

## Helpful Hints For Adopting A Young Dog

My husband and I are huge animal lovers and so when we lost our dog Max to a heartbreaking disease in February 2007 we decided to adopt another dog for us and our other dog Jenny. Max was 7 when he passed and Jenny was 12 at that time. We got the most adorable lab, Brando who was about a year old from Labs4rescue. We waited patiently to get him and the day he came, we were so excited. Then the shock set in. Holy cow he wasn't like our older dogs. We had completely forgot how a younger dog could be, especially a rescued dog that sometimes experiences some trauma from their travels in finding a good home. He was just as confused as we were only he couldn't tell us. **Do not despair, it gets better.** We have some helpful tips for you on what to do and what to expect.

First even if it says the dog is housebroken they don't know you or how to tell you they have to go outside. They don't know which door to go to and how to show you, so you need to be patient and treat them like they aren't housebroken. You need to establish a routine with them and stick to it. You need to take them out regularly and praise them heavily when they go. This was the biggest culture shock for me at first. Brando was in fact "housebroken" he just didn't know our routine and we didn't know his signals. I foolishly expected him to just fall into line with our other dog Jenny's routine. Silly me he didn't know Jenny's routine!!

Second, we found it helpful to keep Brando leashed when we were home so we could keep an eye on him to make sure he didn't have any accidents in the house, nor could he get into any trouble. He didn't like it much, but we stuck with it for about 10 days and it made all the difference. He quickly learned what he could and couldn't do and it helped us form a bond with him and keep him (and our house) safe. "Child" proof your house once you decide to let the dog off leash. Don't leave your shoes lying around if you don't want them chewed and make sure that the trash is unattainable, etc.

Crate training. I highly recommend it, especially with younger dogs. We crated Brando at night until we were satisfied he was housebroken and we still crate him during the day when we are gone for longer than a few hours. Again he didn't like it at first but we tried to make it a positive experience for him and rewarded him when he was good in his crate. We also found a spot in the house he liked his crate to be in. You'd be surprised what a difference this made. Now a year later he runs to his crate when we get ready to leave. It doesn't hurt to use a Kong toy to crate train them. We stuff his with a few small treats or some peanut butter and it keeps him busy for hours after we leave.

Exercise and training. Ok, so our older dogs had slowed down and got a bit lazy and we didn't even realize it. All dogs **need** exercise, but younger dogs especially need exercise. And they **need** training. Both things help tire them out and make them happy. Happy, tired dogs are good dogs. You will need to exercise your dog DAILY with preferably a walk and some playtime. Good old catch is a favorite among labs. Also, you must work on your dogs' obedience training a little each day. We got Brando some simple obedience training and he did so well. Believe me they want to learn and please you. They LOVE the praise and it helps you bond with your dog.

Lastly, remember that adopting a dog is a commitment. A lot of rescued dogs are scared and confused and need a good home. At first they aren't even sure your home is their forever home. They don't know their way around your house, they don't understand what they are allowed to do or not allowed to do, they don't know that when you leave them you ARE coming back and mostly they don't know that you will love them for the rest of their lives. Have **patience and understanding** as your new dog gets to know you. There may be some culture shock for you at first, but try our tips and stick with the dog and you will soon find you have a best friend for life and it can be the most rewarding thing you have ever done. Our dogs are the joy in our lives. You won't be sorry.

**Traci and Bob Montefusco**