

## Your Grey's First Days

Heidi Gehret

Bringing a new greyhound home is very exciting for you and the dog. But in his case, it might be a very anxious time. Imagine being an alien dropped onto Earth, everything is new and pretty scary. We're not saying your greyhound arrived in a spaceship, but he may feel just as lost.

Here are some things to remember and simple steps to follow to help make the transition from track life to "real" life smooth for both of you from day one. Always remember, you're in control - be patient, calm, firm and consistent.

Remember, a retired racing greyhound has lived a very simple life:

He has never seen children or other dog breeds and may need time to adjust. Greyhounds need rules. They've never had to think on their own. They were told what to do by their trainer and by the greyhounds in their pack. Your dog is going to need you to show him what's right and wrong. Greyhounds sleep alone in crates at track kennels with their pack around them. He doesn't need to sleep in bed with you, or should he. Now you are his pack and he will feel more secure and will bond to you faster if allowed to sleep in your room at night. He lived by a schedule. He awoke, was turned out, and ate at the same times every day. Keeping to a schedule will help your greyhound feel secure and know what to expect. We've chosen some important steps from the list of things to do to help your new greyhound make an easy transition to his new home and environment:

When your new greyhound comes into your home, he should be given quiet time to explore his surroundings. Stay calm, he's watching you for direction and if you're worried or nervous, he'll see the signs. Don't fawn over him. Don't invite the neighbors to meet him. Let him get used to things. Limit affection, there's plenty of time for that.

Recognize signs of anxiety or insecurity. If your grey is panting or pacing, put a leash on him and wait until he lies down to pet him; otherwise you will reinforce his anxiety. If he's following you anxiously, ignore him. If there's thunder, don't hug him saying "It's okay." He'll think showing fear is a way to get a hug.

Children should be supervised. Give your dog time to get to know them. Children can help him make the transition. Teach your children to call the dog to them, instead of them approaching him. A dog understands that the person who gives the direction is the one in charge. If your children constantly go to him and give affection, he will think that he is the one in charge. This exercise helps your children get involved with their new dog and sends him the right message. Your child and your grey are likely to be very good friends but children need to know how to act with their new dog to keep everyone safe and happy.

It's your house and you have your rules. Don't hesitate to correct your grey for counter-surfing, getting up on the sofa, or jumping on people. A calm, confident "No" or "Hey" will show him

who's boss and that is you. Remember, he wants you to tell him what's expected. And be consistent!

Limit access to the house. Babysit your new family member so you'll be there to teach him all he needs to learn. When you're home, use gates if necessary to keep him confined in an area where you and your family spend the most time, perhaps the kitchen or family room. The quickest way to stop a problem is to keep it from happening. And the quickest way to form a bond with your new pal is to spend time with him, allowing him to feel part of your pack.

Crate training should start when you're there. Don't put your new dog in a crate for the first time and leave for the day. Your goal is to teach your grey to stay calm in his crate.

Start the training in the evening when you and your family are spending time together watching TV or helping your kids with homework. Put your dog in the crate and shut the door. If he starts to cry or bark, correct him right away. Don't let his anxiety escalate, stopping the behavior right away will teach him to remain calm and quiet in his crate. If he barks or cries again, correct him again. He'll get the message.

You can help all your animals get along. Walking your grey with existing dogs in your household is the best way to help them get to know each other. Your grey should not be left alone in the house with a smaller dog or cat without muzzling or crating him until he proves they can get along without problems. Also, don't let your grey, small dog or cat run loose together in a fenced yard without muzzles. A smaller dog or cat who's running can represent prey and get an unwelcome reaction even from a greyhound who shows affection for that animal in the house.

Remember, you're the boss, you're in control and it's your new greyhound's job to learn that. Don't feel sorry for him, your greyhound is starting a wonderful new life and he doesn't remember his old one. Babysit him for the first few days, keeping him near you, and watch everything he does so you can control situations.

You and your greyhound will be the very best of friends and with your help it will happen very quickly and last forever.