adopting a dog from a rescue group or shelter, be sure to ask what sort of exams, tests, and treatment have been done, including heartworm test, dental cleaning, vaccinations, spay or neuter and blood work. Make sure your dog is microchipped and that the chip is registered to either you or the organization you got your dog from. If you are fostering a dog, read your contract with the shelter or rescue group carefully so you understand and agree with what your responsibilities are (time, medical costs, emergency medical costs, supplies, food).

## Before your dog arrives: Helpful supplies and equipment

Having certain items will make life much **easier** and **safer** for both you and your special-needs dog. We recommend having the following essential items ready and in your home before your dog arrives:

- Crate of appropriate size
- Long (at least six-foot) lightweight leash
- Chain leash
- Harness
- Martingale collar
- An I.D. tag containing your contact information
- Lots of high-value food treats (cheese, chicken, beef, canned tuna)
- Canned dog food
- Puppy pads
- Welding gloves
- Exercise pen (tall, collapsible wire enclosure)
- Baby gate(s)
- Tie-out cable



Martingale collar



Exercise Pen



Tie-out cable



Welding Gloves



Chain leash \*

\* It is important to use a chain or cable leash to walk your dog at first, as even small dogs can chew through nylon or leather leashes in a matter of seconds.

## Safety: For you, your new dog, and current pets



Keeping both yourself and your dog safe should be your foremost concern. Remember that your dog may be extremely frightened at first. We have witnessed countless bites, dogs running away from

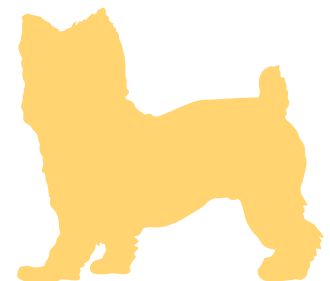
homes, and other tragedies that can be prevented when the proper precautions are taken. Here are guidelines to keep you and your dog safe.

### 1. How not to lose your dog.

For the first several weeks or months, your dog may panic and try to escape. (Don't be offended; remember that your dog is practicing the only behavior he/she knows, to run from new or scary things.) All too often, dogs slip out of collars, jump from cars, bolt out an open door/gate, jump over or dig under a fence. Here are precautions to take to keep your dog safe and with you:

- ALWAYS keep a well-fitted collar with ID tags on your dog. In addition, put a well-fitted harness on your dog.
- ALWAYS keep a leash attached to the collar or, preferably, the harness. This is also called a drag line, and is often the only way to catch your dog. Your dog will get used to wearing the leash in your home, in the crate, in the car, outdoors — everywhere. (To prevent serious accidents, supervise the dog more closely if the leash is on a collar.)

- Use extra caution when you first let your dog roam freely around your house. If your house is large, you may want to start out by allowing access to only one or two rooms. Use a baby gate if needed.
- Be sure that everyone in the household knows to be careful when going in and out of the house. Have baby gates at open doors to the outside to prevent sudden escape attempts.
- In the car, be sure to only crack windows slightly. Dogs can squeeze through a much smaller space than seems possible. Always have the dog on a leash in the car. Before you open the car door, make sure the leash is tied to something or get a hold of it to prevent the dog from escaping.
- Consider having your dog travel in a crate in the car. Getting in and out of the car are prime opportunities for your dog to slip out. Placing your dog in a crate in the car is the safest way to travel with your dog.
- Use an exercise pen or tie-out cable within your fenced yard until you can easily catch your dog. Letting your dog loose in the yard, especially if it is large, can mean a game of chase for you. This is also when dogs tend to escape from yards.



## 2. How to prevent your dog from biting you or harming your other pets.

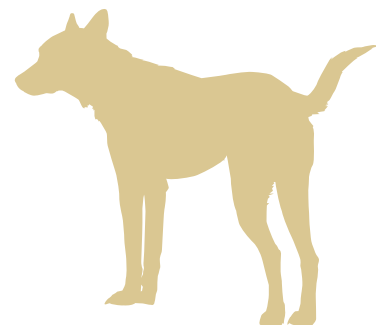
While not always the case, extremely fearful dogs may bite. You'll quickly get to know your dog and how he or she tolerates handling. Some dogs will "freeze" or "shut down" when touched or picked up, others will try to bite. Some dogs who have a history of being starved will guard their food. **It is important not to get angry if your dog does bite.** Instead, take a step back and look at the situation that caused the bite, and think about how to do things differently next time. Below are some ways to stay safe.

