

3-3-3 RULE FOR DOGS

The 3 Days, 3 Weeks, 3 Months (3-3-3) rule represents the stages your dog will go through as he adjusts to living in its new home. It's the first 3 days, 3 weeks, and 3 months after you bring your dog home. It is not a time stamp on the calendar, but a general period of time in which the new dog and new family are going through transition periods. *We cannot tell you how important it is to keep this in mind, to help set your new dog up for success and to avoid the drama that often creates frustration, mishaps, major consequences, and getting dogs returned to rescues and shelters.*

Rescuing a new dog can be rewarding and bring joy to your entire family. Before you adopt shelter dogs, they say you should know the 3-3-3 rule. The 3-3-3 rule represents the **phases of a rescue dog** or common milestones your new dog or puppy will go through 3 days, 3 weeks, 3 months after being adopted from a shelter. Depending on the rescue dog's background, you can expect to encounter some unique challenges as your rescue dog learns to adjust to its new life with you.

The 3-day, 3-week, 3-month rule was developed to help new dog owners navigate the significant transition that accompanies a rescue dog. Here's a breakdown of what this rule looks like. Your new dog will have unfamiliar surroundings and go through an adjustment period while settling into his new home. Give your dog space and time to grow once you bring them home.

It's common for rescue dogs to feel overwhelmed and scared when they arrive at their new home. They may appear stressed, reserved, and anxious and may not want to eat. Other dogs may immediately start to test their boundaries and see what they can get away with and what behaviors are acceptable and unacceptable. Some dogs can also be excited to roam free in a larger space and can be easily aroused.

It's extremely important to remain calm and patient during this period. Start being consistent with rules and training to prevent dogs from learning unwanted behaviors and provide plenty of opportunities for your dog to see you as a trustworthy figure in its life.

It's also essential to not overdo it with your rescue dog during this time. Respect its boundaries and comfort level and give him some space to get used to its new surroundings

Every situation is different, and every dog's experience will be unique. In most cases, however, it will take your dog some time to get adjusted to their new environment. Whether you rescue an older dog or a puppy, a lot of dogs tend to follow the 3-3-3 rule when getting acclimated:

- **3 Days:** Let your dog get used to your new home, and don't force new experiences on them.
- **3 Weeks:** Be patient as your dog settles in and get to know its true personality.
- **3 Months:** As you further bond with your new dog, it's time to start training.

Give your dog time to smell out its surroundings and find comfort in your new home.

Remember to:

1. Give him Time
2. Understand the Previous Feeding Schedule
3. Be Mindful of Your Actions and Reactions

After 3 Days

In the first 3 days, your new dog is like what the heck is happening. Who the heck are these people, why am I here, will I be somewhere else in a few days, where is my family, who are those dogs? What is that sound? I have never seen a couch before... You get the idea.

This should be decompression time for the dog. Your goal at this time is leash, potty breaks, crate time, tethered to you in the house, no visitors, not outings, build trust.

The first three days with your new friend is the introductory period – you're getting to know your pet, and they're also getting to know you. So, don't rush this period. Your new dog won't be your best friend just yet because they'll likely be anxious and confused about everything.

Crate training is a critical part of setting your new dog up for success! Crate training is not "imprisoning" your dog. It gives them their own space and can calm anxiety. You should create "positive" associations with the crate by using treats, chewies (link kongs, pig ear treats from the pet store, etc.) and games. If you want a well-behaved dog that does not tear things up and goes to the bathroom outside – Crate Training is an important part of that. A crate creates a safe environment for your dog and a space that belongs to him. Please refer to the information on "Tips for Successful Crate Training" in your Adoption Packet.

It's typical for recently adopted dogs to act antisocially or skip meals during this period. Some dogs, however, work in the opposite manner and attempt to push the boundaries.

In the **first three days** of being at their new home, your dog is feeling overwhelmed, and he will not be comfortable enough to completely be himself. Timid dogs may even take longer to warm up. Your newly adopted dog is sniffing out where he'll sleep,

where he'll eat and where he'll feel loved. He is making sure his new surroundings are safe. Dog owners should know that this is completely normal. If you renamed your dog after adoption, make sure to use his name consistently.

Don't be alarmed if your dog doesn't want to eat for the first few days or whines/barks while he's adjusting. He may seek a comfortable, quiet, covered space to help him feel safe. Be sure to give him a quiet spot like a crate or a dog bed where he can feel secure. He is most likely scared and trying to figure out what's going on for the first few days. It's common for your puppy to have accidents in the house, so be patient, but also take them outside often and show them the proper place to go to the bathroom.

In these first few days, your dog will feel overstimulated and probably sleep a lot. He may feel separation anxiety from the shelter he left or even from his old pack mates. This anxiety could cause accidents or may even make him sick. Eventually, he'll get used to your home and he'll start to act more like himself. Your dog will most likely start to settle in and feel more comfortable in your home. He can still be figuring out its environment and adjusting to new lifestyle changes. You may also start to see more of its unique personality.

