



The 3-3-3 Rule

The 3-3-3 rule is a protocol that we follow for allowing our pets to adjust. Created specifically with shelter and rescue dogs in mind, these rules can be applied to new puppies and any major change in our dog's life. The idea is that it takes 3 days for them to decompress, 3 weeks to learn a new routine, and 3 months to feel at home. There are some dogs that need more or less time, but remember that change is more difficult for our pets because they can't understand what is happening. With patience and consistency, we can help them through this challenging time.

The first 3 days are for decompression. The best thing you can do is to give them the time and space so they are able to relax, settle into their new surroundings, and begin to build trust and confidence. It's best to give your pup a "safe space" where they can rest, eat/drink, and play with toys or a special treat in a quiet place. This is NOT the time to introduce your new friend to your kids/friends/family members or your current pets. In addition, it isn't the time to worry about dog park trips, long walks, or social outings to Nana's or the pet store. This is too much additional stress for them during this already overwhelming time, and it isn't unusual for your new friend to exhibit behaviors like fear or even aggression

The first 3 weeks are about learning your routine. You'll want to begin working on your usual feeding/potty/play routine. When it comes to potty manners, remember that between the stress, food changes, and trying to learn, your new friend might have some accidents. While you learn your dog's cues, you'll want to give them more potty breaks. This is the time to VERY gradually introduce them to your family and other pets. Keep an eye on body language, go slow, and if you see them getting upset, it's time to take a break. This is also a good time to start with neighborhood walks. Always check your dog's collar/harness for fit. They might get suddenly frightened and don't know where "home" is yet.

The first 3 months are when they're learning to feel at home. This period is about new things and experiences. This is a good time to think about a group class or social training outing which are great to help build relationships and confidence as well as good habits. It's easy to become less vigilant about listening to our dogs as they become more relaxed and comfortable, but it is critical to continue to watch your new friend for signs of stress or insecurity.