- Wear welding gloves when you need to pick up your dog. It may feel strange to pick up your Chihuahua with a huge pair of gloves, but trust us, in the beginning, this is a great way to at least find out safely whether or not your dog will bite you. Once your dog learns that you are only there to love and care for him/her, you won't need the gloves anymore.
- Another way to hold your dog, if needed, is to wrap him/her in a towel (kind of like a burrito). Veterinarians often use these techniques to examine, vaccinate or microchip small dogs.
- Do not place your face next to the dog's head, as she may flee or bite; remember, she was not kissed and cuddled growing up.
- Do not "push" your dogs. Patience and time is of the utmost importance with puppy mill dogs. Some take days, some months, some years, but the "baby steps" are amazing. Please remember to focus on the three steps forward and not the two steps backward in



this process. Most dogs benefit from another dog in the home as a "role model."

- You cannot be too careful with shy dogs, and it is always better to be on the safe side. They usually bond with other dogs first (that's all they've ever known) and then you. Most of these dogs will never be "normal" in the typical socialization sense, but you will develop a special, wonderful relationship that's one of a kind.
- In "escape attempts," do not chase your dog! If your dog's leash is out of your hands, and he's running from you, he'll only run faster if you begin to chase him. See the document called "If Your Dog Is Lost."



## Bringing your dog home: The first days

Now that you've got your supplies together, and are prepared for the special and rewarding task ahead, it's finally time to bring your dog home. It will take time for you to get used to your new dog, and vice versa. Every dog and every household is different, but there are some things you can do to make the transition as seamless as possible.

### 1. Give your dog a comfortable place to settle in.

Plopping your new dog down in the middle of a large house or yard is very scary for a shy dog. Instead, first designate one room for your dog to get used to, and slowly expand the space as he feels more comfortable. For the first few hours, it is best to bring your dog into a quiet room, open the crate door, and leave him alone. Your dog may want to stay in the crate, or he may want to find another place to hide. Be prepared: Your dog may poop or pee in the room. He most likely has never been trained not to use his immediate living area as a bathroom. Puppy pads will be helpful until your dog makes progress with potty training.

### 2. Secure the harness/collar and leash.

Remember, a well-fitted collar with I.D. tags is a must! Hopefully, your dog will already be wearing a well-fitted harness or collar with a leash attached. If he isn't, now is the time to put one on. You'll want to wear the welding gloves and have two people for this job if possible. Your dog may not be too afraid, but it is better to be prepared. Bring your dog into a small room such as a bathroom or small bedroom. Take your dog out of his crate, speaking in a soothing voice. You may need to take the top off the crate in order to reach your dog. Have one person be the "holder" while the other carefully puts on the harness and/or collar.



Twinkle's first day in a home. She is fitted with a secure martingale collar, I.D. tags, and a harness with a long leash attached.

Make sure to clip a lightweight leash to the collar or harness. Now you have a way to catch your dog for potty breaks and anything else.

### 3. How to do potty breaks.

Use the same method you've used indoors — limit the space. In the beginning, you should place your dog in an exercise pen within your fenced yard. Make sure you always keep the leash attached to the dog's harness. If your dog panics while on lead, either pick him up, or carry him in and out in a small crate. Your dog will feel more safe and secure in the exercise pen, and will be less likely to run and find a place to hide. Frightened dogs can easily panic and look for an escape route, which could be a hole in the fence, over the fence, under a deck, or another place that makes it difficult or unsafe to retrieve your dog. Remember that dogs who have lived their entire lives in cages can be extremely difficult to house-train, so just do your best to stay consistent, putting your dog in the exercise pen every few hours, especially after he's eaten.

