

# touch sensitivity

guidelines to assimilate your  
new companion

ASPCA®

## Congratulations!

### You have adopted a new family member.

As your adoption counselor discussed with you, your dog didn't always accept all kinds of touching. This dog indicated to us during his behavior assessment that he might act aggressively if he was pushed beyond his comfort level. Your dog has had some training here to help him be more comfortable with touch. Being comfortable with different types of touch is important and is a skill you can help him continue to learn at home.

**What does this mean?** Your dog is more likely to show anxiety or aggression when being touched on certain body parts, with a certain pressure or strength, or when being touched at the same time that you are holding his collar. Any dog may bite when they are uncomfortable with a touch, so it will be important to continue the training in your home. We strongly suggest you follow the guidelines below starting with the first day you bring him home. It is possible to move your dog past this behavior issue with time, patience and practice.



## guidelines:

- **Be aware of the touches your dog enjoys and doesn't enjoy.** Your dog has shown sensitivity to \_\_\_\_\_. Since you know where your new dog is uncomfortable being touched, instruct family members and visitors to touch the dog where he likes to be touched instead. For instance, "This is my new dog, Tickles. He would love it if you would squat down and pet his chest. That's his favorite place to be petted." If every new person he meets pets him appropriately, it will help him relax when being touched.
- **Reward your dog for accepting touch.** This will convince your dog that tolerating touch pays off and the behavior is worth repeating. Have a baggy of tiny, soft, high-value treats like hot dog, semi-moist liver treats, cheese or dried liver cut into pieces the size of a pea. Put your hand on your dog and while touching him, feed him a treat. You are teaching your dog that accepting touch and remaining relaxed pays off!
- **Refrain from engaging in wrestling or physical rough-housing with your dog.** While some dogs may enjoy this as much as many humans do, a touch-sensitive dog will almost certainly find this unpleasant. Don't undo all your hard work! Play cooperative games instead, like fetch, find-it games (like hide and seek), living room agility, or teach him some tricks.

If you are unable to do these at-home exercises, we suggest you choose another dog to adopt. We want you to be safe, and the dog to be able to work through his issues. Please think this through and ask yourself if you have the time and motivation to help this dog learn to enjoy touch.