Remember to:

1. Stick to your schedule
2. Seek help when it gets overwhelming (we have a trainer that can call you)
3. Visit the Vet regularly

After 3 Weeks

This is the time of who is who from your dog's perspective. Who do I need to worry about, who do I trust (humans and dogs). It is also the time of what can I do – experimentation with who is taking the lead role. You may see behaviors surface during this time that show either a lack of trust, fear, insecurity, or you may see bold challenges in behavior to see what other dog's and humans are made of as the dog tries to find his place in the home.

Outings during this period should be brief... and not to the dog park. If you cannot get the dog calm out in the parking lot of the Pet Retailer... don't go inside. Work outside on state of mind.

After **about three weeks**, your new shelter dog is probably finding himself in his new home. You should have him mostly potty trained and going to the bathroom outside, whether during a walk or on his own in a fenced-in yard. He now understands this is probably his forever home. He will likely start to play more, he should be on a feeding schedule and drinking as normal, he may also even start to show behavioral problems, and this will also be a good time to set boundaries. Make sure you know the proper way to guide and set limits for your new pet.

Start your daily routine so your dog understands what life will be like with you. Be consistent in your training. Spend time playing with your dog but make sure he also gets rest, too. Many dogs will learn their limits in this time period and will understand what's expected of them. His true personality will really shine.

Visitors should really just ignore the dog. It is not necessary at this time for a lot of outside affection, offering of food, or play with anyone but the family (including grandparents).

Socialization with other dogs during this time should be limited to leashed walks or leashed on the porch. And **ONLY** once you are confident there is no stink eye, no posturing, no insecurity, etc., should you do any nose to nose – and even then the new guy is on a leash, even if you eventually just let him drag it.

After the first few weeks, you can start to work on basic cues like sit and stay. Give your dog clear directions at all times. When they follow cues, reward them with dog treats and praise them.

After 3 Months

This period of time is for **YOU** to learn what this dog needs to be successful in your environment and to begin putting a training plan together. There are no black and whites; there are no time stamps. Humans must be supervisors and keen observers during this time. You should train the basics – the way we want the dog to live in our home. You should also set rules and boundaries, from day 1 and every day into the future. If you see something that gives you pause or has the potential to become a bigger issue – do not ignore it. Don't over-react but work on it immediately. Your dog is testing the waters, perhaps testing you in some ways, and needs consistent guidance as much as he needs a good home, food, water, and love.

If you need help, ask for it. If you don't know, seek answers. Make a call. The Trenton Animal Shelter has a trainer that may be able to assist you or answer your questions.

After three months, your dog definitely knows he's yours! He is comfortable with his home and has started to build true trust in you. He is likely set in his routine and is probably enjoying his new life with you. Your dog is probably falling in love with your family members as well. He will even probably be comfortable with your other dogs at this point.

Be sure not to ease off training during this time, as it's a critical time for learning good behaviors. Consider private training classes if that works better for your lifestyle. Your dog is still learning and willing to please. Try and teach your dog more elaborate tricks at this time. Get a good dog leash and train your dog to behave on a leash in public. Continuing to show him new things will only enhance your bond at this point. You can also try introducing your dog to other dogs during walks or let him play with a friend's dog. Your dog **MAY** enjoy playtime with another furry friend. You **MUST** first be very certain of 2 things: 1) your dog likes other dogs and/or is not dog selective and 2) your dog likes/tolerates the dog you are setting up a play date with.

After three months your dog is probably showing you all the love in the world. By 3 months, your rescue dog will have gotten used to your home and will have a proper understanding of what their life with you looks like. By providing adequate, positive training, engaging in plenty of play sessions, and spending ample amounts of time with your dog, you will have established a strong bond with your dog that will only continue to strengthen over time.

Rescue dogs can also establish a set routine by the 3-month mark, so remain consistent with your schedule leading up to this moment. Having set mealtimes, walks, and play sessions can help immensely with dogs feeling secure and can even prevent the development of behaviors such as separation anxiety.

In Closing

The 3-day, 3-week, 3-month rule is a basic guideline of what you can expect as your rescue dog adjusts to its new home. However, each dog is different, so don't expect to see these developments occur exactly within these set timeframes.

The most important thing is to continue to build trust with your dog and establish a consistent routine and training schedule with them. Don't ever hesitate to enlist the help of a good dog trainer that uses **positive training techniques**. You are building a lifetime relationship with your new dog and a philosophy of positive training techniques creates a bond and trust with you and your dog. Rescue dogs need a special kind of

love and care, and when you're able to provide for those needs in a way that they understand, you'll be sure to have a loving and loyal companion in your life.

If you are feeling overwhelmed or have questions, please contact your Adoption Counselor or the Adoption Coordinator and ask if our trainer can contact you directly. Our trainer may be able to give you some advice over the phone to help the situation.