## Living with your dog

Watching your dog's personality emerge is by far the most rewarding aspect of fostering a previously abused or neglected dog. Remember that it may be weeks before you see things like tail wags or any playful behavior. The best way to work with your dog is to introduce new things in increments. It's also important to make an effort to expose your dog (slowly) to new things, places and people — just not all at once right away. For example, taking your dog to a pet-friendly store or a dog park on his first day with you is probably not a good idea. Below are some tips to help your dog acclimate to life in your home and beyond.

### 1. Hand-feed your dog.

Seeing you as the source for food will help your dog learn to trust you. Simply placing a bowl of food on the floor is not enough to reinforce this, but feeding your dog straight from your hand is an excellent way to start building a bond. Your dog may be reluctant to eat in the beginning, especially in your presence. If this is the case, start by putting food down, and then step away and sit quietly in the room. Also, try "high value" treats, like chicken, cheese, freeze-dried liver, canned dog food and other irresistible goodies. Many dogs are afraid of hands coming at them, so crouch low and sit quietly, extending your hand out with the treat. Don't stare at your dog, or look him in the eye until he's comfortable taking food from you.

### 2. Start socializing, but keep space limited.

After a day or two, move your dog to a slightly busier place in the house. Kitchens and family rooms are great areas for your dog to start observing the bustle of living in a home. Set up an exercise pen, if you have one, so your dog can see what's going on, but will still feel



After a month in a home, these rescued puppy mill dogs are beginning to learn about the good things in life.

safe. It is important not to let your dog spend all his time in the crate. Most of the time, dogs see the crate as a safe haven and if given the choice, will stay in it all the time. You don't want to remove the safe spot entirely, but don't let your dog hide all the time either.

### 3. Introduce your current pets.

Once your new dog has had a few days to settle in his safe area, you can bring your other pets in, one by one, to meet him. Hopefully your other pets will welcome your new dog, but supervision is important in case there are any squabbles. Also, be aware that your new dog may act very differently when you are in the room. Shy dogs often don't show their true behavior for a long time, or until no one is around. Use caution if you have other pet species (like a pet bird, rat or other rodent), especially if your dog is a terrier or bird dog.

### 4. Have a "role model" for your new dog.

Dogs from situations of neglect and overcrowding are often afraid of people, but are comfortable around other dogs. Having another dog in your home — one who has been socialized to people and a normal living situation — can be great as a role model for your new dog. Often, new dogs will start to mimic the behavior of your current dogs, and will just be more comfortable in general. Think about what it would be like to be sent to an alien planet, with only aliens present. If there was one friendly human there, you'd feel a lot more comfortable — your dog will, too.

## Training and socializing your dog

So your dog has settled into your home, and seems fairly comfortable with the routine of eating, sleeping, potty training, and maybe even playing with your other dog(s). Now it's time for the fun part — working with your dog every day to help him learn normal “pet dog stuff.” You've made it past the extreme fear phase, and that's great!

The rest of the pages in this kit will help you and your dog move beyond the basics of just getting by. Remember, it could take months or years for your dog to really be comfortable around people. Here are some things to consider:

### 1. Spend time working with your dog every day.

Even if it's just a few minutes a few times a day. Too much time without working on your dog's skills is a way to lose ground fast.

### 2. If you see a sudden change in behavior or habits, take your dog to a vet.

Acting more fearful or snappy than usual, or refusing to eat, could mean your dog is in pain or doesn't feel well.

### 3. Don't stop when you reach a comfort zone or plateau.

Sure, your dog may be living just fine in your house, but there's more to life than that. Strive to help your dog get comfortable with everything he may encounter, such as going to the groomer, taking walks, meeting other dogs and people.

### 4. Go at your dog's pace.

You want to make progress, but pushing your dog beyond what he's ready for is counterproductive and can negatively affect your relationship with him.



The following additional resources can be found in the Best Friends Pet Care Library at:

[www.bestfriends.org/theanimals/petcare/dogs.cfm](http://www.bestfriends.org/theanimals/petcare/dogs.cfm)

#### Training

- Relationship-based training
- Positive reinforcement
- Improving social skills
- Joys of touch
- Basic cues
- Dog education
- Collar sensitivity
- The look of fear
- Object guarding
- Recommended reading

#### Living with your dog

- Promises to my dog
- Urine marking
- Submissive urination
- Cleaning stains
- Keeping your dog safe and sound
- Signs of health in your dog
- Helping your dog enjoy car rides
- Fencing options
- Grooming
- Preventing escape
- Unusual eating habits
- Small dogs, big dogs: What's safe?

