



Recommendations for Fostering Pit Bulls

Fostering a pit bull can help a dog in need find his forever home. While each dog is different and each foster home is unique, the guidelines below can help ensure a successful foster experience.

TEMPERAMENT AND HEALTH EVALUATION

First, PBRC would like to suggest that foster parents, and/or the rescue organizations or shelters they are associated with, screen potential foster dogs for health and temperament prior to placing them in foster homes. A complete health exam should be conducted by a veterinarian. If there are any health problems that may impact other pets in the home, it is important that they be addressed. A temperament evaluation should be performed by someone who is trained to conduct such evaluations. The evaluator should be skilled in reading canine body language and it is preferable that the evaluator be knowledgeable about the breed. If you do not have access to someone who is skilled to assist you in evaluating temperament, <http://www.pbrc.net/temperament.html> for information on evaluating temperament.

Once you have decided to bring the dog home to foster, here are some suggestions:

SEPARATION FROM OTHER PETS

Initially, it is recommended that the foster dog is separated from the resident pets. **It may be necessary to keep them permanently separated depending on the personalities of the animals.** With a dog from an unknown background, it is best to play it safe and keep the dog crated in a separate room. Establish a routine and stick to it. Dogs love routine and this will help make the foster dog comfortable as well as your own pets. Have a plan in place BEFORE you bring the foster dog home including: location of crate, extra supplies on hand (leashes, bowls, towels, toys, baby gates, etc.), and a schedule. Prior to bringing the foster dog home, create a schedule for crate rotation (who will be out when, which areas of the home or yard can be used to keep dogs separate) and review it with other household or family members, too.

In the home, we suggest keeping foster dogs crated and separated in a separate room from the resident dogs in the beginning (can be for days or weeks). Later, you might progress to having the foster dog crated in a separate room, but have the door open with a baby gate in place so they can see each other. If things are going well, you might remove the baby gate so they can actually sniff each other through the crates. You can alternate who is crated and who gets to sniff. Since a new dog is coming into a house of resident dogs, we suggest having only one resident dog out at a time for this. When allowing dogs to sniff each other through crates, it is important that the crated dog NOT have any food or high-value items in his/her crate! Otherwise you may get a reaction based on resource guarding and not necessarily on dog-dog aggression! Depending on your situation, you may progress to where one is gated from the other, separated by a baby gate. Remember, baby gates should only be used to separate dogs when you are present and dogs may need to be taught to respect the gate as a barrier.

If you decide to do a dog-dog introduction with a resident dog, please see our recommendations <http://www.pbrc.net/dogintros.html> for introducing pit bulls to other dogs.

If there are cats in the home, we suggest keeping the dog separated from your cats until you have assessed the dog's behavior towards cats. Keep in mind that some dogs, regardless of breed, may be too prey driven to live with cats.

OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS

Before bringing home a dog to foster, the foster parent should talk with all household members, including family members or roommates, and establish some ground rules about interactions with the foster dog. If there are children in the home, we suggest keeping the dog separate from the children until you have a better sense of the dog's behavior towards children and until you have had a chance to work on some basic obedience with the foster dog. Introductions with younger family members should be done carefully and gradually, and only after a period of observation of the dog's behavior. PBRC recommends that children and dogs always be supervised by an adult when they are together.

TRAINING

If the foster dog is not housebroken or crate trained, crate training will be necessary. Do not assume that a dog is crate trained. Click here for crate training tips <http://www.wonderpuppy.net/canwehelp/1crate.php> .

Incorporating basic obedience into the dog's routine will also be helpful in keeping the dog mentally stimulated, and also to increase adoptability. Teaching foster dogs and puppies that "SIT=everything!" is useful in foster care and in the adoptive home. Sit is a basic skill that can be useful later when working on stay, preparing the animal for grooming such as nail trimming, and to decrease inappropriate behaviors such as jumping up. The basic principle of "SIT=everything" is that you teach sit first and then reinforce it throughout the day by requiring the foster dog to sit for: food bowl to be filled, doors to open, access to toys, leash to be put on, etc. It is a great way to train basic manners and self-control! You might also consider enrolling the foster dog in an obedience class to help improve his skills and make him more adoptable.

If the foster dog is a puppy, it is recommended to enroll him in a puppy class where he can begin socializing appropriately with other dogs. Puppies also need to be socialized with other people, with children, and if possible, with other animals. Please make sure that the puppy is properly vaccinated before taking him to places where other dogs have been.

Always remember that you are preparing the foster dog to live in someone else's home! Manners in the home are extremely important and will help make the dog a better pet for his adopter. Try not to spoil the dog. So, for example, instead of feeding the dog from your dinner plate - a behavior which encourages begging - how about saving some of those table scraps for a short training session, or for Kong stuffing?

If you encounter some common behavior problems (jumping up, barking, pulling on leash, for example), please visit our training page <http://www.pbrc.net/training.html> as well as the Sirius Dog Training website for some great tips on training http://www.siriuspup.com/behavior_problems.html .

PBRC recommends training methods that use positive reinforcement, such as the lure-reward method, clicker training, and the use of treats, toys, preferred games or activities, and social attention as rewards for appropriate behavior. Many common behavior

problems can be easily resolved or prevented by providing adequate care, including daily exercise and obedience training.

PREPARING FOR ADOPTION

As a foster parent, you will be helping the foster dog prepare for adoption into a permanent, loving home. Finding the right home can take weeks or months. Foster parents of pit bulls should recognize that it can take time to find the right home and they need to be committed to maintaining the animal until a suitable placement is found. In the meantime, the fostering period gives the foster parent the opportunity to observe the dog's behavior, learn about his/her preferences, and teach good canine manners. The information you gather during the foster period can help you and/or the rescue organization make the best match for the dog and the adopter. We encourage rescue organizations and foster parents to list dogs on Pit Bull Rescue Central; for information on how to list a dog, [click here](#).

In addition, please see our recommendations for placing pit bulls:

<http://www.pbrc.net/recommendations.html>

<http://www.pbrc.net/adoption/screening.html>

<http://www.pbrc.net/homevisit.html>

It is important to prepare yourself as well! Saying good-bye to a dog that has lived in your home can be difficult, but fostering a dog and helping him find a forever home is extremely rewarding! Through the use of foster homes, many more dogs' lives can be saved.

By PBRC Volunteer