## Nine things you can do to help stop puppy mills

### 1. Join the Puppies Aren't Products Coalition.

It's free, fast, and you will become part of Best Friends Animal Society's campaign to stop puppy mills and increase pet adoptions. To join, go to [puppmills.bestfriends.org](http://puppmills.bestfriends.org).

### 2. Speak up to the public.

Write letters to the editor of your local newspaper about puppy mills (breeders who keep their animals in unacceptable conditions). Note how many ads for dogs, puppies, kittens and other animals are in the paper's classified section, while shelters overflow with unwanted pets. The Doris Day Animal League has a good guide for what to write and how to submit letters:

[www.ddal.org/puppmills/action](http://www.ddal.org/puppmills/action)

### 3. Decrease demand for puppies.

We understand you may have your heart set on a puppy, or a particular breed. Don't support puppy mills by buying pets in stores! We guarantee that your next perfect pet is waiting for you at one of the thousands of shelters or rescue groups across the country — and they're not hard to find if you take the time to look responsibly. First, visit your local shelter. If you don't find the right pet there, rescue one online at [www.petfinder.com](http://www.petfinder.com).

You can also find a dog by searching [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) for breed-rescue organizations, which focus on rescuing specific breeds. Enter a city or state, the breed you are looking for, and the word "rescue."



### 4. Tired of pet stores in your community? Let them (and potential customers) know how you feel.

For information on how to hold a peaceful rally in front of a pet store, go to:

[puppmills.bestfriends.org](http://puppmills.bestfriends.org)

### 5. Wear your opinion on your shirt.

Do you agree that puppies aren't products to be manufactured in America's puppy mills and sold in stores like inventory?

Say so! To order a Puppies Aren't Products shirt, go to [www.cafepress.com/bfnetwork](http://www.cafepress.com/bfnetwork).

All proceeds go to Best Friends' Puppies Aren't Products campaign.



### 6. Know the laws.

Commercial dog breeders who sell wholesale (usually directly to pet stores) must be licensed and inspected by the USDA. Commercial breeders who sell directly to the public (via the Internet and classified ads) do not need to be licensed or inspected unless their state, county or city requires it. Additionally, many states have “lemon laws” for the sale of pets; they aim to protect consumers from purchasing sick animals. For a comprehensive list of your state’s dog laws, including breeder license and lemon law information, go to Michigan State University’s Animal Legal & Historical Center website: [www.animallaw.info](http://www.animallaw.info).

### 7. Support legislation that regulates and reduces breeding of animals.

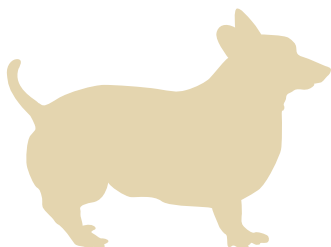
Several websites are available to help people stay updated on legislation for all animal issues, including breeding:

Animal Legal Defense Fund  
[www.aldf.org](http://www.aldf.org)

Animal Welfare Institute  
[www.awionline.org](http://www.awionline.org)

Humane Society of the United States  
[www.hsus.org/legislation\\_laws](http://www.hsus.org/legislation_laws)

International Institute for Animal Law  
[www.animallaw.com](http://www.animallaw.com)



### 8. Don’t give up.

Individuals and organizations have been fighting against puppy mills and irresponsible pet breeders for decades. Things won’t change overnight, but each little change makes a big difference. Even just educating one person about puppy mills, encouraging him or her to adopt rather than buy pets, is a great accomplishment.

### 9. Donate to Best Friends’ Puppies Aren’t Products campaign.

Your donation will be used to fight puppy mills and to give former puppy mill dogs a chance to have what all dogs deserve: safety, good care, happiness, and love from a family of their own. To donate, go here:

<https://www.bestfriends.org/donate/PuppiesArentProducts.cfm>